

The SSE Programme

**Project review of the
Programme Intégré de développement de
Bafoulabé (PIDEB), Mali**

A project of the Strømme Memorial Foundation

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ACRONYMS

BNDA	Bank National de Développement Agricole
CAC	Centre d'Action Cooperative
Cercle	District
CESCOM	Community Health Centres
CFA	Local currency following french franc
CLD	Development Committee
CS	Comité de Secteur
GTZ	German Bilateral Aid Agency
IUCN	The International Union for Conservation of Nature
MSDB	Mouvement Synergique de Developpement à Bafoulabé
NGO	Non-government organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency of Development Cooperation
Noragric	Centre for International Environment and Development Studies Agricultural Univeristy of Norway
PIDEB	Projet Integré de Développement de Bafoulabé
SMF	Strømme Memorial Foundation
SSE Programme	The Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopia Programme
UiO	University of Oslo, Norway
WB	World Bank

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review team is of the opinion that PIDEB is playing an important role in the Cercle (district) of Bafoulabé. There is a strong need for a non-government organisation such as the "Projet Intégré de Développement de Bafoulabé" (PIDEB) in the district.

PIDEB has recently reorganised the way it operates and is now concentrating the development activities in some selected geographical areas (sectors). The team think that this new approach is appropriate - it is improving the synergetic effects between the different sections. However, it can be questioned as to whether the programme can successfully work in 10 sectors. The programme might therefore consider reducing the number of sectors and capitalising its efforts in some selected sectors preferably in sectors closer to Bafoulabé in order to reduce logistics cost.

The health situation has been improved due to the health services provided by PIDEB. For example, the level of complete vaccination in the intervention zone is 45 %. The government is now establishing health centres in the local districts in Bafoulabé (CESCOM centres) and these centres can replace many of the services provided by PIDEB. The success of these health centres remains to be seen and PIDEB should follow their development attentively. It is possible that PIDEB can have a role to play in the training of staff from these health centres. In particular, there could be a need for training in management of these centres. Much remains to be done to improve health conditions in the intervention zone. The level of hygiene in many of the villages is very low and malnutrition is widespread. The CESCOM centres cannot solve these problems.

There are also positive results within the agricultural section. New cropping methods and varieties have been introduced and the adoption rate is generally high. Recently the programme has started a project on soil and water conservation. The programme has a fruitful collaboration with Institute Economie Rural. An interest for gardening in the area has been created and many farmers have received training in gardening.

PIDEB currently provides credit for agricultural equipment, to women groups and to individual women for income generating activities. The credit is provided at subsidies rates (currently 15 % subsidies for agricultural equipment) and no interest in charged and transport and purchase costs are covered by PIDEB. PIDEB is also the in charge of the transport.

PIDEB has promoted the formation of women groups and literacy training. Among the activities undertaken by the women groups can be mentioned: colouring of cloths, sewing, production of soap and pomade, gardening and fattening of sheep. Many of these women groups will probably continue even if PIDEB pulls out. The women groups have also received literacy training. The results of the literacy training programmes are mixed. Attendance is often high at the beginning of the class, but many drop out before completing.

Despite these positive results obtained, the programme has several problems which are reflected in the recommendations.

Recommendations

The team recommends the following :

1. The current credit scheme should be terminated and a new credit system should be established. PIDEB should cease functioning as a merchant, buying and selling agricultural inputs on credit. The same applies to support to small scale economic activities. PIDEB should give credit to the farmers and women groups in the form of cash and the groups themselves should take the responsibility of purchasing the inputs. Viable interest rates should be charged on these loans. These groups should gradually build their own capital and the groups themselves should manage the funds. PIDEB could support these groups based on their performance. PIDEB should not leave any of the existing sectors before the villages are in a position themselves to provide some necessary agricultural equipment and materials for the women groups.
2. There is a need to strengthen **organisational capacity in the villages**. When PIDEB ceases to function as a merchant, local committees will have to assume more responsibilities. Members of local committees should therefore receive literacy training as well as training in management of financial resources.
3. Within the plans for each sector it is important that the real priorities of the local population are reflected. It seems like PIDEB needs to strengthen participative planning in each sector. PIDEB should encourage each village in which PIDEB is operating to establish a prioritised plan of action. Such a plan should indicate investment needs in agriculture, well construction, latrines, small economic activities and education. Based on such a plan it can be possible for PIDEB to allocate credit. The contribution from the population should be spelled out in such a plan.
4. There is no need for any major change with regard to the **agricultural extension service**. More emphasis should be given to the **construction of water harvesting systems**, because this is a low input technology which can secure the harvest in drought years. The fruitful collaboration with Malien research institutions should continue.
5. A plan of action should be prepared for improved **water hygiene and accessibility of potable water**, including strict criteria for project intervention as to new well constructions.
6. The functioning of **CESCOM centres** should be followed attentively. There might be a need for PIDEB to assist these centres in the training of their personnel.
7. The collaboration with research institutions should be focused on issues that represent real obstacles in project implementation. The research component should be linked to defined problem areas in the project.

8. **Literacy training** should be given a high priority. The reasons for low attendance should be examined and the course programme redesigned.

9. The **monitoring systems** should be redesigned.

1 Introduction

1.1 The SSE programme

The Sahel-Sudan-Ethiopian (SSE) Programme was established in response to the catastrophic droughts and famines that struck the Sahelian countries in the mid 1980s. The main objectives of the programme are to improve food security and rehabilitation of the environment. The main principles guiding the programme were: (a) minimise dependence on food aid i.e., sustainability; (b) local participation; (c) specific targeting of women; and (d) poverty alleviation.

The implementation of the Programme was organised through three different disbursement channels namely multilateral organisations, non-government organisations (NGOs), and research institutions.

The SSE Programme provides NGOs with 100% financing from Norwegian Agency of Development Cooperation (NORAD) for their projects if they comply with the SSE objectives. As such, the SSE Programme deviates from NORADs NGO policy which requires a 20% contribution from the NGO itself.

