

Evaluation of Co-funding Programme  
on poverty alleviation and rural development  
in the Sahel

Final synthesis report  
of  
an assessment of CFA activities to combat poverty  
in the Sahel

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From the side of the Stuurgroep, André Leliveld was the day-to-day coordinator, while a number of people have contributed to the preparatory and main stages of the study through their remarks and suggestions on the documents that were produced. On behalf of the Steering Committee, Annelies Zoomers and Anneke Slob were attached to the project, while valuable contributions have come from Nico van Niekerk and Bert Helmsing.

In the preparatory stage, Mark Rutgers van der Loeff and Francis Obeng did an inventory of activities in the Sahel supported by the evaluated CFAs.

## 1. Introduction

This report is a summary of the findings of an evaluation, commissioned by the Steering Committee for Co-funding Programme (CFP) Assessment [*Stuurgroep Evaluatie Medefinancieringsprogramma*]. The terms of reference of the Steering Committee, appointed by the Dutch government and the co-funding joint consultation board (GOM, *Gemeenschappelijk Overleg Medefinanciering*) of the Co-Funding Agencies (CFAs), were to study the implementation of the CFP relative to the content of an agreement between the Ministry of Development Cooperation and the CFAs. The general aim of combating poverty<sup>1</sup> is the central focal point of CFA activities. Since the various CFAs take different approaches in fleshing out this notion and in the methods employed for its implementation, the study not only looked at the implementation of this aim, but also at the roles, policies and aims of the CFAs themselves.

In the preparatory stage of this study, data were collected on the degree to which the various CFAs had committed themselves to supporting poverty reduction activities in the Sahel. This phase took place in the autumn of 2001. During the first six months of 2002 a field study was conducted of the activities supported by several CFAs (NOVIB, Cordaid and ICCO) in the area of combating poverty in the Sahel. In three countries (Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana) six organisations were visited and activities examined: in Mali, AMSS, supported by ICCO, and ACORD, supported by NOVIB; in Burkina Faso, ODE, supported by ICCO, and ADRK, supported by Cordaid; and in Ghana PCG, supported by ICCO and the Diocese of Navrongo/Bolgatanga (DNB), supported by Cordaid.

The results of these studies are published in three country reports. In June and July 2002, these country reports were drafted and submitted to the local counterparts and the evaluated NGOs for comments. In June 2002, a Dutch summary was submitted for comments by the Steering Committee, while in August, an English-language concept synthesis report was written and submitted to the Steering Committee. Comments from the Steering Committee, the CFAs and the local counterparts were received and final versions of these reports are now submitted to the Steering Committee, for submission to the Ministry and GOM.

We are grateful for the support of many in the long stretch leading to these final reports. Not only members of the Steering committee, Annelies Zoomers, Anneke Slob, Bert Helmsing, André Leliveld and Nico van Niekerk, have been very critical and helpful. Many people were involved in the study, either as staff members of the local counterpart organisations (EDS in Burkina Faso, UDS and IIS in Ghana and ISH in Mali), or as directors and staff members of the NGOs and CFAs evaluated. They have given much of their time and effort. Many others, key persons in the local NGO environment, have given much of their time as well. We would like to extend our appreciation to all. Finally, we would like to thank André Leliveld in particular as coordinator on behalf of the Steering Committee. His assistance and understanding have been very much appreciated.

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<sup>1</sup> In Dutch: "Structurele armoedebestrijding"

## 2. Research framework, questions and methodology

### *Introduction*

This evaluation study departed from the premise that development as a concept can be defined in two major ways. Following Bebbington, who put up the framework for the earlier evaluation of CFA poverty alleviation activities in the Andes (Bebbington *et al.* 2002), development and, more relevant in the context of this evaluation, *rural* development can be defined both as a process and a project. The former can be described as the social, economic and political institutional transformation of a certain rural area with the introduction and extension of, and adaptation to western capitalist and global systems of production, exchange and consumption, and of the dynamic change of that rural area through autonomous processes. The latter can be described as the deliberate set of activities implemented to achieve change of certain characteristics of those rural areas and its populations within a given time frame. Quite often, these activities and projects are designed to contribute to the broader process of transformation, but they may also be designed to provide an alternative process of change and transformation within the broader context of global change.

Whatever the goal of development as a project, there will be constraints and opportunities caused by the impact of the broader process of transformation going on around the project. Similar to the evaluation done by Bebbington *et al.* in the Andes Region, this evaluation departs from the premise that the CFA-funded NGOs evaluated have been influenced by the social, economic and political context surrounding these NGOs and their activities. Therefore, to obtain an adequate picture of their success (or failure), this context has to be taken into account. This extends to the role of the CFAs themselves. The CFA may be seen as part of the institutional environment of the partner NGOs, and is instrumental in influencing the NGOs' degree of success (or failure). Many evaluations restrict themselves to assessing the effects and outcomes of NGO development activities (either separate projects or programmes, and either directly funded and implemented by donors or organised through local NGOs and other agencies) in relation to the resources provided. When activities are evaluated at an aggregate level, for instance with the CFA programme evaluations (Steering Committee 2000), the results are sometimes inadequate to obtain insight in the actual impact of the development projects and activities on the broader process of development.

Social, economic and political processes shaping the population's environment, and the institutional context in which the NGO has to function, are discussed. For the former we have adopted the framework of capitals put forward by Bebbington *et al.*, which is based on a broader discussion in the development literature. For the latter we have adopted the concept of the 'aid chain' (Bebbington *et al.* 2000). Together, these two frameworks will make it possible to understand what the evaluated NGOs have done, why they did it and what the degree of success in terms of effects (project-wise) and impacts (process-wise) has been in doing it, relative to what may have been expected considering the social, economic and political context.

This imposes a considerable challenge, as this methodology was relatively recently developed, while the question of whether the effects and impacts are to be judged positively or negatively in relation to a hypothetical situation of non-intervention in the same circumstances is of course very difficult to answer. Would the situation have been worse or better if the NGO had not intervened? Can the effects and impacts found be actually attributed

to the activities of the NGO, or to the impact of the environment on the participating population? Particularly this latter discussion of the attribution is largely an unresolved one.

#### *Framework of the evaluation*

A number of studies have emphasised the complexity, variability and diversity of livelihoods in the Sahel (Rochette 1989, Claude *et al* 1991, Harts-Broekhuis & De Jong 1993, Bruijn & Van Dijk 1995, Brons *et al* 1999). It does not suffice to look at a certain farming system and its success in providing food and income. Poverty, defined as a lack of income from agriculture, is a concept that gives a partial picture at best of how people may be unsuccessful to develop a livelihood (Chambers 1987). There is a whole range of activities that should be included when looking at livelihoods in the Sahel, not only cultivation and livestock keeping (Byceson 2002). In addition, there should be attention to more than only income and poverty when looking at Sahelian standards of wealth and well being. Status, social standing, and religion are all very important but receive relatively little attention in the development discussion. Instead of poverty, it is better to look at deprivation. Deprivation is a lack of (or lack of access to) resources, or capitals, needed to generate income and build a just and sustainable society (Chambers 1995). A sustainable livelihood is the outcome of a successful use of the various capitals owned or accessed (Bebbington 1999, De Haan 2000). These capitals are of a very varied character. The concept of sustainable livelihood is used to describe how people, by using the often limited capitals they have, can be successful in providing for themselves the entitlements to income, food, status, recognition and other needs, and the resilience to continue to do so in times of stress and crisis. Many NGOs have recognised this, and even when they started by focussing on improvement of food security through agricultural development, many have diversified their activities to include other capitals as well. Establishment of community organisations, alphabetisation, business skills, health and sanitation, information and rural infrastructure, market development, institutional development and political pressure, gender programmes and other emancipatory and empowering activities, a large number of activities have been organised by local NGOs.

In line with recent thinking on sustainable livelihoods and the theoretical framework of the Andes study on poverty alleviation by the CFP (Bebbington *et al*, 2002), a set of categories of assets (or capitals) can be identified for the Sahel that are both the basis of people's livelihoods, and the assets the improvement of which NGOs are striving for. These can be natural capitals, physical, financial/economic, human and social capital, and even cultural capital, used by many households to develop a livelihood. Some would add political capital as a separate category as it is very important in obtaining access to resources in most African countries. The following table sets out to describe these capitals and give some examples.

<b>Capital</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Natural capital</i>	Assets in the form of natural resources owned or accessed by the population.	<i>Cultivable land</i> <i>Livestock</i> <i>Water</i>
<i>Physical capital</i>	<i>(or produced capital) Assets that are the result of economic activity and that are produced as capital goods.</i>	<i>Dams or irrigable land</i> <i>Trained animals</i> <i>Soil and water conservation works</i> <i>Agricultural implements</i>
<i>Financial/ economic capital</i>	<i>Financial assets used in the production process to which the population has right or access.</i>	<i>Credit</i> <i>(NGO) salary</i> <i>Remittances</i> <i>Bride wealth</i> <i>Proceeds of (non-) agricultural sales</i>
<i>Social capital</i>	<i>Assets or access to assets as the result of one's relationships with others individually or through institutional mediation at the micro/ meso level.</i>	<i>Membership of (religious, ethnic, other) groups</i> <i>Democratic rights</i> <i>Knowledge of conflict resolution</i> <i>Access to juridical institutions</i>
<i>Cultural capital</i>	Assets of access to assets that one has because of the cultural characteristics of the society of which one is part.	<i>Ethnicity</i> <i>Religion</i> <i>Language</i> <i>Knowledge of cultural expressions in songs, literature, dance, etc</i>
<i>Human capital</i>	Assets that one has because of having a body, all the characteristics potentially useful for providing oneself with a livelihood.	<i>Education (particularly alphabetisation)</i> <i>Health</i> <i>Knowledge generally (technology, etc)</i> <i>Labour</i> <i>Psychological factors (self esteem)</i>

Every person (or 'actor') chooses a set of capitals available to him or her to construct a livelihood strategy, or at least tries to construct one. The whole point of the development project and process is to provide people with more possible sets of capitals from which to choose from, so that they may construct their livelihoods in such a way as they deem useful. This actor-in-context perspective circumvents the often cited criticism that an actor approach is too optimistic about the possibilities of individual actors. The context may simply be too disadvantageous. Either the actors arrive at a higher level of wealth and welfare, or present levels are more stable and sustainable for example. The livelihood strategies that are the result can only be sustainable when they are finally turned into or embedded in more permanent economic and political structures. It is recognised by some NGOs that it sometimes makes as much sense to help people develop their capitals, as it is to change the decision-making environment in which these capitals are used. Similarly, NGOs will have to consider the environment of the population and of themselves when they design their intervention policy.

This points to the importance attached in this evaluation to the difference between the effects and the impacts of the activities. The effects may be described in terms of the change in capitals that people have or have access to in terms of natural, financial and physical resources. Those can relatively easily be measured. However, it is in the impact of these changes that the evaluation is particularly interested in. These include the change in well-

being that is the result of the use of these increased capitals, and in the more structural change in the political economy of rural development. It includes the increase in resilience against future stresses and crises of the livelihood that has been developed, or the possibility to overcome stress by using the more favourable social, economic and political environment that has come into being through the activity of the NGO. This is the link between poverty alleviation at the level of the individual or household, where many NGOs limited themselves to in earlier phases of their work in the Sahel, and rural development, which is defined by the structural improvement of area characteristics (ICCO 1994). It is clear that more attention is being given now by NGOs to the impact on structural change. Thus, the poor's definition of poverty and deprivation, the varied livelihood strategies by which they try to overcome this, the varied capitals they use to do this, and the impact of their and the NGOs activities on deprivation form a connected set of concepts, a framework that guides this evaluation.

In addition to using a capitals and livelihood framework as a means to address questions of change (effects and impacts), the study also uses an 'aid chain' framework in order to analyse the links between development interventions and livelihood changes. The 'aid chain' refers to the various levels of organisations and institutions through which the assistance to 'development' is organised. It is the delivery mechanism of aid and cooperation. Initially, we focused on the various levels of institutions (Ministry of Foreign Affairs/ Embassies, CFA, NGO and institutions of the local population), but the role of individuals at these various levels was recognised in the quality and modality of aid 'delivery'. Thus, the study considered both the relationships among different actors (defined at the individual and institutional/ organisational levels) in this aid chain, as well as the specific contributions of each of these actors.

In concrete terms, the study therefore involved the following levels:

- 1 The population concerned. The evaluation's focus takes as its starting point the viewpoint of rural people, that is to say, the changes in their livelihood strategies. The central theme is how the objectives of the interventions correspond to the priorities of the rural population.
- 2 The implementing NGOs. Both the conceptualisation of rural poverty and coherence between this and the actual implementation are important at this level. Both can be related to the population's viewpoint and their needs. The relative importance of the counterpart organizations supported by the CFAs in relation to the larger group of NGOs and development actors working in the same area need attention in order to answer questions on attribution.
- 3 The donor CFAs. An examination the quality of donor support ('donorship') and partnership offered by the CFAs is important for a better understanding of the quality of financial support, institutional development and dialogue with the population. This part of the study should contribute to an understanding of the ways in which the CFAs influence and contribute to the effects and impacts produced by the work of their counterpart organizations.
- 4 The Dutch Embassies. Their role as donor to local NGOs is limited, but may be quite similar to that of CFAs. In addition, they are partner in policy discussions at national level in the three countries concerned, and influence the debate. However, it was considered to be outside the scope of this study and report to go into details on the role as donor to the CFAs collectively.

### *Research questions*

The main research questions are:

- a. What have been the main changes in the livelihood strategies of different sectors of the rural population in the areas in which the CFAs work?
- b. In as far as there has been visible change in livelihoods: (a) to what extent are these changes the effects or the impacts of NGO interventions; (b) what types of interventions have contributed to poverty reduction and rural development?
- c. How far do – and have – CFA-supported interventions responded to the main needs of the rural population? Do these interventions address the most urgent needs as perceived by people themselves?
- d. What have been the specific contributions of the CFAs, both individually and collectively? What specific value do they add to development, and what are the strong and weak points in their contributions? To what extent have the different actors in the aid chain facilitated the implementation of projects, and the likelihood that these will have effects and impacts among the rural population?

Attention will be given to several key elements in answering these questions. These follow the Terms of Reference established for the evaluation of poverty reduction activities supported in the Sahel (Zaal *et al.* 2001, Stuurgroep 2002):

- The ecological, economic and socio-political context (the trends);
- The coherence of policy at different levels;
- The results in terms of the effect and impact at the level of the capitals available to the population for subsistence;
- The gender component in policy and implementation;
- The role of the *aid chain*.

### *Methodology*

The study was implemented in various stages. After every stage, deliberation with the Steering Committee assured compliance with the needs of the CFP evaluation as a whole. Preliminary activities consisted of a selection of countries in which the evaluation would take place (Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali) and of CFAs to be included (Cordaid, Novib and ICCO).

The first stage was designed to develop a framework and methodology appropriate for the Sahel but based largely on the methodology adopted by Bebbington c.s. for the Andes region. Thus, an integration of findings from the Andes and the Sahel would be possible so as to arrive at a comprehensive evaluation of poverty alleviation and rural development activities of the CFAs and the CFP. During this stage, an inventory was made of relevant activities of CFAs in the Sahel, both content-wise and financial (Rutgers van de Loeff 2001, Obeng 2001).

A long list of possible NGOs to be included in the study was made. The criteria were as follows:

- There should be a good representation of the three major Sahelian ecological zones (arid, semi-arid and semi-arid to sub-humid);
- There should be a balance between the three Dutch CFAs in the Sahel region (Cordaid, ICCO and Novib);
- There should be a good representation of NGOs with long-term and substantial support by Dutch CFAs;

- There should be an array of sectors of support and a variety of goals related to poverty reduction;
- There should be the possibility to give particular attention to gender elements of poverty reduction strategies;
- Existing information about the region and the NGOs concerned, preferably of high quality and of long duration, should make it possible to construct a base line dataset.

Subsequently, visits were made to the region to identify local research groups who could be asked to implement the study in the field. Thus, the wish of the Steering committee to have the 'voice from the South' be heard could be realised. Together with the local counterparts identified, NGOs on the long list were visited and preliminary discussions organised, to familiarise the NGOs with the possible implementation of the evaluation, and to discuss possible modalities. Based on this, a proposal was submitted to the Steering Committee (Zaal *et al* 2001) that formed the basis of the Terms of Reference finally developed, including a final selection of NGOs to be included (Steering Group 2002). Based on further discussions with the CFAs, it was decided to reduce the extent of the evaluation for one of the NGOs to a desk study of available literature.

The following list of NGOs (see below) is the result of the criteria for selection used for the long-list, the discussions held with representatives of these NGOs met in the field, and considerations of logistics and geographical location. For this reason, there is a difference in weight given to projects supported by the three CFAs: Novib is represented by only one (though admittedly large) NGO in Mali.

Going from south to north successively, identification visits were made to the regions of North Ghana (Upper East Region, which specifically includes the Bongo district and the sub-district of Garu), central Burkina Faso (the 'Centre Nord' region around Kaya<sup>2</sup>), and North Mali (the region around Timbuktu). The maps in annex 2 present the locations within the respective countries where the NGOs that were selected are active.

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<sup>2</sup> In the case of ADRK. The ODE study was not geared towards field work in a particular region, but was confined to a literature study and discussions at the head office in Ouagadougou.

Selection of NGOs for evaluation (for details see chapter 7)

Case study	Location HQ	Ecological zone	Activities	Type of organisation	Partner CFA	Since	Weight of CFA in NGO budget
<i>Burkina Faso</i>							
ADRK	Kaya	Semi-arid	Introducing innovations in agriculture and livestock, credit, training, institution building.	Farmers association	Cordaid	1973	Main donor, role taken over by Embassy recently
ODE (desk)	Ouagadougou	Semi-arid	Introducing innovations around irrigated agriculture, institution building, small projects, regional development	Intermediate service	ICCO	1977	One of a group of main donors
<i>Ghana</i>							
PCG	Tamale/ Garu	Semi-arid to sub-humid	Introducing agricultural and environmental change, credit, training, institution building	Intermediate service	ICCO		Main donor
Diocese Navrongo-Bolgatanga	Bolgatanga/ Bongo	Semi-arid to sub-humid	Environmental improvements, agro-forestry, training, credit	Intermediate service	Cordaid		Major donor
<i>Mali</i>							
ACORD	Timbuktu	Arid	Local capacity building, food security, rebuilding herds, water and agriculture, credit, environment.	Service organisation	Novib	1982	Main donor
AMSS	Bamako/ Timbuktu	Arid	Village organisation, agriculture, water, environment, food security	Intermediate, Service	ICCO	1992/3	Main donor

The next phase consisted of field visits to the areas where the NGOs are active. North Ghana can be characterised as the southernmost area with Sahel features<sup>3</sup>. Partners of Cordaid and ICCO were studied, with one partner of each – the Catholic Diocesan Development Office of Navrongo/Bolgatanga (DDO-DNB) and the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG), respectively. In the former case, the focus was on the activities of the Bongo Agro-Forestry Programme in the district of Bongo (70.000 inhabitants) and, in the latter case, on the activities of the Presbyterian Agricultural Station in the sub-district of Garu (also around 70.000 inhabitants). In the Central Burkina Faso research region (the Diocese of Kaya), the activities of the *Association pour le Développement de la Région de Kaya* (ADRK) were examined, an NGO supported in particular by Cordaid, along with the Dutch embassy and several smaller donors. There live about 770.000 people in the area, which extends over three provinces (Bam, Namentenga and Sanmatenga). An ICCO partner was also studied, the *Office de Développement des Eglises Evangéliques* (ODE), but no fieldwork was undertaken on request of ICCO, in view of the fact that this ODE was in the process of an auto-evaluation and policy discussion. The study area in the Niger valley in North Mali is quite representative of the average situation in the north of the Sahel. There are NGOs active in North Mali supported by NOVIB, ICCO and Cordaid. Two NGOs were selected that are supported by the first two CFAs for practical reasons. An initial stocktaking suggested that the interventions by the NGO, SEAD (Sahel Etude Action pour le Développement), which is supported by Cordaid, do not differ appreciably from those of the other two. There was an examination of the interventions by ACORD, supported by NOVIB (as part of ACORD London) and by

<sup>3</sup> With average rainfall around 900 mm per year, with occasional years below 700 mm.

AMSS, supported by ICCO. ACORD covers a large area of six *cercles* (with some 50,000 inhabitants). In the past, this area was even larger. AMSS covers a limited area with 22 small villages (with around 9,200 inhabitants); ten years ago there were only seven villages involved.

The methodology adopted in the field was different from the 'usual' evaluation procedures. Not the activities of the NGO, but trends in the populations' capitals took central stage, and the impact of various interventions on these capitals was sorted out as far as possible. This latter was taken as the context with which the effects and impacts of the activities of the NGOs on these capitals were compared. These were also related to higher level trends in the social, economic and political national environment. Subsequently it was evaluated how the relationships between the various levels of actors in this process had contributed to or hampered the implementation of these activities. A series of methods were used to find data on these questions:

- The first was an 'inception workshop' (*atelier de démarrage*, or *atelier de lancement*). These were organised to discuss the poverty situation and the extent and character of interventions in the respective regions. It also gave a first idea about perceptions of impact. In Kaya, focussing on the Centre-Nord area of Burkina Faso, a three-day workshop with 27 participants was organised. Representatives of the NGOs evaluated, of other large NGOs, of government and donor-supported projects, of government services and of religious and social institutions were present (Belemvire *et al.* 2002, Touré 2002, Dietz *et al.* 2002). One workshop in Ghana with 35 participants focussed on both Bongo District and Garu sub-district. During two days, a very intensive discussion gave a wealth of information on the issues described above (Dietz *et al.* 2002). In Mali, a similar workshop was organised with 33 representatives of the villages studied, leaders of associations, NGOs, government services and local leaders (de Jong *et al.* 2002).
- Focus group discussions were organised with members of the various social groups in the respective villages. In Burkina Faso these villages were Tamiougou (between Ouagadougou and Kaya) and Damkarko II (north-east of Kaya). In Ghana these were Anafobisi and Balungu in Bongo District, and Tambalug and Kugsabile in Garu sub-district. In Mali these were Wana (Goundam, commune rurale de Doukiriya) and Er Intedeft (Timbuktu, commune rurale de Ber), both with traditionally nomadic Tamachek populations, and Sawbomo and Goussou Thirey (Goundam, commune rurale de Douekiré), both Songhai and 'Tamachek noir' villages.
- Discussions with key persons were organised to particularly obtain information about the history and recent developments within the NGO, between NGOs and their institutional context (the religious or otherwise groups or organisations with which they have close contact) and between NGOs and donor organisations. This was done both in the countries concerned and in the Netherlands.
- Interviews were organised with men, women and youth to obtain detailed data on the development of their capitals, the trends and crisis in these capitals and the influence of the various intervening organisations, among which the evaluated NGOs, in the development of these capitals in the direction of more diverse and more resilient capital stocks.
- Existing documentation was used on the regions and on the policies of the NGOs and CFAs, and on the activities and their success, as available.

- Self-evaluative reports were available, one by each of the evaluated organisations in Ghana and one by ADRK in Burkina Faso.

At the CFA level, data was also collected. This part of the research took place in the Netherlands. Methods were interviews with country officers and others on theory and practice of development assistance, and perceptions of criteria of the various levels in the aid-chain, including the lowest level of the participating population. Archival research and the study of general, sectoral and regional policy papers, and mission statements augmented this. In addition, discussions were organised with embassy staff to obtain the point of view of representatives of Dutch development aid in the respective countries. The perception here of aid given to NGOs, either directly or through DGIS funding and the CFA, was obtained.

#### *Difficulties experienced*

With a study of this kind, a number of specific problems may be expected to arise. Problems at the more general level of the study were how to measure impacts (the more fundamental processes of change and the contribution to increased incomes, resilience of the livelihood and well-being), and the discussion of attribution of this impact to the activities of the NGOs evaluated. These may perhaps never be solved satisfactorily. However, there is the peculiar tendency in the three countries to keep the areas of intervention of the NGOs apart. Most NGOs would not work in each others areas, or a village would opt to work with one NGO only, or people would opt to work with the NGO of their preferred denomination only. Particularly when a certain NGO has a spatial monopoly, it tends to provide many of the services that people need at the same time. In that case it can be stated with more trust that the effects and impacts in a certain locality can be attributed to this particular NGO.

### 3. Context of change in the Sahel, and perceptions of changes in capitals

#### *General trends*

The Sahel region has often been portrayed as a disaster area, based on the gruesome media coverage of the severe drought of first 1972-74 and later 1983-85. Talking about 'trends of change' it is of utmost important to be clear about the time perspective. Old inhabitants of the region tend to compare current situations with their memories of the period before the early 1970s. The 1950s and 1960s are remembered as periods of hope, of rapid change, of newly won Independence. With hindsight, it also was a period of exceptionally good rainfall. In addition, it was a period of growing access to an expanding world market for (some) agricultural products. People in their sixties were young during those promising years, and went through very severe droughts in the period between 1972 and 1986, when most of them had just formed new families. Many of them would regard their current situation as a (major) recovery from the 'bad years', but still 'not as good' as the image they have formed of the 1960s. For the vast majority of the current, overwhelmingly young, population the 1960s and even the 1970s are mainly or only known through the stories of their parents. If younger people are being asked about their ideas about long-term change in the area, most will compare their own current or recent situation with what they perceive as their parents' situation when these parents were as old as they are now. We will present a summarised combination of many personal stories about 'perceptions of change', for the research communities in Northern Ghana, the Kaya area in Burkina Faso and the Gao-Timbuktu area in Mali. We will start with our own summary of changes based on the scientific literature about the region.

#### *Climate, farming conditions, and economic diversification*

The rainfall situation in the Sahel region has improved considerably after 1986. Although long-term rainfall data show that the current rainfall situation is still worse than the situation before the early 1970s, the average rainfall amounts of the 1990s was 20-30% better than in the period 1972-1986 for most of the area. However: drought years still occur, agro-climatologists do observe a later start of the rainy season and more unreliable seasonal rainfall patterns, and biological changes that indicate a change to more arid conditions than in the 1950s. Part of those changes can probably be attributed to higher average temperatures, and hence higher rates of evapo-transpiration. Expectations are that further climate change will result in deteriorating agricultural conditions. However, until now, farmers did adapt to the situation of higher risks with remarkable stamina. Farmers nowadays seem much better prepared for eventual new periods of severe drought than they were in the 1960s. Farmers have also developed a range of soil and water conservation techniques and more diversified low-external input crop and livestock systems, incorporated in much more diverse and often multi-spatial livelihood systems. Next to economic diversification, arable land has also expanded and production intensified (part of it by irrigation), and food production and productivity indexes in all three countries have doubled since 1980. In some areas the livestock economy has also recovered from the droughts, and uses opportunities for commercialisation. In other areas (e.g. Northern Mali) the strong pressure on the *Tamachek* nomads to sedentarised, and diminishing opportunities for cheap labour through slavery, make the prospects for livestock expansion to the levels of the 1950s unrealistic. The high population growth levels, and the limited opportunities for investment, have caused a heavy pressure on land. This generally caused high levels of degradation of the natural environment, although there are signs that with the improving rainfall situation and the effect of many

development projects focussing on environmental rehabilitation, this trend seems to have reversed.

#### *Population growth and migration patterns*

The Sahel countries have experienced a very fast growth of population numbers due to one of the highest rates of natural population growth in the world: with annual growth rates during the last twenty years between 2.5 and 3.3% for Burkina Faso, Mali and Ghana. Since Independence the population more than doubled and the population is relatively young. The population has also become very mobile, with a 'culture of migration' as a self-evident part of life. Recently there are signs that also girls and young women adapt to a migrant's lifestyle. A large number of Burkinabé have gone to Ivory Coast (and recently come back, or gone to Ghana); many Northern Ghanaians work part of their lifetime in 'the South', and many Northern Malians have gone to the more promising areas in the Southwest and South of their country with as a consequence a much lower regional population growth rate. The change also entails a rather rapid urbanisation. However, this migration cannot be regarded as 'permanent', as many migrants still regularly return to their rural 'home lands', or want to resettle there during the second half of their lives.

#### *Cultural change*

The large fluidity of the population has resulted in complex spatial combinations of ethnic groups, and a rapid increase in the number of languages that people speak. The participation of children in formal education is still remarkably low, though, and the level of adult illiteracy for men and certainly for women is high. In many parts of the region rapid religious change takes place, with both (various types of) Christianity rapidly expanding in the South and Islam in many parts of the area. In some places 'identity clashes' take place, sometimes directly related to competition for resources, but often politically engineered. In Northern Mali problems of social exclusion and neglect did result in a disrupting civil war (the *Tamachek* rebellion) from 1990 till 1996.

#### *Democratisation and decentralisation*

Everywhere in the region the 1990s brought a change from autocratic political leadership to more open forms of governance, and democratic elections for political positions. The central state has accepted political pluriformity, decentralisation to lower levels of government, and the legitimacy of a range of non-governmental agencies, and of 'public-private partnerships'. Often the intentions (or formulations to please the donor community) still go beyond the actual practices.

#### *Economic growth*

In Ghana and Burkina Faso, and recently also in Mali, overall economic performance has strongly recovered from the years of economic contraction earlier. The World Bank now regards Ghana and Burkina Faso as countries where the average annual growth rate of private consumption per capita between 1980 and 1998 has been positive, although still low (0.4% for Burkina Faso, and 0.2% for Ghana), coupled with other signs of an improving quality of life, but still at very low average levels. With more than 20% under-five mortality rates the health situation is still appalling, and with 87% female adult illiteracy rates (as in Burkina Faso) one wonders about the effects of forty years of 'development'. The recent economic expansion in the growth centres of the countries (partly the urban centres, partly the areas of expanding commercial agriculture) did have a spread effect in the more remote parts of the country. It has created a growing demand for commercial crops from these regions (e.g. vegetables), for livestock, for charcoal and for non-agricultural produce.

### *Aid dependence*

Official development aid to the three research countries is still rather high (between 30 and 40 dollars per capita; between 10 and 15% of GNP, and a major part of available government finances). All three belong to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (with debts between 32% of GNP for Burkina Faso and 84% for Mali). Aid is much more important than foreign direct investment, and - in Burkina Faso - more important than merchandise exports. Development assistance now has many faces: occasional emergency aid, aid through multilateral agencies under Structural Adjustment packages, through a variety of bilateral donors and through numerous foreign private donor agencies. Some of the latter is related to (semi-) religious agencies, both from Christian and Islamic backgrounds, and some to secular development and environmental agencies and private firms.

### *Summary of perceived changes between the 1970s and 2002 in capitals: Northern Ghana (G), Burkina Faso (B) and Mali (M)*

In the focus group discussions in the research villages in Mali, Burkina Faso and Ghana people discussed their ideas about changes during the last thirty years. For the elderly people present it was possible to go back to their young years and to compare the current situation with regard to six main 'capitals' with the past. For younger participants we had to rely on their comparisons of their own current lives and the lives of their parents, around the 1970s. In the country-specific studies more details are given (and more differences between villages, men/women and age groups). In the annex, the summary is given. Here, we present the analysis of that summary.

### **Natural capital**

Positively perceived changes in Ghana are mostly related to better agricultural conditions and practices. More varied crops, irrigation, larger farm sizes, larger role of women, more trees all point at a process of intensification and stable agricultural conditions. Similar positive points are mentioned by people in Burkina Faso, but here the relation is with soil and water conservation, more animals, and more manure for fertility maintenance. In Mali, erosion control, manure availability, and regeneration of critical resources for grazing are prominent. These issues point at the positive effects of adaptive agricultural development policy in the various climate zones. Negatively perceived changes form a longer list. In Mali, the negatively perceived changes focus on the continuous decline of herds, degradation of the pastures, disappearing forests, and conflicts about resources. Water is scarce everywhere. In Burkina Faso, reduced tree cover is also mentioned, together with continued degradation of soils, and land scarcity in places. In Ghana, rainfall changes, river water availability, groundwater sources, land availability and reduction of useful tree species and forest in general are mentioned. The fact that some issues are mentioned in both lists means that either the position of the person is at stake (man/ woman, cultivator/pastoralist), or that there are improvements for some, but not for all people. In fact, both reasons applied in the field.

### **Physical (or produced) capital**

A true explosion of physical infrastructure has taken place in the past few decades. Positively perceived changes include the increased availability of water sources (dams, wells, boreholes, water pumps and irrigation facilities), roads, schools, clinics and markets. Subsequently, water for humans, animals, and cultivation is now increasingly available. This leads to irrigation, better watering of animals and above all, better human health. But also grinding mills, improved houses, social buildings and cereal banks/ grain stocks have appeared. Implements for agriculture are another more widely available resource. This applies for all

three countries. Negatively perceived changes however include above all the increased costs of maintenance, not only for the government (roads deteriorate, dams silt), but for farmers as well (inputs are costly and labour for maintenance becomes scarce). These problems occur more often in Mali than elsewhere.

### **Human capital**

This capital as well has seen a long list of positively perceived changes. Due to better water quality, better knowledge, and better nutrition, there is an increase of health, well being and labour availability. Infant mortality has gone down, and so has fertility. Still the population is growing, with as a result an increased availability of labour (!). Schooling has improved, training and education of the older population groups have led to lower ignorance and have opened up the villages to the world, and return migrants have introduced ideas. New activities slow down migration. The position of youth and women in the villages has improved according to themselves. In all three countries, these positive changes are systematically mentioned. The negative changes are again related to these positive changes in the sense that they imply higher costs, time for attendance, money for schooling, health care, modern amenities, and luxuries. Health problems previously ignored are now important; malaria (water related) and HIV/AIDS ('modern behaviour'-related) are increasing. Here again, maintenance (of reading skills, of independent behaviour by women) is a problem. This is more of a problem in Mali than in other countries.

### **Economic and financial capital**

Particularly in Ghana and Burkina Faso, the perceived trends are an increasing availability of jobs, industry, commercial agriculture, trade, and animal fattening. This applies to men and women. Credit facilities, rural banks, bank accounts are all increasingly available. Women particularly exploit the new opportunities, coming out of the margin of the earlier male-dominated economy. Negatively perceived changes are again partly a result of earlier success: there are conflicts with *Marabouts* about interest on loans, there is above all wealth differentiation, and the poorest hardly dare participate for fear of defaulting their loans.

### **Social-political capital**

Positively perceived changes are the enormously increased quality of organisation, and the networks that now link the population with the NGO, government, the press, political parties and religious organisations. Women in particular seem to play a different role, and this is positively perceived by many. However, particularly with this capital, the negatively perceived changes are also clear; dependence on the NGO, leadership problems, domination by the successful and newly rich, and increasing conflicts over social position (men-women, slave-lord) and resources increase, according to the people interviewed. This is bound to happen, as development itself is supposed to be a process of shifting power relationships. The hope is that it turns towards more democratic structures, but this may not always happen.

### **Cultural capital**

Here, obviously, the perceptions are very clearly linked to the position in society of the person one talks to. Positively perceived changes are towards more equal social status, more contacts with non-local people, more festivals, religion, urban ways, and above all, a revolution in the position of women. This is found in all three countries, though Ghana seems to experience more of the multi-ethnicity trend than the other countries. Negatively perceived changes are the decrease in many traditional beliefs, rules, social status quos, and taboos, and also the result of reduced pressure on people (more teenage pregnancies, more broken homes, and more 'bad behaviour'. These are perceptions, and in all three countries it is the men of status

who feel more strongly about these negatively perceived changes. A positive development from our western and local NGO perspective; the reduction of forced marriages and female excision, may still be perceived as negative development by these groups.