Since 1991, Noragric has been engaged to assist NORAD in the management and administration of the SSE Programme. Noragric's role and mandate is advise NORAD after reviewing projects for their compliance with the SSE objectives. Noragric also acts as a technical advisor for the NGOs involved in implementing projects, and provides forums for communication and sharing of experiences and increased collaboration among NGOs.

1.2. The Noragric review

A review of the Programme Intégré de Développement de Bafoulabé (PIDEB) was undertaken from 28/11 to 6/12-96 by a Noragric team. The team comprised the following members:

Jens B. Aune, Noragric, Associate Professor (agroecology), Noragric, Teamleader
Arild Øystese Hansen, Cand agric., SSE coordinator, Noragric
Jakob Vea, Cand. agric - Private Consultant

The itinerary of the review team was as follows:

28/11 Arrival with MAF from Timbuktu
29/11 Introduction to PIDEB project by the staff
30/11 Review of project documents
2/11- 3/11 Field visit to Oussoubidiagna
4/11 Visit to Ouassala, meeting with Commandant du Cercle
5/11 Presentation of major findings with PIDEB staff
6/11 Return to Bamako with MAF
7/11 Discussion with Pablo Sbertoli, Resident representative of Strømme in

Bamako

The team met with the following PIDEB staff:

Omar Thiero, Timothy Guindo, Founেকে Sissoko, Moro Diakite, Korotoumou Diombana, Houssa Dicko, Fanta Nimaya and Øyvind Asdahl.

In addition the team also met with field agents in Oussoubidiagna and Ouassala.

1.3 Methodology of the review mission

The methodology used by the team to review the programme was reviewing of programme documents, discussions with project staff, field visits for 3 days which included discussions with project beneficiaries, and discussions with the "Commandant de cercle" of the county of Bafoulabé and "Chef d'arrondissement" in Oussoubidiagna.

The principals of the logical framework approach were used when assessing the project performance. The direct results of the project were assessed and the local impact in the local society was evaluated. As the team only stayed for one week in the project area, an in-depth analysis of the performance of the project was not possible.

The team has done its best to ensure that the information in this report is correct, but it was difficult to cross-check the information.

2. Project description

2.1. The project area and target groups

The Strømme Memorial Foundation (SMF) started working in Mali in 1984 as a result of the drought in the 1984 season. In 1988, an agreement on long term development assistance to the county of Bafoulabé was signed with Malien authorities. This was the start of the PIDEB project which has been funded by the SSE programme since the start up.

The county of Bafoulabé is in the region of Kayes and has 163 000 habitants. The county consists of 9 arrondissements (local districts).

The target group for PIDEB is about 50 000 people. Up to 1994, PIDEB was divided into three sections (agriculture, health and women activities) and each section operated more or less independently. From 1994/1995 PIDEB changed its way of operating. PIDEB identified 10 sectors in which it plans to work. In each section the former section of PIDEB are working in collaboration. The population in each sector will be up to 10000 and each sector will consist of several villages. In each sector there will be a CESCO centre (health centre), a primary school and a unit for agricultural extension.

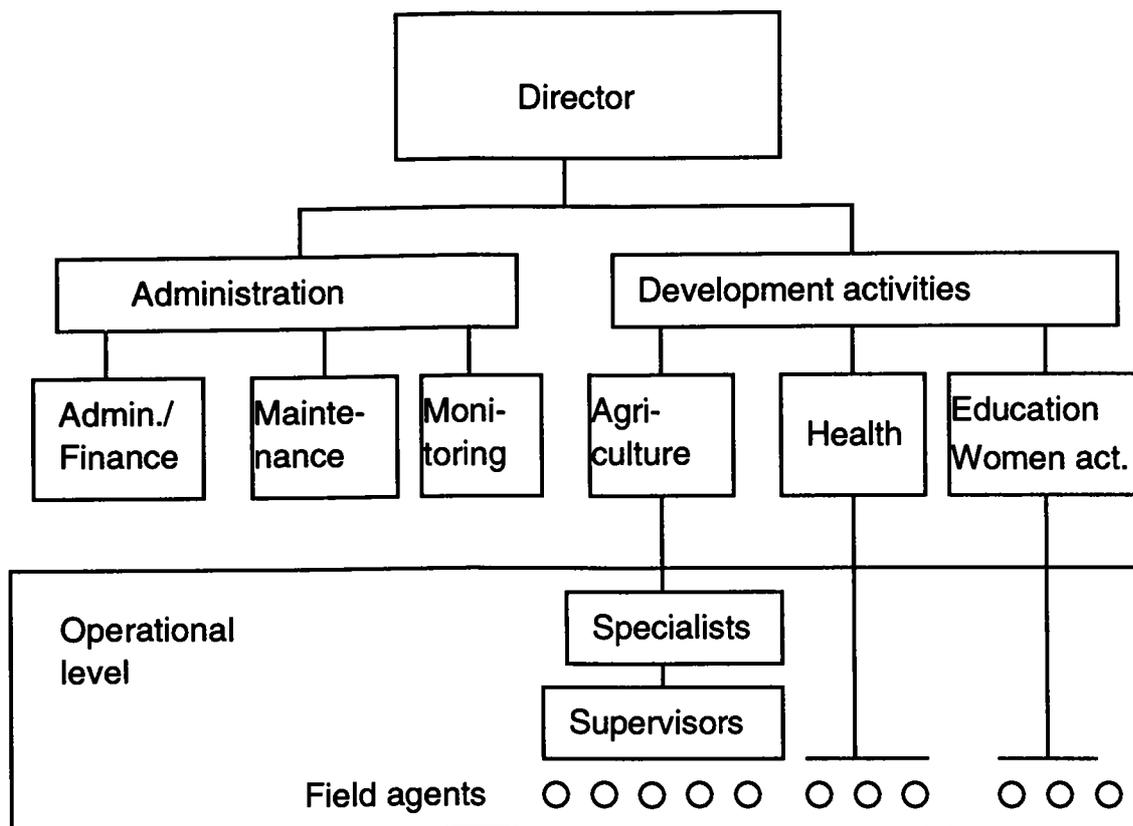
2.2 Project management and organisation

The SMF resident representative in Bamako has the overall responsibility for all projects undertaken by the Foundation in Mali, whereas the director of PIDEB is responsible for the implementation of the PIDEB programme. In the latter years, the project has received an annual support from the SSE programme of between 7-8 million NOK. The duration of the project is to 2007.

The different sections of PIDEB still exist, but try to operate together in each sector. The following sections exist:

1. Agriculture
2. Health
3. Education and women activities
4. Administration
5. Maintenance
6. Monitoring

The administration set-up is roughly as described below.



The position as head of monitoring is vacant. The management group, that consist of the project director and the heads of each section have one meeting every month.

The number of staff in the agricultural section is 25. The section is headed by a Coordinator. There are 15 field extension agents working in the section.

The principals activities of the agricultural section are:

- agricultural production
- extension service
- environmental protection
- technical assistance (wells for irrigation)

PIDEB's health department has 10 employees of which 8 are field agents. Their main objectives at present are:

- support of the community health centres (CESCOM)
- fight against local diseases
- promotion of health organisations
- good drinking water
- good general hygiene

The department for the promotion of women and education has in total 10 employees of whom 6 are field agents.

Their emphasis is at present to promote the following:

- primary schools
- adult literacy classes
- the position of the women in society
- facilitation of women's tasks
- increased incomes
- available credit

Even though the issue is vaguely described in the TOR, the team would like to express some concerns as to organisational set-up:

- The sections still seem to operate more or less as isolated units within the project. PIDEB emphasis synergy with external partners, but there is a obvious need for coordination and common strategy within the project
- PIDEB has a well established infrastructure around the centres in Bafoulabé Oussoubidiagna. A lot of resources seem to be used to keep up the activities in the centres. There is a danger that this can be at the expense of field activities.
- As to strategy adjustment, coordination and restructuring of the project set-up, the director needs a convenient support unit. This could be a steering committee or a reference group with mandate from the Strømme Foundation in Norway. Members of such a group could be representatives from other NGO's, government authorities at different levels and independent resource persons.

2.3 Collaboration with government structures and other partners

Mali has left behind a period with insecurity and political instability. The Republic is now implementing decentralisation of a wide array of government functions and the regions have been given responsibility for development activities and public services. However, the local authorities lack sufficient means to address development needs on their own, and local governmental and non-governmental organisations are challenged to mobilise necessary resources.

PIDEB's intervention is based on the development programme "Programme de Développement" elaborated by the Local Development Committee (CLD) where governmental authorities at different levels, political parties and non-governmental organisations and associations working with development issues are all represented. PIDEB is also a member of and provides activity reports for CLD.

The new regional development strategy is based on target areas divided into sectors. One sector consists of about 10-12 villages and a total population between 5 000 and 10 000. There is a non-political and non-governmental section committee "Comité de Secteur" (CS) for each sector which will be responsible for implementing development activities in the future. PIDEB's target area is limited to ten of the sectors in Bafoulabé.

To avoid overlapping, coordinate activities and assist each other when convenient, NGO's and the local administration in Bafoulabé have established a joint platform called "Mouvement Synergique de Développement à Bafoulabé (MSDB). This organisations include among other GTZ and IUCN.

3. Project activities and management. Major findings and recommendations

3.1 Agriculture

3.1.1. Problem description

The mean rainfall in the area varies between 500 to 1 200 mm. According to PIDEB staff, a serious drought occurs every 5 to 10 years. The main crops grown in the area are sorghum, maize, groundnut, cowpea and fonio. In the off-rainy season some gardening is practised. The natural vegetation in the area can be characterised as a woody savannah.

A major problem in the area is that the farmers are not able to produce sufficient grains to meet the demands in the family. This is related to several causes. Production is generally too low. It appears that the main strategy farmers are pursuing to increase production is to expand the cultivated area. When asked how the land looked 50 years ago, the farmers replied that at that time there were many trees in the area. A large share of the forests have now been cleared for crop production and farmers are cultivating fields more distant from the village than they used to do in the past. The reasons for abandoning the fields close to the village

are that soil fertility has been reduced due to nutrient mining and many of the fields are infested with the weed striga. Low soil fertility is especially due to low phosphorus and nitrogen levels in the soil. Crops are cultivated for many years on the same land without using any kind of fertiliser. Water is another limiting factor in the area. It also appears that an important portion of the rain is lost in some fields due to run-off. Yield are also low because it is difficult to get appropriate varieties and to get the seeds in time.

Families with a good purchasing power will normally have enough to eat. Apart from agriculture, it is difficult to find other income-generating activities especially in the more rural areas. Access to agricultural credit appears also to be difficult in the region. It seems that in this region, saving is in the form of buying animals, especially horses.

3.2. Extension and applied research

In each village PIDEB is working the village has chosen several contact farmers. These farmers are followed up intensively. New techniques and varieties are first introduced to the contact farmers. Other farmers are invited to visit the contact farmers. Simple experiments are also conducted in some of the contact farmers fields. Control of the harvest is done by PIDEB staff.

Techniques that have been introduced through the contact farmers are:

1. Use of farm yard manure
2. Sowing on lines and density of sowing
3. Timing of weeding
4. New varieties of maize, sorghum, soybean
5. Forrage crops, lab-lab
6. Intercropping
7. Nursery schools, fruit production
8. Contour bands

The contact farmers get no direct support from PIDEB, but one contact farmer has had assistance in constructing a well in his garden.

The programme has collaborated with Malien agricultural research institutions in the testing of new varieties and introduction of new cultivation techniques. Several new varieties have been introduced due to this research collaboration.

Impact:

There seems to be a positive impact of the extension service and research collaboration. The adoption rate by local farmers seems to be highest for the introduction of new varieties. The new maize variety SAFITA-2 is grown by most of the farmers in the project area and the sorghum variety CSM 388 has an adoption rate of about 70 % in the project area. These varieties are earlier than the traditional varieties and are therefore more resistant to drought at the end of the growing cycle than the local varieties. They have also become popular in the diet.