The impression from the above is that the first stage of development, the introduction of a whole range of new activities, ideas, infrastructure, etc, has been successful in many cases. Many of the above-mentioned positive trends have been initiated by the partner NGOs studied, especially in human and physical capitals, and attribution in this respect is not very difficult (see below). However, there seems to be a lack of positive feedback. A self-sustaining or self-propelling continuation or improvement of these effects and impacts, derived from increased income from the introduced innovations, is sometimes absent. Maintenance, keeping in good repair what has been achieved, is even a problem in those cases. Such a positive feedback only seems to come about when the type of activity, the type of organisational innovation and the change in attitude links up with positive external conditions, or improved opportunities. Thus, positive feedback is occurring around dams, along roads, and near markets. Similarly, it seems to be occurring during periods of economic liberalisation (fewer rules and less corruption), and political democratisation (less fear for control). This calls for a very careful context analysis by the population and the NGO before the interventions are done, or a less ambitious expectation of impacts when these opportunities are absent. It also calls for some form of cooperation with entities that can provide these external opportunities: the government or multilateral donors that can provide these infrastructures.

## 4 Relevance of NGO interventions in the Sahel

### *Local perceptions*

During the study in Ghana, a large group of representatives from Bongo District and from Garu sub-district were asked to name the ten most important interventions for combating poverty of the past 20 years. The five 'top scores' in terms of appreciation are given below for women and men in Garu and Bongo. The underlined programmes are those in which the NGOs that were studied have been active. At Garu, the main activities of PCG receive high appreciation, with the comment that both women and men consider the support given to (commercial) cattle breeding too limited in scope. At Bongo, where the Catholic NGO is active, it is notable that planting of trees, which is one of the main activities of the subject NGO, was mentioned by the women, but not by the men. In addition, various other activities of the Catholic NGO were not among those most highly appreciated. In this regard, the men noted that they would like to receive more support in developing water sources for commercial market gardening. However, in their eyes the NGO is too unresponsive. It wants to take a small-scale approach. Support for education was also wanted, but that is not part of this NGO's activities either.

<b>Garu women</b>	<b>Garu men</b>	<b>Bongo women</b>	<b>Bongo men</b>
1 <u>Credit facilities</u>	<u>Soil fertility management</u>	Support for girl education	School support
2 <u>Gender training</u>	<u>Credit</u>	Income generation	Health/nutrition education
3 <u>Livestock improvement</u>	<u>Empowerment</u>	<u>Tree planting</u>	Water and sanitation
4 Literacy programmes	<u>Livestock improvement</u>	Health and nutrition education	Credit
5 <u>Capacity building for access to banks</u>	<u>Dry-season (irrigated) gardening</u>	Literacy programmes	Dams and wells

It is clear that the activities of the NGO in Garu, PCG, are mostly in line with the preferences and needs of the local population. We will go further with this discussion when we discuss policy coherence of the various levels of actors in the these areas (as in Burkina Faso and Mali), but it is clear that as far as actual development of capitals is concerned, the DNB interventions are relatively irrelevant as far as the population is concerned.

A similar exercise was undertaken in the central northern region of Burkina Faso. There, several social groups in the subject villages were asked detailed questions concerning their preferences in terms of interventions. The following results were recorded in the most marginal village, Damkarko.

<b>Mossi</b>	<b>Fulbe</b>	<b>The Poorest</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Young People</b>
1 Health	Health	Health	Health	Health
2 <u>Infrastructure (roads, water, schools)</u>	Cattle development	<u>Grain banks</u>	Income-generating activities	Income-generating activities
3 Agro-rural development	<u>Social development</u>	Agro-rural development	<u>Social development</u>	
4 <u>Social and religious development</u>		<u>Social development</u>		

It should be noted here that recent health-care activities (national health care) would have fit in well with the needs, but had not yet penetrated this area. This also applies to cattle-breeding activities for FulBe members. Agro-rural development is not underlined because it does not receive direct support. This is done by financial (credit), physical (ploughs and other materials), human (training and expertise) and social capital (group education) development. This also applies to income-generating activities. Local leaders said that not everything they needed was dealt with – and what was done only came in the form of a *package deal*, via rather inflexible (credit) programmes. They expressed disappointment at what the NGO had been doing for them, and about the results of their work, though changes in the status quo in the village caused conflicts, which points at least at *some* impacts.

Activities in the other village were much more relevant in the sense that they had been offered to the village long enough to stimulate local development when conditions became favourable, after construction of the Kaya-Ouagadougou road. This shows the importance of a sufficiently long-time perspective (in this case, 30 years). Group education, acquisition of knowledge and agricultural techniques (ploughing, soil and water conservation), the introduction of physical capital (pumps), the accessibility of financial capital (credit) along with capital resources already possessed by the population (land, labour and water) led to a sort of *take-off* once the infrastructure there allowed it. The following table presents the priorities expressed by the *poorest* population.

<b>Mossi, poor men</b>	<b>Mossi, poor women</b>	<b>Mossi, poor youth</b>	<b>Fulbe, poor men</b>	<b>Fulbe, poor women</b>
<i>Priority of activities</i> Dispensary and pharmacy Road <u>Forage and wells</u> Dam <u>Savings and credit</u> <u>Livestock prod.</u> <i>Soil and water conservation</i> Pig rearing	<i>Priority of activities</i> <u>Agricultural equipment</u> <i>Livestock</i> <i>Savings and credit</i> Road <i>Forage and wells</i> Grain mill	<i>Priority of activities</i> Roads Dams <u>Forages and wells</u> Dispensary and pharmacy Youth meeting place <i>Savings and credit</i> <u>Livestock</u> <u>Agricultural equipment</u>	<i>Priority of activities</i> Dispensary and pharmacy Livestock facilities <u>Dams and wells</u> <i>Savings and credit</i> <u>Grain banks</u> School Roads	<i>Priority of activities</i> Road Grain mill <i>Livestock</i> Dispensary <u>Grain banks</u> <u>Savings and credit</u>

When the innovation proved to be profitable, private individuals also started to invest according to local spokespersons. Various technologies are now being used to produce for the market and for own consumption, such as gravity irrigation using traditional canals and modern PVC pipes, and pumped irrigation using individually or communally owned pumps. Apart from health services and large and expensive infrastructural investments, all the other priorities are covered by the NGO, and by the NGO alone. There are no other interventions in the village, apart from a small church building and the nearby well, funded by ODE. There is a feeling in this village that development in the Sahel is less of an *up-hill struggle* than has been the case in many previous periods or other villages.

Local organisations are extremely important in combating poverty in North Mali. They are capable of building confidential relationships with the inhabitants, essentially for approaching the poorer sections of the population. The question is, to what extent can one tackle this poverty structurally? Several expensive interventions are necessary that could increase

safeguards for subsistence as well as economic opportunities in the region. Included in these are control over the level of river water by means of a dam in the Niger downstream and a link with the rest of the country by means of an accessible road. When one talks about the neglect of the northern regions, one is talking about lack of investment in this kind of infrastructure. Individual NGOs are not in a position to contribute significantly to such large projects, but they could play a concerted role. On the other hand, the use of that road, with the limited number of inhabitants living in the north, may not justify the building of it. The priorities for the various groups in northern Mali are clearly different, as the table below shows. All the activities mentioned are undertaken by the NGOs in question (in addition to others). However, men and women in the villages differ in their appreciation of these activities: men referred first to activities that improved the agrarian production capacities, women referred first to activities that improved reproduction. The table refers to former mobile groups such as the Tamachek, which now live sedentary lives in this area. ACORD's activities get a slightly better assessment in this regard, by both the population and the local NGO sector. Their activities are the first ones mentioned, and the local inhabitants appreciate more of their activities.

<b>Men</b>		<b>Women</b>	
<b>ACORD</b>	<b>AMSS</b>	<b>ACORD</b>	<b>AMSS</b>
<b>Production</b>			
<u>Perimeter</u>	<u>Out-of-school education</u>	<u>Grain banks</u>	<u>More economical means of cooking</u>
<u>Water regulating works</u>	<u>Drinking water</u>	<u>Training of traditional midwives</u>	<u>Financial support</u>
<u>Village warehouse</u>	<u>Perimeter</u>	<u>Setting up savings and loan funds</u>	<u>Women's activities</u>
<u>Cattle stock loans</u>	<u>Water regulating works</u>	<u>Support to market gardening (motor pumps)</u>	<u>Latrines</u>
<u>Regeneration of pastures</u>	<u>Small loans</u>	<u>Digging canals</u>	<u>Water</u>
<u>Out-of-school education and counselling</u>	<u>Market gardening</u>	<u>Out-of-school education, eliminating illiteracy</u>	<u>Carts</u>
<u>Market gardening</u>	<u>Planting trees</u>	<u>Perimeter</u>	<u>Garden fencing</u>
<u>Planting trees</u>		<u>Support by building a conference hall</u>	<u>Out-of-school education for health-care workers</u>
		<u>Drinking water</u>	<u>Building a school</u>
<b>Peace and conflict</b>		<u>Planting trees</u>	<u>Setting up a management committee</u>
<u>Continued support during rebellion</u>		<u>Schooling in Management</u>	<u>Combating silting</u>
<u>Organising consultations between parties</u>		<u>Schooling in school administration</u>	<u>Building a health centre</u>
<b>Health care</b>		<u>Stock sheds</u>	<u>Contribution to teachers' salaries</u>
<u>Vaccinations</u>		<u>Regeneration of bourgoutières</u>	
<u>Village stocks of medicines</u>		<u>Schooling of health-care workers</u>	
<u>Staff training of health care for people and animals</u>			

#### *Perceptions and activities of the NGOs*

Of course, the relevance of activities is dependent on the point of view of the actor, and each actor, at every level, needs to assess the most urgent intervention, or the most promising and efficient ones for a structural improvement of the situation in a certain region. So, this assessment of relevance as was done above for the population should in principle be made for the NGO, CFA and the government as well, who all have legitimate rights to evaluate their own interpretation of the problems and their approach to resolving them. We will go further

on this issue when we discuss the policy coherence of the actors at the various levels. We would like to be more practical and close to the analysis of the populations' perceptions by presenting a short overview of the main activities of the NGOs, which we for the time being may present as the practical outcome of this assessment of priorities at NGO level. Obviously, practical impossibilities have also influenced these sets of activities. Funding may have been unavailable for certain preferred activities, as in some cases happens (also the donors, among which the studied CFAs have their sets of assessments and perceptions of needs. This is discussed in the chapter on policy coherence). For Ghana, and in a general sense for the other church-related NGOs studied, the following remark is necessary. Though the DDO of the DNB is the development office of the church, it does not handle all the development relevant activities on its own. This is another reason why an assessment of needs may not lead to activity at the NGO: the need is already addressed by other organisations, including the government. In addition, some activities implemented by the NGO studied were not fully or wholly funded by the CFA studied. This means that even when the activity was necessary and successful, the CFA may have nothing to do with the implementation or the success. Fortunately in this sense (there are disadvantages as well, as we will see, see chapter 8), most NGOs studied depend for the largest part on funding by the CFA. We have added this information as far as available to enable a more integral understanding of priorities-activities relationships.

### Ghana

Level of activities	DDO-DNB	PCG
Staff/ NGO support level	- Capacity building of staff of DDO itself since 1991. Parish Development Committees, 145.000 € 2001-2003	- Capacity building (training, M&E and Gender courses).
Local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education (not DDO: school rehab., ended 1999. also school feeding program , not DDO but through CRS</li> <li>- Feeding needy, not DDO, via parishes</li> <li>- Health program: (DDO, but not CFA support) 2 large health centres, six clinics, PHC projects, HIV/AIDS activities.</li> <li>- Integrated village development programme: dam construction, but funded by Felix BE.</li> <li>- Northern Ghana Food Security % agro-enterprise devt. (DDO, but funded by USAID through CRS.</li> <li>- Agricultural Programme (DDO, first funded by Cordaid, now response lacking, 150.000€ 1997-99)</li> <li>- BAFP (DDO and Cordaid funding).</li> <li>- Gender &amp; Devt. Programme (DDO, Cordaid, 170.000€ 1999-2001</li> </ul>	<p>(partly more church based, partly developmental work)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- evangelism</li> <li>- literacy/ education (with Govt funding) kindergartens, primary schools, junior secondary and started senior secondary. (Tamale). One basic school in Garu, non in Bongo)</li> <li>- lay leadership</li> <li>- vocational training</li> <li>- community based rehabilitation</li> <li>- health care (funding from ICCI and other donors, government funding (salaries) through CHAG. Bawku hospital, mobile clinics and Primary healthcare.</li> <li>- agricultural stations/ projects. Of 7, 4 are in north Ghana. Funded by ICCO, 2,4 mln € Technology development</li> </ul>
Regional/ national level	- no activities at higher levels than coordination at District level.	- many higher level activities, policy makers church based, ACDEP think tanks, research institutes and government agencies, Int. donors and multi-lateral agencies.

A similar exercise was done for the NGO in Burkina Faso, ADRK. Here, the attribution problem of activities and donor involvement is even less of a problem as most of the budget of ADRK came from Cordaid and its predecessors, and some from the Dutch embassy (but this only recently). The following table is derived. The same does not apply to ODE, as it has many donors, some of equal importance for certain activities as ICCO.

### Burkina Faso

Level of activities	ADRK	ODE
Staff/ NGO support level	- staff development, training	- staff development and institutional assistance
Local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- group formation and education, literacy and training, gender training, accountancy</li> <li>- credit and saving</li> <li>- productive material (ploughs, carts, pumps)</li> <li>- soil and water conservation techniques, fertility (compost)</li> <li>- small enterprise development/ women's activities</li> <li>- small livestock fattening</li> <li>- small roads</li> <li>- water facilities</li> <li>- recently: popular health insurance system</li> <li>- cereal banks</li> <li>- food aid distribution (Dutch embassy funding)</li> <li>- grain variety testing (Agriterria funding)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- small projects related to churches: schools, health centres, churches, water facilities</li> <li>- market gardening, agricultural technology development</li> <li>activities around dams, en dam building, crop and harvest protection (ICCO financing, other donors BfdW, and some smaller)</li> <li>- group formation, training, problem definition and consciousness</li> <li>- cereal banks (with BfdW)</li> <li>- carts, other materials</li> <li>- soil fertility</li> <li>- anti-erosion in-field and gully</li> <li>- health education and staff, vaccination</li> <li>- credit</li> <li>- schools and education</li> </ul>
Regional/ national level	- various national bodies, international west African fora of development, gender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- very active in various national fora, church based networks.</li> <li>- special activities to coordinate work with other intervention organisations</li> </ul>

Clearly, there is a common approach and similar activities chosen by both these organisations, while the NGOs in Ghana, as far as the activities in these sectors are concerned have likewise chosen to focus on these sectors and activities. Under conditions of poverty such as exist in the Sahel, at least in the initial phase, a common approach can be found among all these intervention agencies. This is strengthened through the coordination and communications in national NGO for a, where experiences are exchanged, and development policy and practice discussed.

In Mali, we see much the same happening, though there, the consequences of the recent violence and uprising are also subject of attention of the NGOs. In addition, the limited possibilities and the characteristics of the natural environment, with the river and its related lowlands as the main resource, influence the activities of the NGOs here. Here even more than in the other cases, the studied CFAs have a dominant position in funding.

## Mali

Level of activities	ACORD	AMSS
Staff/ NGO support level	Staff development	
Local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Grain banks</li> <li>-Training of traditional midwives</li> <li>-Setting up savings and loan funds</li> <li>-Support to market gardening (motor pumps)</li> <li>-Digging canals</li> <li>-Out-of-school education</li> <li>-Perimeters (irrigation)</li> <li>-Drinking water</li> <li>-Planting trees</li> <li>-Schooling in management, administration, health care</li> <li>-Cereal banks</li> <li>-Regeneration of bourgoutières (inundated grazing lands)</li> <li>-Market gardening</li> <li>-Stock loans</li> <li>-Organising consultations between conflicting parties and villages</li> <li>-Vaccinations</li> <li>-Village stocks of medicines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Improved stoves</li> <li>-Financial support Women's activities</li> <li>-Latrines</li> <li>-Water development</li> <li>-Carts</li> <li>-Garden fencing</li> <li>-Out-of-school education for health-care workers</li> <li>-Building a school</li> <li>-Combating silting of dams and lakes</li> <li>-Health centre</li> <li>-Contribution to teachers' salaries</li> <li>-Small loans and credit schemes</li> <li>-Market gardening</li> <li>-Planting trees</li> </ul>
Regional/ national level	- Training courses	- National and international level policy discussions and fora

Here again, many of the activities are quite generally adopted by the NGOs in the Sahel, though some are geared towards localised possibilities such as market gardening where water is available, and the regeneration of grazing lands along rivers. In addition, there is more attention to livestock in Mali (relative to the other NGOs studied), and migration, though not part of the policy or set of activities, is an issue that is accepted by the NGO.

## 5. Results of NGO interventions in the Sahel

We have discussed the scientific ‘objective’ trends and the locally perceived ‘subjective’ trends in chapter 3, and the relevance of activities of NGOs on the basis of their own priorities and of those of the population in chapter 4. We can now put into perspective the results of the activities obtained. These results are often very difficult to measure, and most often the data obtained are of an ordinal level and in the form of dummy variables: a certain variable may have improved for this particular person or household or not. However, that is of no consequence if the improvement can be traced to the interventions studied. Only in the case of Ghana has it been possible to implement the methodology fully, to the level that for adequate numbers of men, women and youth, the change of capitals has been systematically traced. It shows two things. First, it shows that if the methodology designed is fully implemented, it can be effective for a study of this kind. Second, this methodology means that the labour input necessary for this type of result is enormous. This labour input has only been possible in Ghana where more people have been able to participate in the implementation of the study than elsewhere.

### *Effects and impact at target group level in Ghana*

The NGOs receiving support emphatically choose the most problematical areas in terms of poverty, making no further distinctions in these intervention areas between the relatively wealthy and the relatively poor (Dietz *et al* 2002). Via the churches there is some insight into the most grinding cases within the religious community – older widows that get little support from their children, abandoned women with small children – for which there are specific ‘caritas-like’ support facilities. However, wherever possible, they try to organise the villagers as a whole and, in doing so, also include the more enterprising farmers and traders. One frequently hears that, in effect, everyone in this area is poor. When questioned further, it appears that a distinction can be made. There is agreement with the idea that ‘the poor are invisible’, and that this is an obstacle to poverty reduction activities. PCG has an additional participants’ profile because there is an implicit commitment to a Protestant identity. In practice, this makes it slightly more problematic to reach the Muslim population, which seems to figure among the poorer sections of the population as well, and particularly to reach Muslim immigrant groups. At ‘*compound*’ level, the latter are not poorer, but there are generally more people in each communal unit. This means that the per-capita figures will probably be lower. Their lower school attendance is an obstacle to integration and improvement of their livelihoods, although the education level in the villages is low in general. The last ten years the Presbyterian Agricultural Station in Garu has succeeded to form groups with mixed identities, though.

Within the subject villages, the NGOs and their activities are prominently present – or were so in the recent past (at village level, both NGOs have a strategy of entry-consolidation-phasing out, which is strictly followed and takes approximately six years). NGOs often have (or would like to have) absolute control in ‘their’ villages, to prevent other NGOs from taking up activities there. It seems as though the entire north of Ghana is covered with a patchwork of NGO intervention areas, in which the nature and prominence of the ‘input’ and the ‘approach’ is very dependent on the NGO that a particular village deals with<sup>4</sup>. In all villages there is some government presence, especially that of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, and there

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<sup>4</sup> Though we have seen that the differences are in the details, as many of the NGOs are active in similar and quite relevant sectors, with similar types of activities.

are some schools (education is free) although not well attended. In the area of health care, the situation is relatively favourable. Government and church combine their involvement and recently a coherent system was developed. In fact, the villages of North Ghana are not part of the 'government-free' area of Africa. The actual work done by civil servants in the villages is however closely related to the links they have with the NGOs ('the government provides the expertise; the NGO provides the petrol and the *night-out allowances*'). With the agricultural programmes of PCG, there is an equally important role of both government services and NGO. In several village areas that are part of large development programmes by international agencies (such as IFAD), the scale of NGO intervention appears as relatively small.

Where PCG is (was) active, many interventions have occurred in all kinds of areas, with impressive carry-over.

- Fifteen years ago, the Garu region was one of the most decrepit areas of North Ghana, having been hard hit by the Sahel drought. There are indications that there have been significant changes, many of which are seen by the population as substantial improvements.
- In agriculture (where many PCG interventions take or took place), there has been a breakthrough in pig farms and in irrigated (dry-season) market gardening. There have been improvements in farm management and in the quality of the environment. There has also been a visible rise in prosperity. Although productivity of local grain production is not increasing significantly and is seen as a continuing worry, it is no longer so important as safeguard for livelihood and food in this area. Income is high enough (along with support from *remittances* from the many labour migrants who work in the south of Ghana) to supplement food shortages with food produced elsewhere (especially from central Ghana, where many northerners have migrated).
- At the PCG villages we discovered several remarkable, long-lasting, small-scale relationships between Protestant religious groups and individuals in the Netherlands and 'adopted' village projects. These arose from Dutch people who had been development aid workers in the past, or had been active as ministers. These relationships were autonomous, so much so that the current PCG leadership was amazed to hear about the importance of these linkages. The support is significant and has certainly not done any damage to the village and several individuals. This is the result of 'personal development aid' or 'development aid with a human face', which has been received locally with even greater enthusiasm than the more structural support from the NGO: '*This is real friendship*'. In the Catholic villages there was similar support from Germany, but not from the Netherlands. Neither Cordaid, nor the Diocese or the project has any policy in this regard.

The visible 'impact' of the activities of the Catholic Church's Bongo Agro Forestry Programme (BAFP) is impressive.

- Compared to the situation in 1982, there is much more greenery in the area, with many more trees around. Many farmers are now using various sustainable agricultural techniques. It should be noted, however, that the situation regarding rainfall is much better now than during the first half of the 1980s (average rainfall during the 1990s was 20-30% better than during the 1980s). Environmental reconstruction has therefore been facilitated by better environmental conditions, and there is some question as to whether the improvements can be attributed to the activities of the NGO. another question is whether this environmental reconstruction translated into greater prosperity, or whether it prevented a bad situation from getting worse. The Bongo area seems more traditional in all respects than the area around Garu with the exception of

children's education, making a break-through by the NGO difficult. The fact that this NGO decided to concentrate on the environmental sector (or was forced to by the donor?) prevents it to function as a kind of catalyst of 'local development' in various domains. The villages where this NGO is active had not received any attention other than environmental support. In villages where the inhabitants believe there is much more to be done, this is a major problem.

- In recent years much attention has been given to organising women. According to the women and men, that has resulted in more independence for women and in a cultural revolution in the way that men and women deal with one another now in public meetings.

Thanks to the dedicated and systematic work of the Ghana research team, we can formulate quantitative conclusions about the impact of BAFP and PCG (PAS) activities and about the differences in impact between rich, medium and poor households. We will compare the four villages.

First we will look at the wealth (or better: poverty) profiles. In each of the four research village 12 husbands and one of their wives could get plus or minus scores on 46 wealth indicators (Dietz *et al* 2002, ch 6 and 7). Per village the maximum number of scores would be  $12 \times 46 = 552$ . Looking at these scores, we can conclude that the Garu area in general is wealthier than the Bongo area (Kugsabilla and Tambalug: 236 and 249 points respectively versus Anafobisi and Balungu: 263 and 200 points respectively). However, it is clear that the village with the highest wealth score is in Bongo (and it is the most isolated village, where BAFP started rather late: Balungu). On the other extreme, the village with the lowest wealth score can also be found in Bongo: Anafobisi, an area that was selected as an early intervention village because of its poverty. It is interesting to note that also in Garu, PAS first became active in Kugsabilla, a village that (still) has a more pronounced poverty profile than the second village, Tambalug. What is also clear is the difference in wealth levels in each of the villages between the husbands and their wives, although some break-through situations in women's wealth can be seen as well. According to the people interviewed, on many wealth indicators the situation now is (much) better than ten years ago and certainly compared to twenty years ago. The findings are presented in the annex (Annex 4).

The differences between relatively rich and relatively poor are most pronounced in Tambalug and Anafobisi and least pronounced in Balungu. In all four villages the beneficiaries have more assets than the non-beneficiaries, but differences are rather small. See next table.

**Total wealth scores for Bongo (Anafobisi and Balungu) and Garu (Kugsabilla and Tambalug).**

*Anafobisi*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
Beneficiaries	49	38	26	113	188
Non-Beneficiaries	38	30	19	87	200
All	87	68	45	200	193
Index B/N	129	127	137	130	

*Balungu*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
Beneficiaries	62	50	31	143	200
Non-Beneficiaries	45	39	36	120	125
All	107	89	67	263	160
Index B/N	138	128	86	119	

*Kugsabilla*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
Beneficiaries	51	50	29	130	176
Non-Beneficiaries	50	31	25	106	200
All	101	81	54	236	187
Index B/N	100	162	116	123	

*Tambalug*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
Beneficiaries	54	51	34	139	159
Non-Beneficiaries	49	44	17	110	288
All	103	95	51	249	202
Index B/N	110	116	200	126	

We will now look at the results of the impact study of the activities of the Catholic Diocese of Navrongo/Bolgatanga and their Bongo Agro-Forestry Programme (BAFP) and of the activities of the PCG and their Presbyterian Agricultural Station in Garu. We have based it on a large number of performance indicators, close to the indicators of change the NGOs had (and have) chosen as targets. We can see rather impressive results in all villages. A large number of changes could be noted in the direction the NGOs stimulated, both for men and for women, and with women often in the lead. This is true for all four villages. If we compare the direct beneficiary households (members of BAFP and PCG groups respectively) with those who have been more at a distance (and called 'non-beneficiaries' in the comparison), we can conclude that in the Garu area, there is a considerable difference between the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, even more so in Tambalug than in Kugsabilla. The differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in the Bongo area are less outspoken, and higher in Anafobisi than in Balungu. See next table.

**Impact of interventions: BAFP or PAS beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and wealth categories; scores on selected indicators**

*Anafobisi*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
beneficiaries	97	94	90	281	108
non-beneficiaries	69	69	57	195	121
Total	166	163	147	476	113
index B/N	141	136	158	144	

*Balungu*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
beneficiaries	111	104	77	292	144
non-beneficiaries	99	57	90	246	110
Total	210	161	167	538	126 (R/M 130)
index (B/N)	112	182	86	119	

*Kugsabilla*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
beneficiaries	107	113	72	292	149 (M/P 157)
non-beneficiaries	59	53	42	154	140
Total	166	166	114	446	146
Index B/N	181	213	171	190	

*Tambalug*

	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Index R/P</i>
Beneficiaries	97	107	82	286	118 (M/P 130)
Non-beneficiaries	56	55	30	141	187
Total	153	162	112	427	137 (M/P 145)
	173	195	273	203	

The rich survey material allows us to say something about the differences between the changes in five domains of capabilities. We have left out the cultural domain here, because the study about cultural changes was more qualitative. Still we can say that both the Bongo and the Garu area are in a process of gradual (and the last five years rather fast) change towards Christianity (and in Garu also new conversions to Islam). The women and the youth lead here; many husbands seem to be rather reluctant, and some elders do complain about the impact of these cultural changes.

The biggest differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries can be noted in the domain of human capabilities (mainly all types of training experience), which can be regarded as core business of the two NGOs. In the Bongo area the differences are far less than in the Garu area, though. The Catholic approach is more inclusive, so it seems, than the Presbyterian approach, which illustrates an earlier observation from inception workshop and focus groups: BAFP' approach is broad, but more shallow; PCG's approach is concentrated, but deep. The second domain in which beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries differ considerably is in the sphere of social capitals (both in Anafobisi and in Kugsabilla). In the other two villages it is in the economic domain (in Tambalug and in Balungu). In natural capitals, the major focus of both NGOs, there is only a slight difference between BAFP and PAS members and non-members respectively (although always positive). Differences in the Garu area are more

outspoken, though, than in the Bongo area. Looking at the scores on the natural capital indicators, we cannot escape the conclusion that many changes in natural management have been stimulated by the presence of BAFP and PCG respectively in the village, and by the examples given by the member households to others. The sequential analysis of the survey households also shows the important catalytic function the two agencies have played. See next table for data on the capitals.

**Index figures for rich, medium and poor households showing performance differences between PAS and non-PAS households between capitals.**

Anafobisi.

<i>Capitals</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Natural	111	100	<b>125</b>	111
Physical	89	<b>143</b>	86	104
Human	188	467	<b>800</b>	346
Social	275	160	<b>333</b>	242
Economic	<b>210</b>	153	138	163
Total	141	136	<b>158</b>	144

Balungu

<i>Capitals</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Natural	109	<b>171</b>	73	111
Physical	71	<b>83</b>	50	68
Human	136	<b>450</b>	100	164
Social	130	<b>240</b>	80	121
Economic	111	145	<b>162</b>	136
Total	112	<b>182</b>	86	119

Kugsabilla

<i>Capitals</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Natural	113	<b>139</b>	123	126
Physical	133	150	<b>300</b>	167
Human	460	<b>2000</b>	550	675
Social	280	<b>1200</b>	400	375
Economic	214	<b>215</b>	200	210
Total	181	<b>213</b>	171	190

Tambalug

<i>Capitals</i>	<i>Rich</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Total</i>
Natural	143	148	<b>250</b>	165
Physical	200	133	<b>250</b>	186
Human	<b>1500</b>	750	1300	1075
Social	175	83	<b>300</b>	136
Economic	150	<b>309</b>	210	217
Total	173	195	<b>273</b>	203

Finally, we can give some conclusions about the differences between rich, medium and poor households in the capital changes. In two villages, Balungu and Kugsabilla, the medium-level households show the largest differences between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and in almost all capitals. In these two villages, for households who are currently in between rich and

poor, belonging to the NGO mattered most. In both villages, the poor show the lowest difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries; the poor in Balungu even show an inverse relationship: the non-beneficiaries have performed better than the beneficiaries. However, in the two other villages, Anafobisi and Tambalug, the biggest difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries can be observed among the poor households, and in almost all capitals. Here, for the poor it really mattered to be close to the NGO. In Anafobisi the relatively rich households follow; in Tambalug they show the lowest difference between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. So: we cannot conclude that the NGOs are more successful among the poor than among the rich, or the other way around. BAFP as well as PCG have a village in which the poor benefited most in relative terms; but they also both have a village in which the poor show a smaller benefit than the rich between members and non-members. However, concluding, the changes observed in all villages, among all wealth categories, and among beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries have been quite impressive. For an area that was virtually 'written off' after the dramatic drought of the early 1980s, the NGOs did play a major role in being a catalyst of change, and in making it possible for the people of Garu and a bit less in Bongo to participate in the opportunities the environment offered in Ghana and beyond.

#### *Effects and impact at target group levels in Burkina Faso*

The fact that we have not done any research at the level of ODE's target groups<sup>5</sup> makes it difficult to assess the effects and impact of ODE's activities. The results as reported by the NGO are helpful however. ODE's monitoring and assessment activities in the latest reports contained many and systematically presented details. The reports focus on the actual effects and especially on the impacts, and include verbatim reported interviews (for example ODE 2002, but all these reports follow the same format and include detailed information following a well established log frame). This information is of course one-sided and, for us, unverifiable. What we did encounter in the field, however, would seem to support the idea that the decision by ODE to more coherently locate their activities in a specific region was a wise one. Early in the 1990s, ODE made a conscious decision to concentrate its activities specifically in several departments involving integrated rural development activities. The region chosen in 1990 for the integrated rural development programme was indeed marginal in a spatial and social sense. In addition, there was funding of activities around large flood-control dams, along with a multitude of small-scale activities throughout the country, which ODE as the national development office of FEME could not avoid. Though we did not visit the areas where most of ODE's activities take place, some projects were encountered when the fieldwork with ADRK took place. In several villages we did find effects (infrastructure), but little impact (everything was small-scale, seldom directed towards combating poverty, even though favourably received by the local inhabitants). While these specific small-scale activities were appreciated, they had no effect on speeding up local development. As funding is not directly from ICCO, these activities are not specifically part of this evaluation. On the basis of the monitoring and evaluation reports by ODE, results of the various (ICCO-sponsored) programmes (the regional development programme and the flood-control dams with their surrounding activities in particular) have been positive to the local population. They are appreciated and seem to have considerable positive effects in terms of higher production and income. In addition, the impact, in terms of diversification of the rural economy, the higher levels of spending on education and health by the population itself, and levels of well

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<sup>5</sup> This was done at the request of ICCO, which considered it not opportune to involve ODE in this type of research at the moment when ODE was itself in a process of redefining positions, policies and approaches, and the organisational structure of ODE itself.

being in general, seem to have been positive, and are sustainable, based on environmental, social/ institutional and economic criteria.

As stated, ADRK is active in a highly marginal region. They do not specifically target the poorest inhabitants of this region, but started out as targeting those who originally owned the land. The goal was to work the land using animal traction to improve food production. This is a traditional sector of the economy, and the activities later became more diversified. However, the approach, the formation of groups responsible for training, credit and self-organisation, remained the same, as with many other NGOs in this region.

The amelioration of the food situation through increasing productivity of *natural capital* and *human capital* (land and labour through the introduction of animal traction) was the earliest activity of ADRK. This has continued to be one of the main activities, through organisation of the population in groups, and the provision of credit. Later, soil and water conservation and fertility measures were necessary. 3000 hectares of land have been rehabilitated, 1500 metres of permeable dams have been built, and many people trained (77 people as staff, of which 1 woman, and 633 'innovative farmers', of which 56 women). The results have been measurable, and appreciated. Studies show that crop yields have improved using these techniques (Rochette 1989, IFAD 1992, Tiffen *et al* 1994, Reij *et al* 1996). In the intervention region, studies have shown that yields have gone up, and incomes have increased (Broekhuysen 1985, Zaal *et al* 1991). Of course, the improved rainfall situation generally has helped in improving yields and production since the early 1990s. On the other hand, there have been years with very bad rainfall as well, and none of the spokespersons and members of the population have mentioned this improved rainfall. The better yields may therefore truly be caused by improved technology application. As the NGO is active in villages where other similar NGOs are not, this success is attributable to the activities of this NGO. We will present some information on the capitals available in two villages; Damkarko, a remote village north of Kaya (the capital of the region), and Tamiougou, a well-connected village south of Kaya.

- Targeting the poorest: economic capital

A large package of activities is offered to the members, of which credit, the purchase of equipment (for men mostly) and small scale economic activities are closely intertwined. Some services are available to all, such as water facilities. At ADRK the whole group is responsible for repaying the credit. The positive effect of this for the NGO is an almost 100% payback rate. ADRK is the only surviving NGO providing these services in the Sahel after the drought in the 1970s. The price paid for this success is social exclusion of the very poorest of certain activities. The poor often cannot or do not dare to participate. On the one hand, they do not own any land on which to experiment (or they are not allowed to by the owner). On the other hand, they often do not dare participate because taking out a loan involves risks, and not being able to repay it entails renewed humiliation. This is particularly the case in the poorest, most marginal village we studied<sup>6</sup>. There, opinion about the relevance, effect and impact of the NGO was less favourable than in other, economically better-integrated regions, where the effects were mainly perceived as positive. Most of the FulBe, the cattle breeders in this region, do not participate at all (or, when they do, only in small, isolated groups), since they are considered unreliable group-members because of their (supposed) mobility. There is a fear that they will leave after having been granted a loan – even though, qua lifestyle, they are fully integrated in the sedentary Mossi community. As credit provision is based on the local

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<sup>6</sup> In that regard, the choice of a spatially marginal and a more integrated village was the right one.

savings and loan group, and the group is responsible for repayment on punishment of being excluded from new credits, the group is very careful whom they admit in their ranks. A similar reluctance of the poorest was mentioned when we talked about the cereal banks. Refunding of the cereal loan taken out is against quite strict conditions, and the poor hesitate to commit themselves. Generally, the interest rates at ADRK are higher than with the local rural banks (*'Caisse Populaire'*), partly probably because of high overhead costs. If we look at the broader context, similar credit, equipment provision and related services are offered by other projects and NGOs, while the situation generally is such that local banks (the *'Caisses Populaires'*) can be found in most urban centres. The latter, though having lower interest rates, have payback rules less adequate for small-scale producers, and interestingly, the projects and other NGOs have either stopped the combined credit-equipment-services package because of non-repayment (Plan International/ Sanmatenga (PI/S) for example), or have handed over their credit-equipment component to ADRK (the Dutch government funded PEDI project).