As far as cropping practices are concerned, the techniques of sowing on lines is well adapted in the zone. The main advantage of this method is that it facilitates weeding.

A new activity PIDEB has recently taken up is construction of contour bands made of stones. The farmers did not receive any economic support for constructing these bands. It is very encouraging that farmers construct such bands without any financial support. This testifies that they see a clear interest in the construction of such bands.

Recommendation:

The team do not see any need for changing the extension system. The project should give increased emphasis to the construction of contour bands. The collaboration with Malien research institutions should continue and if possible be strengthened.

3.1.3 Gardens

The project has promoted gardening. In 1995 the area gardened was 19.4 ha and there was a total of 48 gardens in the project area. The main crops grown in the gardens are onion, tomato, cabbage, carrot, reed beets, potato, gombo and other species. PIDEB sells seeds and pesticides to the villagers every year at a subvention rate of 15 %.

Impacts:

It seems from the gardens visited that the farmers had a genuine interest in gardening and normal yields seemed to be expected. Gardening is an important activity because it can improve the quality of the local diet. However, there are some major problems with the gardening activities. The gardens are very dependent of the presence of PIDEB, because PIDEB provides seeds and pesticides every year. In one garden we visited the farmers were only growing onions, because PIDEB had failed to provide seeds to the farmers in the previous season. Temperate legumes like cabbage and carrot were severely attacked by insects.

Recommendations:

The project should transfer in a planned way the responsibilities for providing inputs such as seed and pesticides to the village committees or to local traders as soon as possible. It is also recommended that more emphasis should be given to fruit growing (mango, citrus, papaya) instead of temperate legumes. Fruit trees do not have to be sown every year and they are also less susceptible to attack from insects. In this way the gardens become less dependent on purchasing inputs every year.

3.1.4 Agricultural credit

In first years PIDEB was operating, agricultural equipment was provided free of charge. Gradually the subsidies have been removed but PIDEB is still providing agricultural equipment such as ploughs, sowing machine and other agricultural equipment at a price subsidised by 15 %. As PIDEB takes the cost in relation to transporting, buying and selling the material, the real subvention rate is much higher. About 80 % of these loans have been managed satisfactorily. There seems to be a strong demand for such low-tech agricultural equipment.

In some villages a centre for cooperation, "Centre Action Cooperative" (CAC) exists. The team was able to obtain only limited information on how they function, but according to the information given the members have to pay a monthly fee of 200-500 CFA per month.

Recommendations:

The team recommends that the current credit scheme should be terminated and a new credit system should be established. PIDEB should give credit to the farmers in the form of cash and the farmers themselves should take the responsibility of purchasing the inputs. Viable interest rates should be charged on these loans. The groups should gradually build their own capital and the groups themselves should manage the funds. There are many successful models for credit activities to be found in West- Africa. In a "Note Technique" developed by PIDEB's department of Agriculture the development of a similar credit scheme is proposed (Caisse villageoise d' epargne de de crédit autogéré)

PIDEB might also consider providing credit through Centre Action Cooperative. Villagers should also get training in how to approach banks such as Bank National de Développement Agricole (BNDA).

3.1.5 Promotion of collective farming

PIDEB has promoted cultivation of collective land. The objective of this activity is to produce a surplus that can be sold when prices are favourable. The profit gained from selling the products can be used to promote other collective activities (such as small shops etc.). Another objective is to promote collective mentality within the village.

3.1.6 General recommendation agricultural activities

Development of sustainable agricultural systems in the region is a difficult task. Generally it can be stated that it is more difficult to develop sustainable agricultural systems in areas which have limited market access, the reason being that it becomes more expensive to buy agricultural inputs such as seed, tillage equipment, fertiliser and pesticides in remote areas. It also becomes more costly to sell the agricultural surplus in areas distant from the marked places. It is also very difficult for PIDEB to

run the project in areas which are not accessible during the rainy season and where the transport costs are very high. Therefore, the team suggest that the project should gradually concentrate in sectors closer to Bafaloubé were the project running cost will be lower and the chances for success higher. The women groups will also function better in areas where the marked access is easier.

The traditional agriculture practised in the area is extensive, which suggests that the yields are obtained by mining the soils nutrient base. Fertiliser can solve this problem, but under the current marked situation this does not seem to be a viable option especially in the more remote areas. It is easier to increase agricultural production by better controlling the run-off. Construction of contour bands which the programme has started can be an important contribution to secure the agricultural production in the region.

Within the plans for each sector it important the real priorities of the local population is reflected. It seems like PIDEB needs to strengthen participative planning in each sector. PIDEB should encouraging each village in which PIDEB is operating to establish a prioritised plan of action. Such a plan should indicated investment needs in agriculture, well construction, laterines, small economic activites, education etc.. Based on such a plan it can be possible for PIDEB to allocate credit. The contribution from the population should be spelled out in such a plan.

The team observed one example of a land use plan developed in one village by the use of participative rural appraisal techniques (Ouassala) (GTZ project). Such a plan can be a useful instrument for the villagers in planning how the land, animal and capital resources should be used. A land use plan can be of special importance if some key resources are treathened (water holes, vegetation belts, etc).

4.2 Health

4.2.1 Problem description

PIDEB's collaboration with local authorities as described in project documents was confirmed of the "Chef de Cercle" in Bafoulabé and the "Chef d'Arrondissement" in Oussoubidiagna. There are some problems as to the common understanding of PIDEB's responsibility, strategy and integration in the governmental structure in the collaboration with county health authorities.

The team would like to emphasise that PIDEB's role and strategy/approach should be formalised in agreements with local authorities in order to avoid such conflicts.

In general, health services are very weak and distances to health centres are often too long. Among the frequent diseases to be found are diarrhoea, respiratory diseases, malaria, onchocercioses and bilharzioses.