Of course, the fact that the context provides a significant additional stimulus also applies to Burkina Faso. Productivity in the rural regions has increased everywhere in Burkina Faso, due to innovations, better rainfall and economic and political-social liberalisation. Still, contrary to other villages and intervention areas, the difference in effects and impacts between the two villages and between wealth groups shows that, if the context is favourable, ADRK's intervention can have a favourable effect. It seems to have stimulated both farming for those who have land, and many other sectors for most other groups of people. For the irrigation areas around the dams, there is even a suggestion that one of the aims is to keep young people in the area and assist the many migrants returning from Cote d'Ivoire. The tremendously inferior social position of women has improved considerably because of ADRK's intervention, culturally, organisationally and economically. The poor have perhaps not benefited as far as agricultural development is concerned, the water situation, including better health, small economic activities and education have been accessible for them as well. There is little government attention for the same capitals brought in by ADRK and other NGOs. Nevertheless, it is difficult to determine whether these activities have resulted in higher productivity and greater prosperity, although measurements have shown that food production per capita virtually doubled with the new animal traction technology and that there was an increase in acreage (Zaal *et al* 1991). Other ADRK services and activities seem to bring greater prosperity as well, and as the introduction in any village is monopolised by the NGOs, their success can be attributed to those NGOs, in this case ADRK.

- human capital; Gender and involvement of women

Women only joined in large numbers after credit facilities had been approved for non-agricultural activities, and following the introduction of a pro-active incentive policy with support (coercion?) by the donors, assisted by SNV volunteers. The women programme of ADRK is now very well organised and very effective in the intake of women into the organisation, along with modifying and setting up activities for women. Women now form a third of the membership. The process shows the interesting dilemma of whether a new attitude may be forced upon the population, but also on the NGO, which would probably not have developed (or developed much later) a gender policy of its own had it not been forced to do so. In this instance, the results were quite good. The most successful activities are small credits and remunerative activities with those credits (such as fattening of small ruminants). The latter activity is also interesting for the youth, who have very little of interest to find in ADRK. Training, education and group formation including responsibilities within the group (chairwoman, accountancy, spokeswoman for various fora), and knowledge of health issues, family planning, etc, have improved the position of women in the households and their self-image. This is in sharp contrast to the more 'traditional' households and villages where these

influences are less direct. Even in remote Damkarko, though a 'ADRK-village', the position of women is still relatively traditional, and discussions about forced marriages and female circumcision are still raging. Though the improvement of the position of women in ADRK groups can be attributed to the influence of the NGO, they follow trends in other areas of the country, and thus help in extending a new culture that exists in the capital and all other bigger cities, but that is slow to infiltrate in the more remote rural areas.

Interestingly, human capital has not only improved through the direct means of education and training to men and women, but also, and more 'democratically' by way of improved water facilities. This has led to higher quality water, fewer water borne diseases, and better health. This in turn led to better labour availability, well-being, and lower expenditures on medicines, which had become extremely expensive because of the devaluation.

Education and training for the implementation of ADRK's activity has led to about 3900 people having been trained as accountant, chairperson, controller, trainer or committee member, of which about one third is female.

- Ethnicity and religion: changing social capital

Social organisation is the basis of ADRK. All activities are implemented through it. Social organisation across ethnic boundaries is clearly more difficult than across religious boundaries. The ADRK membership includes Protestants, Catholics, Muslims and traditional animists. The village groups control the activities. Not everyone in the village is a member of these groups. Enlistment is voluntary. There is expressly no entry-consolidation-phasing-out strategy within ADRK; ideally everyone continues to be a member. Its membership has now grown to more than 13,000 in number<sup>7</sup>. Wherever the organisation is present, there is a clear group atmosphere – a local organisation that is accountable and a means of communication with the outside world. In principle, this group approach also enables other NGOs to be active in villages, though most NGOs expressly avoid activities at the same level of intensity in 'each other's' villages. The inhabitants that encounter this explain it (and probably rightly so) as an avoidance of competition for services, and therefore membership. Nevertheless, the membership continues to increase, despite investments in time and money required and despite occasional, alternative funding channels (rural banks, other projects).

- Physical capitals: the use of water facilities

Many forms of physical capital have been developed. At the private level, about 6500 ploughs, 2000 carts, 5000 donkeys and 4300 oxen have been sold on favourable terms to the farmers, who use credit for this. But apart from this, 10 water holding dams, 30 bore holes, 68 women's workshops, schools, health clinics, and houses for teachers have been built, 100 cereal banks, and 70 km of rural roads. Innumerable wells have been dug, probably in the hundreds. As far as we were able to gather from the interviews, the results of water development in terms of market gardening around dams and water points, provision of drinking water for humans and animals, and health improvements through higher quality water are considerable. This applies especially when ADRK's intervention made it possible to utilise formerly unused capital resources (land, water, labour, expertise, social organisation). In the most accessible village, intervention regarding a dam resulted in irrigation farming and high (market) production. This attracted traders from Ghana and Togo and yielded good returns. Water provision has improved dramatically with the building of wells for cattle and integrated farming, and 'forages' for drinking water. Enormous improvement has taken place in the health situation through better drinking-water facilities and better nutrition<sup>8</sup>. In the

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<sup>7</sup> When ADRK started, the original aim was 200 members. With a *concession* size of 10 members, some 130,000 people are now being reached, or 17 percent of the population in the Diocese, which is impressive on any account.

<sup>8</sup> The estimate shows an improvement between 50 and 100 percent of food production. Depending on well being, this would provide between six months and one year of reasonably adequate nutrition. The

marginal village, too, there is improvement in the health situation, through better drinking water, better nutrition and public information about preventing illnesses and family planning. Still, the results show less of a take-off phase than a general improvement in a basic level of health, via a development process that is not particularly systematic. The context here is very important. We have the impression that the NGO, though it ultimately appreciated the market gardening opportunities this context provided and acted upon it by offering pumps, new agricultural technology etc., it was more a reaction to a locally expressed requests than a clear policy to use these opportunities. The devaluation of the CFA has also helped the export of crops such as are produced by the farmers groups. Government policy has recently been geared towards aiding the establishment of marketing channels, and this again has helped farmers in exporting their produce. ADRK *has* been very aware of this policy change and has been keen to exploit this possibility, although it came at a very recent date.

- Control over the NGO: a special form of social capital

ADRK is the only farmers' association in the set of NGOs that were evaluated, the other NGOs are mostly intermediary in character. The process towards self-sufficiency has always been one of the ultimate goals of ADRK. One problem, however, is that the NGO is not very flexible, in the sense that it depends heavily on an dryland development strategy and activities. As a result, there is often emphasis on an activity (soil and water conservation) or on related supporting activities (training) instead of on the aim for which the activities were undertaken (higher sustainable production of food) which can also be brought about with other capital resources, or even on alternatives for *dryland* cultivation (irrigation, market gardening and raising animals for slaughter). There are no alternative ways to reach this aim within the NGO's set of rules. If people bend these rules, people do so 'illegally', with the knowledge of other members of their group. It also takes a long time for applications for assistance (for specific activities) to reach the management and be included in a package of activities for which support is given. The character of the NGO is therefore often more service based than a true associational organisation. This contrasts with the trend towards a larger local say in the modalities of development. With decentralisation in Burkina Faso, village funds must be found which could be used for development, at the discretion of the villagers but in consultation with the services (Integrated Development Programmes or PDIs). These funds can be spent at the NGO or the service of one's choice. Whether one subsequently remains a member of ADRK is another consideration. In addition, it is not known whether spatial segregation between NGOs will continue to exist. This provides opportunities and risks, both for the population and for ADRK. From this, it follows that it is important for the NGO to know what the best strategy is that is chosen by the population and supported by the NGO in order to achieve the goals set by the population. Allowances should be made here for the phase in which the NGO finds itself, the context of the villages and regions where one is active and the trends in the regions, in order to bring about successful development for all groups. ADRK now understands this. However, it would be difficult to remodel ADRK in a situation of disarray, such as the one the NGO now finds itself in (see notes on CFA channel). The researchers' idea is that development policy at ADRK is now too often a traditional type of standard package showing the development hypes of a period, which is sometimes very successful, but not always.

*Effects and impact at target-group level in Mali*

The programmes of AMSS and ACORD in North Mali place considerable emphasis on combating poverty. The NGOs have a good understanding of poverty problems (ACORD conducted research into perceptions of poverty). They provide general basic services, carry

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rest would come from looking for gold, small-scale trading based on farming production, and *remittances* from migration.

out specific activities for the poorest (such as small livestock gifts from ACORD), take food safeguard measures or select villages on the basis of a poverty criterion.

The NGOs' interventions received very favourable assessment, both in the inception workshop, in the focus group and in individual discussions. Men tend to indicate a slightly different sequence than women, when asked about the importance of intervention. The men give production-orientated interventions more priority; the women, interventions geared towards food safeguards, household activities and health-care aspects. Further, the interventions by ACORD are mentioned more frequently than those of AMSS. In general, it would appear that ACORD assumes a higher priority among the population than AMSS in various subjects. Interventions clearly contribute to a reduction in poverty via the various capital resources.

For *natural capital*, this entails the expansion and intensification of farming by constructing perimeters and gardens, increase in and diversification of production, improvement of fertilising, purchase of small livestock, gradual expansion of cattle stock after droughts and again after rebellions, sowing the *bourgou* and planting trees. The interventions have improved food production, but farmers complain of productivity declines in certain villages. It is not known whether this is the result of soil depletion.

For *produced capital*, this entails modern means of production such as motorised pumps, wells, fencing of gardens from cattle, grain silos, schools and health posts. Many interventions are geared towards the community as a whole. For example, this refers to food aid, seed gifts, construction of village wells, provision of diesel pumps, construction of irrigation areas, building of a grain storehouse and environmental measures. In some villages the land in the irrigation area was distributed equally among the families; in other villages allowances were made for the size of the families. Everyone can also benefit from the support of organisational forms, savings and loan facilities, the provision of education and out-of-school education. However, certain groups have benefited somewhat more directly than others; the slightly older men more than the young people, because the main interventions are production orientated and the older men are in control of production. The marginalized groups (the very poor, the elderly and invalid workers) have participated less than the others. Women have also taken part less than men, but their income and social position has improved – a situation that they view favourably. This contrasts to the situation of young people, who feel somewhat neglected. Although they benefit indirectly from the improved situation, they do not receive any direct support for their group. In the community, they are the ones that do the work, also for the provisions supplied by the NGOs, but they have no authority over their activities. Former slaves in hierarchic villages may not be reached as often because of their marginal position. In villages with homogenous populations (former slaves in 'Tamachek Noir' villages or free people in the villages of Songhai) they were expressly told that everyone had access to the interventions.

*Human capital* entails such things as eliminating illiteracy, providing primary education, skills' training, out-of-school education, public information, health care, latrines, hygiene and cleaning of public spaces. A large amount of effort has gone into these activities and they are appreciated and requested, though there is also the fear that without actual usage, which is difficult in this remote area where no newspapers and other documents are available, the proficiency will disappear again.

Support given to *social capital* refers to the organisation of the population at local level (women's and youth organisations, professional organisations, savings and loan organisations) and at higher levels (federations, associations and co-operatives), shelter and reintegration of refugees, and discussions with neighbouring villages about land disputes. The interventions of the NGOs have done much to organise groups that have resulted in better

coordination, communication and unity. On the other hand, ACORD has done much to bring the groups together. Quite often, the men, women, young and old organise themselves separately. This against a very unfavourable context to these innovations, with all major social groups (based on age, gender, ethnicity) being so segregated. In that sense, the achievements of the NGOs are considerable.

*Cultural capital* involves discussing ethnic attitudes, gender attitudes and attitudes to poverty and exclusion. There is an emphasis on gender, which has been recent and limited at AMSS through incentives for small-scale activities and via the organisation of women. This has been somewhat longer and better thought through by ACORD, by encouraging women to take part in supra-village organisational forms and by discussing the position of women. As stated above, women have taken part less than men, but their income and social position has improved – a situation that they view favourably. The trend to which this has to be set is varying of course: as in Burkina Faso, in the larger cities of Mali the position of women and the perceptions of men has advanced along these lines more than in the more rural areas. In large areas and among many groups in Mali, the position of women has not progressed so much. The spread of a more fundamentalist Islam may be a drag on future improvements in position.

Another relationship that is problematic and well established is that between former masters and their slaves. ACORD in particular has been very active in bringing this to the fore, and the intervention, against this very difficult background, has done much to make formerly lower status people acceptable to others, and instil a feeling of equality among the population. Finally, *financial capital* involves rotational and starting funds, gifts, savings and loan banks at local and higher levels. Credit is an important source of financial capital and it is difficult to find outside of the NGO circles. This form of capital has certainly been made more available, and it has had positive effects on investments, and production and income.

The interventions studied fit in with the livelihood strategies of the population, with one major exception, the lack of attention given to extensive or intensive livestock raising. This is a conscious policy of the two NGOs, based on bad experiences in the past with the intervention of '*reconstitution de cheptel*'. It is also based on the conviction that sedentary types of agricultural production (irrigated arable farming and market gardening) in the Niger Valley offer the best economic potential. However, under the former nomadic population and under the sedentary inhabitants, there is much interest in cattle raising. For the former group, cattle and camel raising was a way of life. It was also an opportunity for sustenance and savings, for prestige gifts etc. For the second group, the possession of cattle was a form of saving. Research is needed after the potential of various types of animal husbandry and the efforts and investments needed. However, the negative attitude towards (nomadic, extensive) animal husbandry and as an after effect towards animal husbandry in general, is almost universal among development agencies and government organisations, if not in the development research community.

Factors that have led to positive results are the NGOs' knowledge of the local situation, the openness and dialogue with local inhabitants, and interventions geared towards the major problems – food safeguards and poverty (in the broadest sense). Factors that detract from the results are the very difficult physical and production conditions (climate, diseases and plagues, the peripheral, isolated location), the low population density and very widely dispersed population, very low level of education and extremely low level of facilities. The 1990-1996 rebellion has nullified part of the interventions. Both NGOs take a more or less integrated approach in their work. They are the only – or dominant – NGO in the communities concerned. In addition, there are still many other NGOs active in the vicinity and in specific fields. Representatives of the population groups were very aware of what each NGO had done

in the way of interventions. The NGOs mutually define their own spheres of influence. There is a multitude of interventions in the villages concerned, which are not necessarily integrated. The subject NGOs do not specialise, although they call in specialist forces (other NGOs or government services). SEAD indicated a preference for NGO specialisation (via tendering for commissions in the government's sector policy). AMSS and ACORD are not developing in this direction. At NGO level (staff at various levels), the cooperation with CFAs and confrontation with local issues also leads to a better, more systematic reflection on and knowledge of local problems, and a better understanding of possibilities and strategies of approach, of training and the acquisition of knowledge by their own personnel, and of cooperation with the government and other organisations. Cooperation with the government at lower levels is important and necessary for both parties. In general, there are good contacts and they work together, but the interventions are not always mutually balanced. Certain government services played a role in the construction of perimeters and the introduction of new rice production techniques. In the areas of health care and education, the government did nothing in the past. In the more central villages, the NGOs, often in mutual consultation, set up primary schools and/or health centres. The affordability of such facilities is a major problem. The intention is that the decentralised government is to provide for the salaries of teachers and health workers for these community schools and health centres. The NGOs play an important role in the education of local representatives in new town councils (eliminating illiteracy, schooling and provision of information).

*Results: summary and discussion in the context of the Sahel*

The 'impact' of support offered by ICCO, Cordaid and NOVIB to the subject NGOs in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mali is relatively visible. Many of the social changes during the last decade identified by the population are 'attributable' to the activities undertaken by the NGOs with CFA support. The attribution problem here is less troublesome than elsewhere, since Dutch donor support is so dominant in the region or in the intervention villages and since, for the most part, the NGOs rely on NOVIB, Cordaid and ICCO for their financial support to very large degrees. Exceptions to this, at least temporarily, are ADRK which recently obtained funding from the Dutch Embassy, and ODE, which 'only' gets about a third to forty percent of its budget from ICCO. In addition, the approach is important, with a choice between broad but shallow activities, including many people, or more geographically focused activities with a deeper reach. In this regard, it should be noted that PCG's approach in Ghana has been much more vigorous, concentrated and apparent than that of DNB/BAFP. Therefore, in the eyes of the inhabitants, it played a key role in the changes ascertained by them. In Burkina Faso, particularly depending on the duration of interventions and the local context (infrastructure), the impact differed and could expand from a locally to an internationally important one. NOVIB has actively tried to create an organisational framework and to teach local organisational skills to local staff and social groups (and, during recent programme phases, to certain extra-local forms of organisations such as cooperatives, unions, etc). Their results in terms of effects and impacts have been noticeable and appreciated by the population. With respect to AMSS, it believes that support for setting up organisational frameworks is also important. For this reason, with all types of interventions, training and out-of-school education are important for the target groups concerned, and they are appreciated as well.