The lack of access to reliable sources of potable water effects the health situation and well-being of the entire rural population. The team was informed that in certain areas

bad water quality is estimated to be the source of about 80% of the total health problems.

Beside the diseases already mentioned, malnutrition is one of the most serious health problems. As many as about 30 to 35% of the children between 0 and 3 years have malnutrition symptoms. This is a periodical health problem especially linked to the period of starvation before the next harvest. Symptoms of malnutrition could easily be seen in the villages. According to the programme staff, the most serious malnutrition problems are lack of protein, iodine and vitamin A.

The general level of hygiene in the villages seems to be quite low and access to well functioning latrines seems to be limited for the villagers.

3.2.2 Support to the health centres (CESCOM)

The new governmental development programme presumes construction of one health centre in each sector. While the government will provide 75% of the construction costs, some equipment, the first stock of medicaments, one kerosene refrigerator for storing vaccines and one motorcycle, the local population has to provide the last 25% of the construction costs. This can be done by providing manpower, building materials, transport or cash.

Construction of one centre is estimated to cost 10 to 15 mill. CFA, which requires a local contribution of 3-4 mill. CFA. PIDEB has been involved in the construction of four health centres, with a participation limited to maximum 1 mill. CFA for each centre.

The centres do not receive financial support to cover running costs after establishment. The income from treatments and supply service (pharmaceutical) is supposed to cover all financial needs such as salaries, maintenance, materials, fuel/ kerosene, etc.

The team is of the opinion that a positive impact of this activity is obvious, and that the health situation will change when the population has access to professional health services. However, the team is concerned that a professional function of these centres might require resources that cannot be provided without external support and training of the responsible staff and steering committee. Staff at the centres that the team visited expressed concern that the number of clients would decrease if PIDEB implemented promotion/information as to health, vaccinations, etc. was withdrawn.

The team would like to recommend that PIDEB assist the centres in building local competence and structures to ensure the establishment and management of operating/revolving funds.

3.2.3 Mother and child care

This component include activities such as:

- vaccination and information on nutrition issues for pregnant women

- vaccination and nutritional follow up of children between 0 and 6 years
- medical treatment of children between 0 and 6 years
- maternity assistance
- family planning.

Local and traditional midwives and nurses are trained in different health, nutrition and maternity issues to provide reliable assistance and to recommend transfer to health centres or hospitals as necessary.

The main objective as to family planning is birth-control that assures a resting period of at least two years for the women between each new birth.

The project has contributed to reduced infant mortality. The rate of complete vaccination for children in the region is 45 %. PIDEB has contributed to an increased awareness among the population for the need to take vaccines.

The villagers mentioned that since the arrival of PIDEB there had been much less maternity problems. The training offered to local midwives is part of the reason for this.

3.2.4 Drinking water

As mentioned earlier, lack of access to good sources of potable water affects the health situation. However, the team was surprised to find that almost each village in the district has received at least one drilled well through governmental and/or non-governmental well-digging programmes.

Four large diameter wells have been constructed by PIDEB to provide drinking water for villagers. In addition to the expensive drilled and large diameter wells, most villages still have traditional open wells or water holes in river beds.

In one village, Marena, the team observed a PIDEB well under construction. The work had begun in February 1996 and at the time of our visit they had come down 20 m. It was a wide diameter well (2m) with concrete linings. After only 4 meters they met the rocks and had been using dynamite to come down to the 20 m they now where. According to experiences from other wells, they would not find water before they reached 30 to 40 m. The villagers had earlier used a borehole and were satisfied with that, but the pump/tube broke down. People wanted to get it repaired, but technicians said it could not be repaired. A PIDEB contractor said the water was bad and that it would always break down. Therefore, it had been decided to make a new well.

In dialogue with local health personnel and villagers, the team received the impression that water borne diseases are not as serious as indicated initially by the project staff, and incidence of cholera is negligible.

The team would like to recommend a plan of action for improved water hygiene and accessibility of potable water, including strict criteria for project intervention for new well constructions.

3.2.5 Social security

Since their intervention in the area PIDEB, has emphasised emergency relief assistance in case of disaster, droughts and famines. This is still a part of the project strategy, but with the focus on the physically handicapped and disabled and the poor to whom the project is providing medical equipment and medicine.

3.2.6 Prevention of local diseases

Local diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea, guinea worm and AIDS are combated through information at village level and training of local and traditional health workers.

3.2.7 Nutrition research

From 1997, PIDEB wants to integrate a research programme on nutrition into the project in collaboration with the University of Oslo (UiO) and SSE Research Programme in Mali.

The review team experienced difficulties in obtaining the necessary information on project objectives and methods /strategy and will therefore not give any further comments in this review.

However, the team would like to recommend that PIDEB/SMF focus on issues that represent real obstacles in project implementation. The research component should be linked to defined problem areas in the project.

3.3 Promotion of women and education

3.3.1 Problem description

Women have a relatively weak position in the local society. They have many daily arduous tasks like fetching water and firewood, preparing food, washing clothes and many other duties.

The team met with the women's group in Oussoubidiagna. The women in this group expressed the view that they were marginalized compared to men, also in activities undertaken by PIDEB, but it was difficult for them to explain this in more exact terms.

Women in the major centres like Bafoulabé may be socially and economically stronger than those in the countryside, but also they often have to share with their husbands what they earn themselves.

The main strategy PIDEB is following to improve the conditions of women is to reduce their work burdens and to increase their revenue.

PIDEB's goal is to strengthen the position of women and make them more active also in the village decision-making process.

The women's department has specifically set the following objectives:

- *Achieve a literacy percentage of 30% of women between 15 and 45 years in their local language
- *That the number of girls and boys in primary school are equal
- *That the local sector authorities establishes mechanisms that significantly allows for women in the decision making process in local projects and programmes undertaken with the participation of PIDEB
- *That the number of women who are contact farmers compared with men is increased to 30%
- *That at least 30% of funds allocated to agricultural credits are reserved for women.

3.3.2 Women groups

Present situation and problems:

The farmers have a tradition of cultivating some food crops in communal fields in order to secure food reserves for difficult situations in the community, or in order to allow for an important celebration in the village. Both men and women may take part in this for the good of all. This tradition provides a good basis for the development of other kinds of co-operative groups or associations in the local society.

Specific groups for women are relatively new to the area, but as a result of development efforts some women are now working together to generate income. Within the PIDEB area of intervention, there is often 30 to 50 women in an association and there may be up to 4 associations in a village. The activities are generally individual activities, but the association provide the individual women with a more secure environment for their work.

PIDEB's strategy is to promote women's associations in every village. In Bafoulabé itself the team visited a women's association which was started in 1994. They activities took literacy classes and had income generation activities such as sewing, embroidery, knitting and some soap production. Each member's production is their own property.

From the beginning, this association had the intention of entering into milk production, producing fodder crops and raising dairy cattle. For this purpose they have a request for land pending with the government. In the meantime, they buy one sheep each year which they fatten and sell to make some money. PIDEB has given them a 100.000 CFA credit for this purpose. They have also been trained by another organisation in the keeping of poultry. The members have now a total of 386 hens. Each member pays 1.000 CFA as an entrance fee and in addition 250 CFA as a monthly membership fee. The number of members varies as some quit when they feel they have learned enough and new people arrive.

The main problem for the local population is the insecurity of food supplies. On average, there is an annual period of food scarcity of three months (period de

soudure). This is often very difficult for the farmers who may then be forced to lend money, on which they may pay 100 to 200% annual interest, in order to buy food

Because of debt, farmers sometimes have to sell part of the harvest even though they need it for their own consumption, and sometimes this situation is detrimental to women. In the area, 35% of children under 3 years are malnourished, partly due to ignorance. For example, some people will not eat beans. On the other hand, both the seeds and the leaves of the baobab tree is eaten, and it is an aim of the advisory services to diversify the consumption patterns.

The situation with annual periods of insufficient food supplies make it very important for the people to have other means of income generation, especially for the women who are responsible for the preparation of the daily meals.

There are no co-operative efforts among the villagers for purchasing grain from other places during times of scarcity. There were no organised grain banks within the area where PIDEB works.

PIDEB activities:

Reduction in women's workloads

To promote cottage industries and to alleviate the tasks for women, the project has sold small equipment like small mills, shellers and sewing machines at a reduced rate and on credit. The aim of this intended easing of work is:

- * To gain more free time for women who can then use this for various income generating activities.
- * Free girls from their work in the household so that they can attend school.

For this purpose, PIDEB had distributed 1 ox plough, 3 carts, 1 seeder, 2 work oxen and 1 donkey in Oussoubidiagna. ¹

Technical training is very important if one is aiming to enable people to involve themselves with various handicrafts, trades and cottage industries. PIDEB has done much for this as seen in the following table.

Table. Number of women trained in different activities.

Year	Embroidery	Soap production	Small credit
1992	350		
1993	306		
1994	233	126	60
1995	87	187	162

Table. Number of worksaving devices procured through PIDEB

Year	Peanut mills women	Ground-nut shellers women	Sewing machine women
1992	12		
1993	8	4	
1994			
1995	12	1	16

Difficulties encountered:

- * Late training of women.
- * Too short training period given to training in colouring and soap production.
- * Weak organisation of women due to insufficient follow-up.

Colouring

While the women earlier used only local natural resources to produce colours, they now buy the colours through PIDEB. Each women has her own cloth to be coloured, but they join together in the colouring process in order to save work and inputs.

One group explained that they undertook colouring when they had gathered from 10 to 15 cloths, and they charge 1,000 or 1,500 CFA for the colouring of one cloth according to whether it is decorated or not. Most of the colouring is based on orders from other clients. The needed inputs for colouring and the production of soap and pomade are often bought by the PIDEB agent and stored in the village.

Mills and shellers

In Kossaya, an association with 45 women had obtained a groundnut sheller from PIDEB on credit. Before, they did this by hand and the equipment would obviously make the task easier for them. Every member pays 50 CFA/month as a membership fee. They bought the shellar for 37,500 CFA, 10,000 in cash and the rest on credit from PIDEB. It is possible for them to do three bags of groundnuts per day. If it breaks down they said they would contact PIDEB. They hope to pay the debt with the monthly fees, and after that they will continue to collect money for maintenance and renewal.

Sowing and embroidery:

In Bafoulabe, a women's association established in 1994 was visited. Their main activity was sowing and embroidery. They also did some knitting and soap production. The association obtains credit with PIDEB to buy materials and to purchase sewing machines. These are then bought by the members and paid over some time. In addition, PIDEB subsidizes this with 10% on purchase prices. Products produced are linen, curtains and wedding dresses.

Vegetable growing:

Aims in vegetable growing have been:

- * To train women contact farmers.
- * To supply the women's associations with agricultural equipment and seeds.
- * To provide technical training in vegetable growing.²

There is now a women's association in the villages PIDEB is working in, but both members and non-members can cultivate vegetables in the common garden. The agent is co-ordinating the work.

Vegetable gardens are usually collective in the following sense. The association works together to clear the area and fence it. Within this fenced area, the members then cultivate their own individual plots.

PIDEB is also helping gardeners in making large diameter wells.

Small credit:

The main aim of small credits is to increase the revenue of the villagers.

Credit has always been given without interest, and there was real resistance towards charging an interest on future loans among the PIDEB staff. No credit in the form of cash is functioning at present.

PIDEB gives credit in kind by purchasing small equipment and offering this on credit to members of the women's groups. This equipment such as groundnut shellers, small mills and sewing machines, etc. In addition, these types of equipment have been offered with a 10% subsidy on the purchase price, and with no costs added.

Impacts:

PIDEB has succeeded in promoting women's groups and associations. Each group has a president, treasurer and secretary even though some of these may be illiterate.

Some of these groups began their activities without PIDEB, perhaps because of other agencies having worked in the area and they will probably also continue if PIDEB ceases its activities. This was the case for a group doing business in the colouring of cloth in Oussoubidiana, where at least the group president had been doing this before. On the other hand sewing and production of ointments are new activities.