The success of the activities of the supported NGOs was due in no small part to a relatively good period in the cycle of climate fluctuations, in view of the important role of agriculture in the livelihoods of people, the changes in capitals of people and the approaches of the NGOs. In addition, these NGO activities were favourably influenced by the fact that the economies

and political systems of the countries in which the study took place managed to climb out of the deep abyss of the 1970s and 1980s. Economic growth in the south of Ghana, along with rapid urbanisation in that area, liberalisation of markets, and devaluation of the CFA, also afforded many opportunities in the north of the country and for much of Burkina Faso. The activities of the NGO sector often managed to take advantage of this. Better opportunities to transport products to the south through construction of good roads, together with attention for commercial activities by small farmers by governments, have improved the economic environment in the areas studied. In Mali as well, climatic conditions and economic growth have been favourable the past 15 years. However, the northern regions participated little in these developments. The rebellion of 1990-1996 caused a very insecure period annihilating many former development efforts. The isolated situation of Timbuktu implicated that rural and urban producers were not able to profit from better perspectives in the south. Improvements realised in the north can be put for a large part on development assistance through NGOs. The question that needs to be asked is whether the economic success could have been even greater if the NGOs (and their donors) had dared to work on a larger scale and to operate more intrepidly in Ghana, Mali or Burkina Faso, with greater realisation of the repercussions (positive and negative) of economic liberalisation and globalisation. This question seems to be answered elsewhere in the affirmative, as the study by Edwards in Asia shows (Edwards 1999). From the perspective of the population, more investment and maintenance in physical infrastructure (dams, irrigation pumps, roads) could have resulted in even faster expansion – but NGOs constantly backed away from this. It is clear from this chapter and that on the perceptions of change, that these large infrastructural investments are appreciated, but that maintenance or adequate management is lacking. Thus the role of the government, usually responsible for these investments and their maintenance, is ambivalent. Many of these investments are regarded as the responsibility of the government. However, it could also have led to a better private-public partnership with the Ghanaian and Burkinabé authorities, as has come about in the meantime in the health-care sector in Ghana. With coordination and (donor) funding, the NGOs could make better use of such partnerships in the coming decentralisation – in which case the NGOs would have to operate on a larger scale.

Recent official studies in North Ghana into the poverty situation provide a peculiar picture. For the Upper East Region they found that there was massive, increasing poverty. In regional discussions, which we attended, the findings were viewed with disbelief and considerable scepticism. Many NGO leaders believe that there is a crude overestimation of the poverty situation and a crude underestimation of the achievements. The faulty data used at macro level makes political manipulation of data relatively simple. The NGO sector itself is confronted with an ongoing dilemma: harping at a very bad situation could result in more support, but the denial of improvements achieved can undermine confidence in the effectiveness of ‘aid’. Everyone now openly admits that the NGO sector as a whole has failed in setting up its own ‘development monitoring system’. With support particularly from ICCO, much work was done in this area during the last two years. However, it was not possible to make much use of it for this study. Monitoring of the implementation of activities and the organisational and institutional performance of ADRK does not compare favourably<sup>9</sup>. At ODE, the monitoring system is incomparably better.

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<sup>9</sup> As indicated above, there is monitoring of training sessions, but it does not focus on who makes use of them or what results they produce. It only mentions whether the activities have taken place and for how many people.

## 6. Policy coherence; CFAs, NGOs and the populations

After the presentation of regional environmental and economic trends, and the perceptions of these trends by the populations in terms of capitals available to them, we established that activities of the evaluated NGOs were relevant and relatively successful. However, there remains the question about whether all relevant sectors were assisted to the degree indicated by the prioritisation of the population. In this chapter, we will discuss the coherence of policies of these two levels, in relation to the policies of the CFA that support the NGOs and their participating populations. We will do this on the basis of a number of policy matrixes.

### *Choice of region*

The first choice made by the CFA, even before the coherence of policy between development partners becomes an issue, is that of the intervention region or country. We will see later that this in itself is a complex process. Here we focus on the actual choice made, and discuss the characteristics of the regions.

Within North Ghana, the Upper East Region is the most marginal area in terms of isolation, poverty, population density and environmental degradation. From the early 1990s onwards the road links to South Ghana improved. Concerning accessibility and marginality, the Upper West Region is more marginal, but somewhat less in terms of poverty. Cordaid's assistance is spread across many subsections throughout the north of Ghana and across quite a few sectors (to put it irreverently, the comments from the field are that Cordaid is 'shooting with buckshot'). ICCO partners are more specific, concentrating expressly on selected problem areas and on selected major problems.

In Burkina Faso, the central northern area is certainly not the most marginal region spatially, considering the short, excellent road link between the centrally situated town of Kaya and the capital, Ouagadougou. Beyond this road however, accessibility declines rapidly. All things considered, the region is one of the most marginal, neglected regions, despite this accessibility by road. In terms of the provincial scores on the Human Development Index, the central, northern area is invariably in the lower regions, even at the bottom of the list. The choice for the support of ADRK, centrally located in this area, is an evident one.

In Mali, NOVIB – and, with NOVIB, the other partners in the consortium – were aware of the specific, very problematical circumstances in North Mali immediately after the drought of 1973-1974, for which they founded ACORD-Timbuktu. ICCO has also become active in North Mali in order to deal with the most serious emergency. The area is geographically, economically and politically marginal. Until 1994, NOVIB supported the programmes from a special Sahel office in Ouagadougou. NOVIB's general policy serves as a touchstone for new applications from NGOs. Combating poverty is the key objective for this area, and here migration is taken seriously in the analysis of problems and potential solutions. In the cases of ICCO and Cordaid, virtually no attention is given to this consequence of globalisation, one that has played a major role in the development of the area. Notably (at ICCO and Cordaid and at the supporting partners in Ghana and Burkina Faso), the huge mobility of the population, a vast movement from the north to the south of Ghana – and from Burkina Faso to Cote d'Ivoire and back<sup>10</sup> – is only discussed in negative terms. In our view, one of the main characteristics of the socio-geographic situation in much of the Sahel is being ignored, or brushed aside as undesirable. This entails a highly mobile population with a '*multi-spatial livelihood*' and a large sectoral, household '*diversification*' and communal living, in which

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<sup>10</sup> If it is discussed at all. In the 2003-2006 operating plans, there is no reference to this as a specific topic – despite the major role of migration in the international debate about development, and certainly also of migration in the lives of the people in the research area.

both '*nuclear families*' and traditional '*extended families*' are not the relevant context to study the fluidity of 'households' and individual behaviour.

*Choice of priorities: ICCO and its partners*

ICCO's policy deals specifically with the need to tackle the most urgent needs first, by concentrating on (emergency) aid to prevent illness, hunger and violence. Only then can work start on more structural types of combating poverty, followed by fleshing out policies on citizenship and social advancement. In this regard, ICCO's analysis pays explicit attention to the special position of the vulnerability of women who, along with young people, the elderly and minorities, are the most powerless groups. Subordinating these groups is not only ethically wrong, it also results in conflicts and is an indirect threat to sustainable development. ICCO sees globalisation, one of the possible causes of this inequality, not only as a threat but also as an opportunity for greater input by NGOs in the debate about development. Precisely for this reason, sectors such as the economy, trade, society and social development afford an opportunity – also for the poorest, in one of the most marginal regions in the world. Democratisation is explicitly mentioned. This is an interesting innovation, since in the area of research there is ongoing discussion and implementation of this process in all three countries, at all higher levels, relative to further decentralisation of administration. ICCO emphasises the effects of HIV/aids, which is a highly relevant issue in the research area. ICCO also pays specific attention to the use of emergency aid as a means of supporting the poorest regions during periods of crises.

ICCO has been very active in Ghana. It is expected that this will remain the case, in the fields of health care and of sustainable agriculture. Additionally, there has been particular support for credit programmes and for rural, small-scale income acquisition outside of agriculture. Here, the emphasis has been on North Ghana since the 1980s. In the 1990s (none too early) special attention developed for a gender approach. In this area, ICCO concentrated primarily on a single main partner, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) (see matrix on next page). Our study focused on one of four agricultural stations of the PCG, which is located in the driest area around Garu in the north-eastern-most part of Ghana. It is an area with an ethnic and religious diverse population, in which the difference between Busanga Muslims, Kusasi Presbyterians and people adhering to traditional beliefs is significant. ICCO (together with Cordaid) has long supported an umbrella NGO for support to Christian NGOs in North Ghana, ACDEP.

### Matrix on policy coherence between ICCO, PCG and the population

Policy elements	ICCO	PCG/PAS	Population
<b>General objectives</b>	ICCO considers it as its task to cooperate with overseas partners in their efforts to give shape to justice and mercy in all aspects of life (economical, cultural and social) and in the relations between people of different races and religions.	To improve living conditions in Northern Ghana, and in the areas (for all people) around PAS stations in particular, through improvements in agriculture	
<b>Specific objectives</b>		Integrated soil fertility management through a large variety of means, support agricultural inputs, training, income diversification, group formation and gender awareness. Make use of decentralisation and access government services.	
<b>Definition of poverty</b>	Lack of access to and control of production means, educational and health services (basic needs), credit	Poverty is seen as a consequence of environmental degradation, harsh climatic conditions with occasional droughts, decreasing availability of agricultural land, isolation from markets, food shortages leading to poor nutrition and poor health, inadequate and poor performance of (state) facilities and services, dependence on agriculture, lack of cash-income opportunities, tenure problems, subordination of women by men and limited participation of women in decision making	See Bongo: there is not much difference in the images of poverty between Garu and Bongo
<b>Definition of development</b>	Human beings are themselves responsible for the development processes. ICCO considers it as its task to cooperate with overseas partners in their efforts to give shape to justice and mercy in all aspects of life (economical, cultural and social) and in the relations between people of different races and religions. In this context development can be read as creating circumstances that facilitate that all groups in society have equal rights and can equally participate in activities and have access to and control over production factors, services and facilities; power and means have to be more justly distributed among people.	The core of development is seen as enlarging food production and income-earning capacity, together with more social coherence (group formation) and knowledge and a more equal position of women in society.	See Bongo
<b>Approach (organisational target levels)</b>	Away from direct support to producers and towards financial support to intermediary organisations and to creating counter movements for fundamental changes to achieve more justly relations and equitable economic shares Preferred partner organisations are (local) basic organisations, with a commitment to the objectives of ICCO, and sufficient degree of organisation, of self-reflection, of learning capacity.	In target villages groups are formed, which get support for about six years and which are later expected to continue without structural support.	Groups are now seen as important tools for mutual assistance and knowledge sharing.

<b>Policy elements</b>	<b>ICCO</b>	<b>PCG/PAS</b>	<b>Population</b>
	Seeks to offer women the means and opportunities to change the unequal power relations in society. Wants to encourage the involvement and empowerment of women. To achieve equal participation and self-determination. Plus economic independence Full participation of women and equal rights should be focal points in its policy and activities. Also in its own organisation!		
<b>Regional policy</b>	(period 2003-2006): Reducing the number of countries and partner organisations from 36 to 21 countries and from 370 to 300 organisations in Africa	Garu was selected (next to three other stations elsewhere in Northern Ghana) as the poorest and most arid area.	PCG/PAS activities are well known and widely praised in a large scatter of villages in Garu sub-district
<b>Sectoral policy</b>	Policy in 1990s originally focussing on agricultural sector, food security, health care (clean water), community building, institutional support, and during the last years a growing attention for gender and environment, civil society / institution building.  In the newest policy plan (2003-2006) ICCO states to aim at poverty alleviation in the South by concentrating on: access to basic services and facilities; sustainable and equitable economic development; democratisation and security.  In the newest policy document more attention is said to be given to the gender aspect (girls), the aids problems and the civil society aspect	PCG General: Literacy, leadership training, vocational training, education, community-based rehabilitation, health care Presbyterian Agricultural Stations (like the one in Garu): improved sustainable agriculture	Sectoral priorities of women in Garu: Credit facilities, Gender development/issues, Livestock improvement, Literacy programmes, Capacity building for successful operation with banks; Family planning education; Water and sanitation infrastructure, Dry season vegetable production, Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation; Eradication of witchcraft homes/village. Men in Garu mentioned the following order of sectoral development priorities: Soil fertility management (composting), Credit, Empowerment, Livestock improvement, Dry season gardening, Introduction of early maturing crop varieties, Dam construction, Hand dug wells, Sale of farm inputs, Cash crop/ fruit tree growing.
<b>Gender policy</b>	Seeks to offer women the means and opportunities to change the unequal power relations in society. Wants to encourage the involvement and empowerment of women. To achieve equal participation and self-determination. Plus economic independence Full participation of women and equal rights should be focal points in its policy and activities. Also in its own organisation!	Gender mainstreaming. Create mixed groups next to specific women groups. Specific support for credit to women (groups) through a specific offshoot NGO (BESSFA).	Women group leaders and the success of women group activities have resulted in a change of attitude and in more gender awareness and cultural change.

The protracted support given to think-tank-type NGOs such as ACDEP, and to the PCG agricultural stations, coupled to the major development role taken up by the University in Tamale (and its long standing relationship with the NGO sector), as well as to the activities of locally-influential consultancy groups concerned with low, external-input, sustainable agriculture (also with support from the Netherlands, DGIS, ETC international) – have transformed it into a pioneering area of sustainable agricultural and environmental development experiments in Africa. ICCO seems consistent in its continuing concentration on these sectors and areas. There is progressive emphasis on direct combating of poverty at a primary level. Despite some frustration in the late 1990s with inadequate monitoring, assessment and reporting activities at PCG and despite a period of high turnover of personnel, resulting in poor consultation, recently they have got a better grip on the situation. There is new confidence in the ability of the partners (particularly PCG and ACDEP) to continue their pioneering work.

ICCO is very active in Burkina Faso as well. It has long-lasting ties with the country, and it will continue its activities. ICCO has been active in Burkina Faso particularly in the area of (sustainable) agricultural development, service provision (water, training, eliminating illiteracy) and credit programmes based on group development. These are quite traditional and, given the regional context, also quite logical sectors to be active in. The ICCO partners are not very active in the field of health care. ODE, along with many of the ICCO partners, spends only a small portion of their funds on health care. As with many other NGOs, it has started doing so recently. In the late 1980s, early 1990s, gender has become more important in the CFA policies, and in the policies of the NGOs they supported, and in some cases has become quite important. The general context to implement these policies in is difficult however. ICCO has supported ODE for a long time. However, in recent years it has been expanding its contacts and now supports seven organisations<sup>11</sup>. It has followed a careful strategy in this expansion, one that first encompasses institutional support of the NGO, which only later leads to support of activities. In so far as the data permit, it can be concluded that 95 percent of the funding by ICCO is largely geared towards combating poverty; 4 percent goes to furthering civil society; and virtually nothing is spent on advocacy and lobbying. Concerning the sectors, the largest share is directed towards primary production (nearly 70 percent, especially due to the scope of ODE's programme, which concentrates on the integrated agricultural development around flood-control dams). This is in line with many of the policies of its local partners, and certainly with that of ODE. In addition, it focuses attention on organisational improvements (approximately 10 percent goes directly to strengthening the organisations that will receive funding). Further, it supports a multitude of other sectors, of which health care (8 percent), habitat (4 percent) and civil society (4 percent) are the most important. ICCO would appear to be quite consistent in this regard and, consequently, a reliable organisation for local partners. With respect to the near future, this primary sector will in any case be of continuing importance. ICCO's three main themes for the period 2003-2006 are sustainable, fair economic development<sup>12</sup>, access to basic provisions, and democratisation and safety. Identity used to be extremely important and, according to ICCO's operating plan, will continue to be so in the near future. Not only should the choice of organisations with several transparent criteria (people orientated, analytical, active at various levels, gender specific, instructional and networking) result in new contacts, there are recent efforts to introduce these skills within the existing partner organisations. Although these seem to be rather 'accessible' skills, which could be useful for any

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<sup>11</sup> In contrast to ICCO's general policy of country concentrations and reduction of partners, in Burkina Faso the number of partners has actually expanded from one to seven.

<sup>12</sup> This could indeed become operational in this region as support for sustainable, productive agriculture.

organisation, one must be careful in judging this type of control over the partners. We have not included a policy matrix on ICCO and ODE as the absence of information on the ideas of the population would add little to the discussion.

ICCO has been active in Mali ever since the first major drought that hit the Sahel in the early 1970s. Since then, ICCO has built up many contacts. The intended purpose of the interventions is to provide basic subsistence to the local population, which had become impoverished due to the drought. We also find this in the interventions geared towards constructing small-scale irrigation areas, in an effort to combat poverty by offering small ruminants, means of production and working capital, along with providing basic services such as eliminating illiteracy. Gradually, the emphasis has shifted (without stopping these earlier interventions) to providing greater attention for organisational structures, empowerment, gender and conflict management – in short, social capital on the one hand and natural and economic capital on the other. In this regard, the CFAs has responded to the rapidly changing context, and by organising special courses concerning the current decentralisation of various government tasks to community level. ICCO is therefore well aware of the context and has adapted its general policies adequately to local circumstances. Another example of this is that ICCO and its counterpart do not see migration to the south as something that should be prevented. In effect, it is recognised that resources in the north are limited and in this sense they are quite unique, as in many other cases (as in Ghana and Burkina Faso) the feeling, if there is an explicit feeling about it, is that migration is bad for local society in terms of loss of labour. AMSS is a small, local organisation concerned with several specific problems in the villages where it is active. It sometimes makes use of specialists, government or private services in carrying out its projects. External assessments carried out at the end of each three-year programme enable adjustments and the delineation of new policy. Recently, a type of automatic assessment was introduced. On other issues it is noticeable that AMSS has fewer expressed and explicit ideas. For example, there is little explicit information on definitions of poverty and development. These can be deduced, but are not stated explicitly. They can be described as intermediary, between those of ICCO (quite generally defined concepts of poverty and development, with a focus on people's own responsibility and possibility for development, with the use of their limited resources made possible by facilitation) and those of the population (quite concretely focused on improving wealth through obtaining material assets through the NGO, and through social ties and networks). On the other hand, a very clear and well-implemented gender policy is in place, which is to be appreciated in the very difficult context in which the organisation is working. Women see the activities of the NGO as an improvement of their position, quite contrary to men who see women as inferior, though to be respected. It is clear that on such locally contentious issues, the NGO's position is nearer to that of the CFA than when issues of general goals, activities and approaches of development are concerned. These on balance favour men rather than women, and primary production (cultivation) rather than small income-generating activities. However, the attention has definitely shifted to these latter sectors, which reflects ICCO policy as well.