Some women have indeed increased their production and improved their position in village life, but for the majority this has just begun.

The evaluation team of March 96 found it difficult to say anything about the effects of the assistance given to alleviate the tasks of women. The women in Kossaya said that they earlier had received two small mills for groundnuts, but they soon broke down. They paid 'a little' for them. The PIDEB staff explained that this was before they worked there. A groundnut sheller obtained later on credit from PIDEB has increased their capacity to three bags of groundnuts per day. If it breaks down, however, they are dependent on PIDEB for assistance.

Improved local stoves are also part of the items listed as means of improving the lot of women. The team however saw little of these.

Sixty (60) women in six villages have earlier received small credits totalling 615,125 CFA with a repayment rate of 100%. The PIDEB agent was heavily involved in this activity and may be partly responsible for this good result.

The inputs for colouring and soap and pomade production are often bought by PIDEB. When asked whether they will be able to obtain colours if PIDEB stops its activities they replied that there are lots of merchants in town who go as far as Bamako to purchase goods. They will find a representative, but it is uncertain how this will work.

Colouring is traditional, but some women have learned the process from PIDEB. Most of the colouring is based on orders from other clients. Colouring is undertaken as a groupwork, but none of the women in Oussoubidiagna could tell how much money their group had in their cash-box. Apart from the practice that PIDEB often purchases inputs for colouring and the production of soap and pomade, it has also in some cases bought the merchandise the women have been producing.

There are positive results and there will probably be work for these groups also in the future, but the groups are still in need of training.

The cultivation of vegetables has increased and new varieties have been brought in through the PIDEB activities. The groups are still in need of PIDEB assistance to secure water for their vegetable gardens, to fence them and to obtain the 'new' varieties of seeds.

It is difficult to estimate what has actually been achieved and what is the impact of all these efforts on the target groups. It seems likely, however, that the results are not satisfactory as compared with the resources used in the project. There is little or no chance that the project will achieve its objectives within the time limit set in the present long term plans.

Recommendations:

The example from Bafoulabé shows that women's groups may work well once they are properly established, and also that the project must take seriously existing weaknesses as referred to in an earlier evaluation:

- *the insufficient taking into account the preoccupation's of the villagers, like questions of animal health, maintenance of agricultural equipment

Most of the women's groups are probably not yet sufficiently functional to survive on their own. Therefore, technical assistance and literacy training are important activities for PIDEB. It is important that the project follows up the women's groups closely and give sound support to remunerative activities undertaken by them.

The project seems to have been too eager to see some practical results in the villages earlier rather than later, and it has therefore given gifts or taken upon itself tasks

that should normally be done by the members of the groups or associations. It is therefore vital that a new viable credit system is developed. This should be saving schemes that the women themselves are in control of and based on performance (degree of pay -back) the groups can be allocated credit in the form of cash from PIDEB. The groups should gradually build the own capital.

Subsidies might be a useful tool in promoting development, especially if used by the government for specific purposes and within a long term plan. It seems, however, that the use of subsidies in PIDEB is more based on a general care for the well-being of the target group, than on achieving specific development results. The use of subsidies should therefore be reduced and efforts should be made to promote economic activities where the women can manage with real costs.

3.3.3 Literacy Training - Education

Present situation and problems:

There are practically no schools in the villages. A major problem is that the parents do not see any reason for their children to attend school. There are few villages that send some children to Bafoulabé for schooling. They then receive millet from the village and a married woman goes with them to care for them. School attendance is less than 50%.

Adult literacy classes are difficult to make functional because people cannot afford a half a day or more. In addition, men usually do not want their wives to become agent 'animators' in the village.

No more than 10% of the population is literate. For example none of the women in a group colouring cloths in Oussoubidiana could read or write. Many women usually come to the opening of adult literacy classes, but many quit the courses later on. Women say they wish to learn, but that learning takes place at a certain age and they have passed that age. Girls cannot go to school because they marry at the age of 14 to 15 years, but boys do go to school.

Objectives:

- * Support the development of general education in the sectors so that at least 50% of the children attend school.
- * Make sure that at least 50% of the youth and adults in the sectors of intervention can read and write.
- * Ensure that 90% of the villagers are trained in health, agriculture and other activities so that they are capable of appreciating and using technical advice in their own local language at least.

The framework offered by agreements made between PIDEB and the village community should constitute a good basis for this kind of work. Literacy committees (comité alpha) are established to support this, but they do not function

as intended. The remuneration of the local agents could also have a positive effect, but many receive little or nothing in this respect.

In co-operation with the parents associations (APE) the PIDEB agents are working towards getting more girls to attend school.

PIDEB tries to encourage construction of new primary schools in the villages, and in Ouassala close to Bafoulabe the team observed a new school nearing completion. Total estimated cost was in the area of 14 mill. CFA, of which PIDEB contributed 1 mill in addition to other assistance offered (transport etc.). The main donors count the PIDEB assistance as part of the local contribution.

Support to literacy classes has been offered in various ways. Fencing material and teaching material have been given to stimulate literacy classes. Also credit has been offered to women in order to get them to attend.

As in Kossaya, the instructors are not paid, but the village work in their fields as compensation. This instructor teaches from 12.00 - 15.00 hours from January to June. At present she receives no direct help from the project apart from supervision and advice.

The women's association in Bafoulabe have built their own building for their literacy classes, called 'Centre Alpha' and PIDEB has provided chairs, tables and some desks. There are two teachers in the literacy classes.

Table. Results of literacy classes (from annual report 1995)

Year	Class	No of participants	No of women	No of success	Success% of all	Success of women
1992	all	731	266			
1993	1. year	522	325	161	30	65
"	2. "	169	21	95	56	12
"	3. "					
1994	1. year	399	196		41	
"	2. year	169	79	53	31	12
"	3. year	53	8	27	51	3
1995	1. year	432	224	205	47	69
"	2. year	146	24	89	61	16
"	3. year			59	89	6

Difficulties encountered:

- * Literacy classes had a late starting of courses in some villages.
- * The trainers (animatrices) have insufficient knowledge.
- * Non-payment for the booklets used - only 10 % are paid.
- * Irregular attendance.