## Matrix on policy coherence between ICCO, AMSS and the population

Policy elements	ICCO	AMSS	Population
<b>General objectives</b>	ICCO considers it as its task to cooperate with overseas partners in their efforts to give shape to justice and mercy in all aspects of life (economical, cultural and social) and in the relations between people of different races and religions.	Poverty alleviation and improvement of the living conditions of the population.	
<b>Specific objectives</b>			
<b>Definition of poverty</b>	Lack of access to and control of production means, educational and health services (basic needs), credit	There is no explicit definition of poverty. Central objective of AMSS: poverty alleviation Originally through a strong focus on reinforcement of means of production (and increase of physical capital), later on attention for capacity building added. ' la reduction de la pauvreté par l'accroissement des revenus et l'amélioration des conditions de vie de façon à permettre aux différentes communautés une cohabitation harmonieuse et un souci de protection de l'environnement	Songhaï (cultivators): someone without kin and someone who ne peut pas subvenir à ses besoins. Tamachek : a person who has nothing to eat, and a person with limited capacities (mentally or physically handicapped). Women: persons without family, women without a husband.
<b>Definition of development</b>	Human beings are themselves responsible for the development processes. ICCO considers it as its task to cooperate with overseas partners in their efforts to give shape to justice and mercy in all aspects of life (economical, cultural and social) and in the relations between people of different races and religions. In this context development can be read as creating circumstances that facilitate that all groups in society have equal rights and can equally participate in activities and have access to and control over production factors, services and facilities; power and means have to be more justly distributed among people.	The definition of development on which the activities of AMSS are based is not clearly stated. From the activities executed in the villages can be deduced that development is seen as achieving a more secure and sustainable subsistence base of families in terms of food security, reduced risks of illness etc, facilitated by more equipment and infrastructure and more knowledge.	The goal of development is described in terms of reaching a wealthy status: financial means, a herd, many children, self-esteem, status, and the possibility to give to others. Apart from that and self-evident, good and enough food, clothing and a house, schooling for the children.
<b>Approach (organisational target levels)</b>	Away from direct support to producers and towards financial support to intermediary organisations and to creating counter movements for fundamental changes to achieve more justly relations and equitable economic shares. Preferred partner organisations are (local) basic organisations, with a commitment to the objectives of ICCO, and sufficient degree of organisation, of self-reflection, of learning capacity.	At first by concrete projects in villages, gifts. Later on more attention for the formation of self-organising groups and training of these groups.	Self-organising groups ( for agricultural activities, food security, credit) have been promoted in the AMSS supported villages for communally based agricultural activities. People appreciated this approach but besides are still asking for direct help in terms of gifts, materials, or loans.

<b>Policy elements</b>	<b>ICCO</b>	<b>AMSS</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Regional policy</b>	<p>(period 2003-2006): Reducing the number of countries and partner organisations from 36 to 21 countries and from 370 to 300 organisations in Africa .</p> <p>During the last decade of the former century the number of organisations in Mali supported by ICCO grew from 2 to 11 per year.</p> <p>In Mali: <b>Emphasis on activities in rural areas</b></p>	<p>22 villages/ camps in the Goundam District, Timbuktu Region in Northern Mali</p> <p>Number of villages increased from 5 to 22.</p>	<p>Family/ household level concerns first (food security), secondly that of specific groups (women, younger people want have a voice) and finally that of the village (availability of services).</p>
<b>Sectoral policy</b>	<p>Policy sectors in Mali: in 90s originally focussing on agricultural sector, food security, health care (clean water), community building, institutional support, and during the last years a growing attention for gender and environment, civil society / institution building.</p> <p>In the newest policy plan (2003-2006) ICCO states to aim at poverty alleviation in the South by concentrating on: access to basic services and facilities; sustainable and equitable economic development; democratisation and security.</p> <p>In the newest policy document more attention is said to be given to the gender aspect (girls),the aids problems and the civil society aspect</p>	<p>Originally a strong focus on reinforcement of means of production (and increase of physical capital), later on attention for capacity building added.</p> <p>Agriculture, infrastructure, habitat/housing, health, credit, capacity building, training and education</p>	<p>Demands for increasing infrastructure and production means (in particular pumps), access to clean water, schools, training, credit, fertilizers, transport means (boats)</p> <p>Wishes per group:</p> <p>Men: increase of livestock, herds, clean water, irrigation, training, anti-erosion actions, agricultural equipment (ploughs)</p> <p>Women: grain mills, sewing machines, market facilities for horticulture and handicraft products, transport means, small livestock, jewels, health centre, and houses.</p> <p>Young adults: land, milk cows, training, agricultural equipment, solar cells</p>
<b>Gender policy</b>	<p>Seeks to offer women the means and opportunities to change the unequal power relations in society. Wants to encourage the involvement and empowerment of women. To achieve equal participation and self-determination. Plus economic independence</p> <p>Full participation of women and equal rights should be focal points in its policy and activities. Also in its own organisation!</p>	<p>AMSS supports 86 groups on village level of which 21 are women groups. At the start in 1992 the programmes of AMSS had not a specific gender focus, but during the years this aspect became more important and in more recent policy documents AMSS mentioned goals with a specific gender focus. Programmes included activities for women and for changing existing gender attitudes at villages (leaders) level. The activities aim to strengthen the economic position of women by increasing their access to credit and income-generating activities such as horticulture. From these goals one can reduce that also AMSS is a little bit aware of the fact that It is not enough to organise economic and social activities for women or by women, but that through strategic gender planning, the issue of gender should be incorporated in all planning and institutions.</p>	<p>Ambivalent: bien respectée et traitée, mais inférieure. Men and elderly people still mistrust the new role of women in public life. Women see it as an improvement of their position.</p> <p>Traditionally women have less access to means of production. Extent of access or control varies per ethnical (sub)group.</p>

### *Choice of priorities: Cordaid and its partners*

Broadly speaking, Cordaid has taken a comparable stand as ICCO as far as priorities are concerned, in which the poorest and most marginal areas should receive support in improving their living conditions and in strengthening the social structure. It has been a loyal partner in this respect in the past, to which local (catholic) NGOs have turned for funding of rural and agricultural development, training and education activities. In the coming planning period (2003-2006), directly combating poverty will be a lower priority at Cordaid, from 65 to 55 percent of investments<sup>13</sup>. Generally, a significant increase in expenditures to create access to the (international) economy through market links will involve seizing opportunities offered by globalisation. In the case of Burkina Faso, this will also entail links to national policy, as it has done in the past. Experiences in the field support many of these choices (see below). Cordaid emphasises also the effects of HIV/aids. In a policy aimed specifically at Africa, Cordaid has set up a separate budget for this purpose. Cordaid pays specific attention to the use of emergency aid as a means of supporting the poorest regions during periods of crises.

Cordaid has been very active in Ghana as well. It is expected at the time of writing that this will remain the case. Cordaid has long been active in supporting partners in the field of health care on the one hand (particularly Memisa) and on the other, in the area of sustainable agriculture. Additionally, there has been particular support for credit programmes and for rural, small-scale income acquisition outside of agriculture, as did ICCO. Here, the emphasis has been on North Ghana since the 1980s. In the 1990s (none too early) special attention developed for a gender approach. Although Cordaid's support is more widely spread than ICCO's, support given to the Development Office of the Diocese of Navrongo/Bolgatanga (DNB) has been relatively important. Our study concentrated on one of the main activities of DNB – environmental reconstruction in the most problematical district, Bongo (in terms of poverty and environmental degradation). This district has an ethnically more homogenous population (Frafras) in which the Catholic Church plays an increasing part, but still with a majority of 'Traditional worshippers'. Cordaid has also supported an umbrella NGO for support to Christian NGOs in North Ghana, ACDEP. One can see a reversal at Cordaid of the situation of trust with its partners that existed before, with a desire to move away from the traditional operating methods of the Catholic partners and establish closer ties to secular NGOs. There is also a desire to reduce direct combating of poverty at a primary level (agriculture and the environment) and concentrate on health care, safety and combating urban poverty for all of Africa. In particular, Cordaid would like to focus the support for the primary sector to the area of increasing international and regional access to markets in the future. Add to this many years of faulty communication with the traditional partners – and the contours of an approaching fundamental misunderstanding and perhaps conflict become visible. The Cordaid partners are largely dependent on Cordaid as donor and are insufficiently prepared for a phasing-out process. Conspicuously, for the whole of North Ghana, Dutch support to NGOs is the lifesaver, keeping much of the NGO sector afloat, although there are also many smaller NGOs that are entirely or partially financed by other foreign donors. World Vision in particular has a prominent presence. In the district of Bongo we found seven active NGOs, and 13 in the sub-district of Garu.

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<sup>13</sup> In this regard, it should be noted that this is already an elaboration of the need to combat poverty, which is specific to Africa. For the other regions, expenditures for combating poverty go to 35 percent (Asia, Europe and Oceania), and to 15 percent (Latin America).

### Matrix on policy coherence between Cordaid, DNB, and the population

Policy elements	Cordaid	DNB/BAFP	Population
<b>General objectives</b>	Cordaid works for the poor and deprived in the world and for social and economic justice. Per sector: improve physical, social, economic and political/ institutional situation of the urban poor, improve income of poor groups (men and women),	Promote human dignity through improvement in the living standards of the population in the diocese	
<b>Specific objectives</b>	Support and develop local people and their organisations irrespective of their characteristics (age, sex, sexual preference, ethnic background, religion, political orientation). Improve local living conditions and strengthen the structure of society. To provide emergency aid and develop civil society.	Improvement of natural capabilities through tree planting, soil and water conservation, livestock improvement, provision of land improvement inputs, environmental education, village leadership training, group formation and training and cultural change towards a 'stewardship mentality'	
<b>Definition of poverty</b>	Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. Political and social deprivation and economic marginalisation is the result of unequal distribution of means.	Poverty is a result of severe land degradation and erosion resulting in low crop yields, of occasional environmental disasters (droughts), of overgrazing, and deforestation and of deficient land management practices. It is also a result of a poor road network, and hence marketing possibilities, inadequate education and health, high agricultural land densities, small land holdings, low productivity of labour, low access of women to economic opportunities and loans, land tenure problems, low self-help mobilisation capacity and male domination	Bongo people define the conditions of poverty as compounds which look untidy, with no 'modern' structures, no door and window frames, hardly any furniture in the house, and no bowls on display; certainly no cattle or pigs, hardly any or no sheep or goats, maybe a few (but sometimes no) fowls and the dogs which are on the compounds look very underfed; a 'poor' compound farm (around the house), with visibly meagre harvests, no food ban on the compound. The poor are very shy people, who would not present themselves; would not go to meetings; would not have many 'friends' in the village; are often treated as 'strange', 'fools' or outcasts or their poverty is seen as a punishment for their 'immoral' or 'not-normal' behaviour; they would generally not have relatives elsewhere who support them ('socially poor') and they would not have many (or any) children. Being childless is seen as dire poverty. In poor houses you will not find bicycles, nor iron ploughs, nor wrist watches; children don't have shoes and the clothing and shoes of adults is often torn or partly destroyed.

<b>Policy elements</b>	<b>Cordaid</b>	<b>DNB/BAFP</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Definition of development</b>	Development is not a linear process. Poverty alleviation and development should combine income generating activities, health, education, security and political ownership. Implicitly: Living together peacefully and democratically, social, economic and political rights for men and women, present and future generations, freedom of choice of how to use individuals' capabilities, cooperation between governments, civilians and NGOs for the fight against poverty and injustice.	It is assumed that a major improvement of land (including tree) management results in improved agricultural productivity, and hence food security, better health, and income-earning opportunities based on local agriculture.	Development is defined as increasing individual and household wealth, but also more 'dignity', higher social status, and more knowledge.
<b>Approach (organisational target levels)</b>	Away from direct support to producers and towards intermediary organisations with emphasis on market accessibility, exchange of information, training and credit provision. Faith based institutions (50/ 50 percent catholic/ non-catholic). Strategic partnerships will be formed. Reduction of project funding and towards strategic funding.	For the Bongo Agro-forestry Programme: A small project staff supports village-level animators, who stimulate group formation and give training and inputs to these groups. After some years support is 'weaned' and new groups in other villages are supported.	Locally the 'group concept' has now widely been accepted as a useful tool of mutual support and encouragement. People now also form groups beyond the NGO-supported ones. People also try to diversify and they try to take part in migration (mainly the young men, but nowadays ever more young women as well).
<b>Regional policy</b>	Reduced number of countries of which 16 in Africa (Burkina Faso excluded from 2003 onwards).	The Diocese of Navrongo-Bolgatanga, and for BAFP: Bongo District	BAFP is known and regarded in high esteem in a scatter of villages in Bongo District
<b>Sectoral policy</b>	Urban areas, economy (market accessibility), health care, conflict and peace. In Africa specifically HIV/ Aids.	For the Diocese Development Office as a whole: Education, school feeding, health, dam construction, agro-enterprise development, improving agriculture, improving women's position For BAFP: agro-forestry, soil and water conservation, land management	The women of Bongo had the following preference order of sectoral improvements Support for girl child education, Income generation activities, Tree planting, Health and nutrition education, Literacy programmes, Grinding mill support, Seed supply, Immunisation, Dams and hand dug wells, and Soil and water conservation. Men from Bongo gave the following preference order of necessary improvements: School support programme, Health/nutrition education, Water/sanitation programmes, Credit, Dams/wells, Soil and water conservation, Forestation, Capacity building, Promotion of large/small ruminant and poultry production
<b>Gender policy</b>	Realisation that there is a feminisation of poverty going on. More than 50 percent of funding is for women related activities.	Explicit attention for women's position; supporting women's leadership in groups and villages; 'mainstreaming gender'.	In general both men and women agree that the improvements of women's position can be regarded as important. The youth complains that they are 'forgotten' (including young girls).

Cordaid has been particularly active in Burkina Faso. It has long-lasting ties with the country, but in 2003 it will discontinue its activities there. This will mean the end of the position of leading agency, which the organisation has had for a long time. NOVIB will take over this position in Burkina Faso, but it is still unclear as to how continued financial support to NGOs associated with Cordaid will be organised. Although there was a lengthy warning period, there is no real exit and takeover strategy. Cordaid, like ICCO, has been active in particular in the area of (sustainable) agricultural development, service provision (water, training, eliminating illiteracy) and credit programmes based on group development. These are quite traditional and, given the regional context, also quite logical sectors to be active in. The Cordaid partners are also not very active in the field of health care. Both ADRK and many of the other Cordaid partners spent only a small portion of their funds on health care – and have often only started doing so recently, such as OCADES, also in Kaya. Only in the last two years has ADRK set up a national health service as an experiment with heavy funding from the embassy. This activity is still not very successful because of limited organisation, with too few reimbursable medicines to be meaningful to the population. Because of the high prices of commercial medicines (*inter alia* due to the devaluation of the CFA and to expensive imports), most people have turned to traditional remedies. In the late 1980s, early 1990s, gender has become more important in Cordaid policies, and in the policies of the NGOs they supported, and in some cases has become quite important. The general context to implement these policies in is difficult however.

In general, Cordaid also follows a traditional path with respect to its activities and partners. Most of the activities take place with local Catholic development offices, or directly with farmers' associations such as ADRK. These are generally large enough to merit the idea that they can be left responsible for the development of their own policies. There is always the ambivalence of these policies having to fit in the general policy of the donor, and implicit and sometimes explicit pressure to influence the NGO policies does exist.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, also ADRK has no explicit definitions of poverty or development. The implicit definitions are again intermediary and more concretely focused on improving capitals (human, physical and financial) than the general definitions of the CFA. The sectors in which the counterpart organisations are active are chiefly those of rural or regional development (see above), sometimes specifically aimed at activities for women and girls. These activities were set up in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In itself, this was quite late, but they quickly grew in importance, both in numbers of independent projects and in the importance of the gender component in the staff and activities of existing organisations. In general, none of Cordaid's partners appears to be very innovative, but concentrate on several core tasks that they do well. They turn their attentions to new activities only when there is a clear need for change, or a clear demand for assistance. Except for rural and regional (integrated) development, Cordaid's partners are mainly busy with adult education, technical training (for girls), eliminating illiteracy and income generating activities for women. The very strong focus on the group approach at the NGO level is not reflected in a similar attention at the CFA level, not does it seem to be supported at the population level, which seems to favour individual approaches. Loss of the group approach would reduce the efficiency of the NGO perhaps, but would improve participation of the population, in particular the poorest. It would make the activities also more flexible and adapted to the needs of individuals.

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<sup>14</sup> The same can be said about the donor organisations who feel the pressure of DGIS policy and of the discussion going on in the donor community on development policy.