Impacts:

Approximately 600 pupils attended the end of year training exams. There were 347 pupils, of which 91 were women, who passed the final examinations (40%).

Eight centres for adult literacy classes have been constructed and equipped by PIDEB. Two schools have received maintenance support.

The results are not too encouraging. It was observed that in the village Kossaya, there were only 2 women who could read and write. A total of 29 persons were listed as attendees, but only 10-15 showed up during teaching hours.

The situation is better at the 'Centre Alpha' in Bafoulabé. Eleven women finished the second year and 22 are in the first. When putting questions to this women's group the team also received some of the answers in French. It is normal for the literacy level in Bafoulabé to be higher than in the surrounding areas.

Women met by the team were thankful for the assistance already received, but also clearly stated that they are still in need of assistance from PIDEB.

Recommendations:

The PIDEB literacy programme has a duration of 3 years. The farmers find that this is too long and that it does not sufficiently take the time consumption into consideration. Farmers are interested especially if the programme is offered along with agricultural or other training. Repeated intensive short courses may be more efficient according to the project staff. The population, especially the women, show little or no interest in learning to read and write. PIDEB should make new efforts to inform and help both men and women in the villages to understand the need for literacy skills and search for ways to demonstrate this.

Support to primary education should be continued.

The real obstacles should be identified. The literacy programme needs to be reconsidered in order to better take the situation of women in the villages into consideration and to make them more effective. The literacy training should maybe changed in the direction of functional literacy programs that are connected to the more practical activities which the project implements; credit, in-come generating activities etc.

3.3.4. Function of family planning component.

Present situation and problems:

Family planning is still very limited in all the districts. Islam is against prevention, and so is the general attitude of the population.

None of the members in a women's group in Oussoubidiagna would say how many children were suitable for a family in their situation - it was the man who should give his opinion on this.

Project activities:

Two years spacing of children is the aim of the programme, but the women are allowed to decide for themselves as whether they will be 'planned'.

3.4 Programme monitoring

The monitoring in the programme is not functioning well. However, it is possible to find some information on project activities in the annual reports. Not much information is available on the impact of the project activities. Since 1994, the programme has been developing a computerised monitoring system. A description of the systems exist. However, the process has stopped because programming was not done in a satisfactory way. PIDEB plans to start with a new programmer.

Our recommendation is that PSM should seriously reconsider the strategy chosen. It is seems that the ambitions for the monitoring system are too high. PIDEB should especially pay addition to monitoring the impact of the project activities.

The objectives of the programme will have to be set more realistically. It seems that the objectives set represent what the programme would like to obtain and not what is actually realistic. This is especially the case for the objectives chosen for education.

The budgeting and accounting routines from PIDEB makes it impossible to calculate the cost-efficiency of the various activities. PIDEB should therefore reconsider the way budgeting is done.

4. Overall project impact and sustainability

4.1 Environmental consequences

The way in which agriculture is traditionally practised in the region causes environmental problems. As mentioned earlier, yields are declining and farmers have to clear new land (forests) for agricultural production. The land problem is however not acute on the regional bases since only 20 % of the arable land is under cultivation. However, the forest cover has been much reduced around the villages. It will be difficult to control the deforestation rate unless a more intensive agriculture is developed. Some people may also be facing a fuelwood problem through shrinking forests. In order to minimise this problem, it important that villagers have access to and use improved stoves. The impression the team received when visiting the villages is that it can be possible to increase the use of improved stoves.

Living fences made mainly of Parkinsonia (tree) have been constructed around the gardens. About 12,000 metres of this type of fence have been constructed. However, in the gardens the team visited none of the fences were functioning properly.

Another important environmental problems in some areas is soil erosion. The contour bands that the project has assisted villages in constructing are an important contribution to arrest this problem.

Problems in relation to water are treated under the health section.

4.2 Gender issues

The PIDEB programme seems to have a quite balanced staff with regard to gender. However, in the agricultural section there were more men than women.

As far as the gender approach in the programme is concerned, the team is of the opinion that the project has tried to improve the living standard for both men and women. The health programme has focused on mother and child care and the project has promoted small income generating activities for women. Women have also been trained in gardening and they have been offered literacy training. This training must have strengthened the women's role in the society.

4.3 The strategy for phasing out

The PIDEB programme lacks a clear plan for phasing out. Phasing out will however be more easy in some fields. This is especially the case for the health activities where the CESCO centres will take responsibility for providing health services to the population. However, the functioning of these health centres is not guaranteed. It will depend on the willingness of the population to pay for the health services.

Some of the women's groups will also continue. However they will need to assume greater responsibilities when PIDEB pulls out.

It is difficult to see if anybody will be able to assume the responsibilities for agricultural activities that PIDEB now has. The public extension system do not have the capacity to follow up the contact farmers in the way PIDEB has been able to do. However, the new agricultural practices (water harvesting, sowing on the line and gardening) and new varieties introduced will be there even if PIDEB pulls out. When it comes to the village associations their function will depend how well the members are trained and how well the groups are organised. PIDEB has an important work to do in strengthening the organisational capacity of these village groups. The village groups must in the future themselves take the responsibility for providing agricultural inputs. There is a special need for building viable credit institutions in the villages. PIDEB should not leave the sectors before being sure that viable local credit institutions are developed.

At times the team received the impression, especially from some of the PIDEB staff, that the programme was an aim in itself. It therefore seems necessary to strengthen the project staff understanding of development.

Acknowledgement

The team was grateful to the PIDEB staff who received the team well and patiently give all the information asked of them.

From the 1995 annual report of the women dep.

¹Rapport d'étude, Berge, diarra, Cisse, Mars 1996.

²Rapport d'étude, Berge, diarra, Cisse, Mars 1996.