## Matrix on policy coherence between Cordaid, ADRK and the population

Policy elements	Cordaid	ADRK	Population
<b>General objectives</b>	Cordaid works for the poor and deprived in the world and for social and economic justice. Per sector: improve physical, social, economic and political/ institutional situation of the urban poor, improve income of poor groups (men and women),	The improvement of the living conditions of the population, in cooperation with different partner organizations.	
<b>Specific objectives</b>	Support and develop local people and their organisations irrespective of their characteristics (age, sex, sexual preference, ethnic background, religion, political orientation). Improve local living conditions and strengthen the structure of society. To provide emergency aid and develop civil society.	Available means and capabilities of everyone should be used fully to reach agricultural growth, more humane labour conditions, conservation and rehabilitation of the environment, drinking water provision and increase of income and living standard.	
<b>Definition of poverty</b>	Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. Political and social deprivation and economic marginalisation is the result of unequal distribution of means.	There is no explicit definition of poverty. Poverty translates as an insufficiency of revenues and sources of revenue on the one hand and an insufficiency of competences (capabilities) on the other. Definition of poverty as used by the gender dept. staff is congruent with the wide view the organisation takes on the needs of the population. The following elements are mentioned. Basically, it is a lack of basic needs ( <i>'manque de produits de base'</i> ). More specific, this is a lack of food, water, clothing, money ( <i>'économie'</i> ), physical and social capital ( <i>'biens d'équipement et biens sociales'</i> ), means of transport and health.	Men: not to have the means to eat well, dress well, live well, educate his children. He is sexually powerless, and has no social status, grace, and knowledge. Young: no work to pay for food, clothing, house, health. Women: no remunerative activities to eat enough, low production, no chicken even, and few children. Rich: (apart from the above) behaviour and status are lacking. Middle: relationship lack of means-food, dress, house is stressed Poor: impossible to feed, dress and house the family, sexually powerless.
<b>Definition of development</b>	Development is not a linear process. Poverty alleviation and development should combine income generating activities, health, education, security and political ownership. Implicitly: Living together peacefully and democratically, social, economic and political rights for men and women, present and future generations, freedom of choice of how to use individuals' capabilities, cooperation between governments, civilians and NGOs for the fight against poverty and injustice.	It is assumed that under-utilised natural resources are still available, but that local dynamics and support to local initiatives are needed to give the region a stable economic and social base on which productivity growth and an increase and stabilisation of revenues can depend. This is implicitly the definition of development on which the activities of the NGO are based.	The goal of development is described in terms of reaching a wealthy status: financial means, a herd, many children, self-esteem, status, and the possibility to give to others. Apart from that and self-evident, good and enough food, clothing and a house, schooling for the children.

<b>Policy elements</b>	<b>Cordaid</b>	<b>ADRK</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Approach (organisational target levels)</b>	Away from direct support to producers and towards intermediary organisations with emphasis on market accessibility, exchange of information, training and credit provision. Faith based institutions (50/ 50 percent catholic/ non-catholic). Strategic partnerships will be formed. Reduction of project funding and towards strategic funding.	The voluntary and active participation of farmers is the base line of action for ADRK, in a structure in which responsibilities will slowly be transferred towards the farmers and in which the necessary knowledge, decisive powers and financial means will be devolved towards them. Improvement of income through group based approach. A concerted approach is followed: all sectors influence each other, and activities with other development organisations are avoided in the field.	Self-organising groups have established themselves in the ADRK supported villages. They are seen as important vehicles for service provision. Developing preference for individual approach is strong however (flexibility, less humiliating, less time consuming, adapted to needs).
<b>Regional policy</b>	Reduced number of countries of which 16 in Africa (Burkina Faso excluded from 2003 onwards).	The diocese of Kaya	Individual/ household level concerns
<b>Sectoral policy</b>	Urban areas, economy (market accessibility), health care, conflict and peace. In Africa specifically HIV/ Aids.	Agro-pastoral, economic (financial; credit and saving, and market integration facilitation), health, education and training, social (group formation), advocacy (headquarters), independence of women through remunerative activities.	All groups: health Mossi: health, infrastructure, agro-water, education. Generally: agro-pastoral development above credit/ savings (or; the activity rather than the financing of it) FulBe: health, livestock development Young (poor and middle): health and income generation Women: health, income generation Poor: grain banks, agro-pastoral development All groups after the above prioritisation: social and religious development
<b>Gender policy</b>	Realisation that there is a feminisation of poverty going on. More than 50 percent of funding is for women related activities.	It is not enough to organise economic and social activities for women or by women, but that through strategic planning, the issue of gender should and can be incorporated in the institution of ADRK itself.	Ambivalent. The men and elderly people see the development of women's rights as a destruction of society's social capital (status, respect), the young and women see it as an improvement of that capital. This includes issues of forced marriage, circumcision/ excision, roles in the family, income generation.

For the future, Cordaid's overall approach and its regional and sectoral policies seem relatively irrelevant with respect to the needs in this marginal region. Indeed, there is a logical explanation for the decision to abandon the partnership with ADRK, since the new Cordaid approach seems especially geared towards intermediary organisations – with the emphasis on market accessibility, exchanges of information, training and granting credits. Although these sectors are important for ADRK, it is not an intermediary organisation. Moreover, because of its extremely pragmatic, not very principled and transparent process, Burkina Faso was not selected as a so called 'concentration country'<sup>15</sup>. In the studied region in Burkina Faso, Cordaid's new sectoral policy (urban attention, the economy (market accessibility), health care, conflict and peace, and in Africa, HIV/AIDS) does not seem very coherent and relevant. Moreover, now that Cordaid would especially like to support 'faith-based organisations' – and not exclusively Catholic ones –, there seems to be plenty of room for confusion, if communication with the partners is problematic – a situation similar to that in Ghana<sup>16</sup>. There are fears that there could soon be severe conflicts between the donor and the partners and between the partners and the population.

#### *Choice of priorities: NOVIB and its partner*

Novib started its activities in West Africa in the sixties. Novib's policy, the same as mentioned for ICCO and Cordaid, focused on improving the livelihood conditions of the poor in the world. This policy was gradually shaped by plans and strategies oriented towards being a reliable partner for groups and organisations who work with and in favour of the poorest, by giving them financial support and providing them with services. In 1989 the first 'Sahel' policy document was written and from this moment onwards Novib has formulated more and more explicitly its policy objectives in specific (five) year plans. At the end of the twentieth century 35% of the available means were planned to be allocated to Africa and for West Africa a specific five-year Core Sahel programme (including the countries Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania Niger and Senegal) and a Coast Countries Programme (including Ghana and Ivory Coast) were written. According to the latest five-year plan Novib policy focus on sustainable development in particular by supporting initiatives of poor people to reduce poverty and by giving them a voice in the developed world as well (Novib 1998). For this combat against poverty Novib supports a considered mix of local partners. To realise its main goal (reducing poverty) Novib developed three strategies. For the first strategy, direct poverty combat, 60 % of the funds are available. Projects falling under this strategy must lead to improvement of the access of the poor to basic social services: health care, education, healthy environment and food. In addition 30% of the funds are geared at enforcement of the civic society, the second strategy. Activities in this field have to facilitate that public and private sectors increasingly take into consideration the position and rights of the poorest people, in particular that of women, children and minorities. Society building is explicitly mentioned as being very important in view of the processes of decentralisation of the administration in the Sahelian countries. Finally, 10 percent of the funds are allocated for the third strategy: influencing policy through political lobby activities in the South. For executing the core programmes, such as the Sahel Core programme, the right partner-mix must guarantee the well-balanced implementation of these three strategies (Novib 1998). Segmentation of the funds according to themes gives an additional pattern of Novib's choices of priorities. Priority is given to three themes: (1) Gender and development (from this point of view 50-70 % of the funds have to be spend on increasing options and opportunities of women); (2) Environment

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<sup>15</sup> The choice was not only based on the characteristics of the countries and their (impoverished) inhabitants, but especially on the number of Cordaid's collaborative donor agencies in the country concerned. In Burkina Faso, only Cordaid was very active.

<sup>16</sup> The recent communication with both the partners and the embassy is difficult.

and development and (3) Human rights and development. Like ICCO, Novib gradually developed a gender orientation in its policy. In addition to these priority themes Novib distinguishes a number of special fields of attention: food security, basic social services, financial services (saving- and credit programmes), organisation and institution building, emergency aid and international cooperation.

NOVIB, similar to ICCO, has been active in Mali because of the first major drought that hit the Sahel in the early 1970s. The purpose of the interventions by NOVIB in this very marginal area was to provide basic subsistence to the local population, which had become impoverished due to the drought. Here as well, interventions in the early period (1990s) were predominately geared towards constructing small-scale irrigation areas to enable agricultural and gardening activities. In addition, in an effort to combat poverty, gifts in the form of small ruminants, means of production and working capital are provided, along with basic services such as literacy classes and further education. Gradually, the emphasis has shifted to greater attention for organisational structures, empowerment, gender and conflict management. NOVIB has responded in the past (and continues to do so) to the rapidly changing context – for example, through their presence and by remaining active during the violent uprising in the north, when most organisations withdrew, and by organising special courses concerning the current decentralisation of various government tasks to community level. NOVIB is therefore aware of the context and has adapted the general policies to local circumstances. Migration is a significant phenomenon in the north of Mali, both in terms of movements to the regional towns and national capital to the south, and in the form of nomadic movements and flight in the face of violence. Many Tamachek have returned from Mauritania and Algeria, now that the situation is once again safe. Especially ACORD played a role in the return and relief. The migration to the south is not seen by the NGO as something that should be prevented. In effect, it is recognised that resources in the north are limited and in this sense they are quite unique. Under the influence of the donor consortium, ACORD is a fairly large and professional organisation that, besides carrying out specific interventions, devotes attention to new development themes much sooner and to a much larger degree than other NGOs in the region. Reflections about interventions, geared towards natural and production capital and social capital, about the effects and impact on the local economy and community, and about its own position and independence vis-à-vis the donors, appear to be much more developed than at AMSS. NOVIB has played a role in this. There is a clear relationship between general and specific objectives of NOVIB and ACORD, which comes as no surprise perhaps, but interestingly, in the sphere of the definitions of development, and in terms of the approach, there are differences. Structural improvements and integrated approaches are not easily implemented and need to be made concrete, and in this respect ACORD has used its room for manoeuvring and, on the basis of experience, has operationalised its approach in the form of a group approach, away from earlier direct investments. Interestingly, the local population is more likely to focus on individual and family levels, as in many other cases. And at the same time, the human capital building approach adopted sector-wise (services, training and education, institution building) is not reflected by the preferences of the population, who would rather have seen some more investments in road and water infrastructure, equipment (pumps), livestock support and other directly productive investments. Gender issues have been slowly adopted, and in the mid 1990s have been integrated in the NGOs' policies. This is again an intermediary position between the advanced ideas of NOVIB in this respect, and the position of the local population, in particular men. Here as well as in other cases, the position of women is inferior to that of men, and the change is slow to come.

### Matrix on policy coherence between Novib, ACORD and the population

Policy elements	Novib	ACORD-Timbuktu	Population
<b>General objectives</b>	Sustainable development through support to initiatives of the poorest groups of people and by giving them a voice	<p>In the 1990s From Integrated rural development towards assistance to vulnerable groups, re-enforcement of the potentials and capacities of local structures and improvement of mutual trust between various parties involved in the rebellion</p> <p>Currently: To support the democratisation and decentralisation process in Timbuktu by facilitating the participation of the most vulnerable groups in society to take part in decisions which affect their lives and to exercise their rights and their duties</p>	
<b>Specific objectives</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Structural poverty alleviation by working together with local organisations who work for the poorest part of their society</li> <li>2. Give information about non-western societies (turn against stereotypes) in our own society and make people in the north aware of the rich southern cultures</li> <li>3. Stand up for the interests of developing countries by political and economical powers in the North</li> </ol>	<p>In the 1990s:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Give support to groups who suffered from the rebellion (gifts)</li> <li>2. Strengthening of the capacity of local groups to enable them to participate in processes of democratisation and decentralisation</li> <li>3. Facilitate the dialogue between various groups to consolidate peace</li> <li>4. Continuing credit programmes</li> <li>5. Training and education</li> </ol> <p>Currently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To facilitate the emergence of a strong social movement, able to represent and defend the political, social and economic interests of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups in society</li> <li>2. To pursue the process of empowerment of the most vulnerable groups by creating a balance between technical intervention and advocacy work</li> </ol> <p>To promote the economic sustainability and viability of those associations, groups and institutions which are ACORD partners, including technical units composed of ex-ACORD staff to facilitate their de-linking from ACORD</p>	

<b>Policy elements</b>	<b>Novib</b>	<b>ACORD-Timbuktu</b>	<b>Population</b>
<b>Definition of poverty</b>	<p>Poverty is seen as a complex system of factors which are inextricably connected with each other</p> <p>Poverty is seen as lack of access to or control over production means, lack of power, options and lack of access to basic social and financial services</p>	<p>During recent years ACORD-Timbuktu has executed several researches (ateliers, villages surveys) to investigated how different groups of population define poverty.</p> <p>Les critères choisis pour bénéficier des actions de ACORD sont ceux des population elles mêmes</p> <p>In fact ACORD does not discriminate at village level.. In some cases the reports mentioned of help given to small groups of vulnerable people of poor people</p>	<p>Songhaï (cultivators): someone without kin and someone who ne peut pas subvenir à ses besoins.</p> <p>Tamachek : a person who has nothing to eat, and a person with limited capacities (mentally or physically handicapped).</p> <p>Women: persons without family, women without a husband.</p> <p>Persons who can't give goods or help to others</p>
<b>Definition of development</b>	<p>Adagium: to help people to help themselves improving their living conditions and position in society. Seen the complexity of the poverty problem an integral development approach is advocated : structural improvement of the position of the weakest groups in society</p>	<p>Deduced of the activities undertaken ACORD interpret development as improving security (of food, income, peace)</p>	<p>The goal of development is described in terms of reaching a wealthy status: financial means, a herd, many children, self-esteem, status, and the possibility to give to others. Apart from that and self-evident, good and enough food, clothing and a house, schooling for the children.</p>
<b>Approach (organisational target levels)</b>	<p>Cooperation with local groups and organisations working with the poorest people, aiming at structural improvement through active participation on both sides and quality of work.</p>	<p>From direct investments in activities to strengthen the production capacity and access to social services in the villages to (recently) "formation", training, institutional building, mediation, of various groups at various levels.</p>	<p>Self-organising groups ( for agricultural activities, food security, credit) have been promoted in the ACORD supported villages for communally based agricultural activities. People appreciated this approach but besides they are still asking for direct help in terms of gifts, materials, or loans.</p>
<b>Regional policy</b>	<p>In Western Africa Novib has a Core Sahel programme (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal) and a coastal countries programme (Ghana and the Ivory Coast)</p> <p>In 2002 Novib will allocate 35 % of the financial means to Africa</p> <p>Mean focus is on rural population but recently poor urbanites are target groups as well</p>	<p>In the 1990s: Districts of Goundam, Rharous, Timbuktu, Gao, Bourem, Teninkou</p> <p>Currently: 34 (and 9) grassroots organisations (cooperatives, unions, networks) 14 collectivities, state structures, local and national NGOs in the Timbuktu (and Gao) region</p>	<p>Family/ household level concerns first (food security), secondly that of specific groups (women, younger people want have a voice) and finally that of the village (availability of services).</p>
<b>Sectoral policy</b>	<p>Priorities (themes):</p> <p>Poverty alleviation: 60 % of project funds</p> <p>Gender and development</p> <p>Environment and development</p> <p>Specific additional themes:</p> <p>Food security</p> <p>Basic Social Services (primary health care, sanitation,</p>	<p>From investments in infrastructure, agriculture, production equipment, credit, cereal banks towards: Improvement of the financial capacities by institution building for credits / savings</p> <p>Creation of rolling funds for purchases of livestock, small equipment</p> <p>Training, education of groups on various levels of</p>	<p>Demands for increasing infrastructure and production means (in particular pumps), access to clean water, schools, training, credit, fertilizers, transport means (boats)</p> <p>Wishes per group:</p> <p>Men: increase of livestock, herds, clean water, irrigation, training, anti-erosion</p>

<b>Policy elements</b>	<b>Novib</b>	<b>ACORD-Timbuktu</b>	<b>Population</b>
	<p>clean water, education, training)            Financial services            Institutional/organisation building            (credit, saving groups</p> <p>Emergency aid</p>	<p>society (villagers, leaders, local officials)            Consolidation of peace            Surveys            In the last annual reports ( 2000) programmes aiming at improvement of agricultural production were not mentioned . However the delivery of pumps to villages continued</p>	<p>actions, agricultural equipment (ploughs)            Women: grain mills, sewing machines, market facilities for horticulture and handicraft products, transport means, small livestock, jewels, health centre, and houses.            Young adults: land, milk cows, training, agricultural equipment, solar cells</p>
<b>Gender policy</b>	<p>Compared o the early 1990s the gender focus strongly increased. (awareness of the feminisation of poverty )</p> <p>Gender is an integral aspect of the policy. Gender analysis is basis for all projects and programmes. Goal for 2000 was to achieve that 50-70 % of the funds should be spent in projects/programmes for poor and powerless women or programmes that contribute to the empowerment of women and increase their changes and options.</p> <p>Funds for formal and informal education of women will increase. Specific fields of attention are violence against women (circumcision) family planning, AIDS, perinatal health care.            Attention for improvement of gender expertise at various organisational levels</p>	<p>Gender aspect increased in the policy objectives. In the first half of the 1990s the conclusion of ACORD was that investments in, and profits of general investments for women lagged behind those for men.</p> <p>In the 2000 annual report a conclusion was that :´de l´analyse (see above definition of poverty) de la pauvreté, il est déduit la nécessité de mener certaines actions du programme considérer comme prioritaires surtout en faveur des femmes qui semblent être les plus vulnérables ».</p>	<p>Ambivalent: bien respectée et traitée, mais inférieure. Men and elderly people still mistrust the new role of women in public life.            Women see it as an improvement of their position.            Traditionally women have less access to means of production. Extent of access or control varies per ethnical (sub)group.</p>

## 7. The aid chain; the NGOs and the CFAs

In this chapter we will systematically deal with the institutional set-up of the development assistance provided by the CFAs to their partners in the various countries, and by the NGOs to their target groups. On the basis of a summary table, we will first discuss the institutional situation of the NGOs in the three countries. The table is presented on the following page.

### *The NGOs*

For all case NGO's it applies that they are relatively long established NGOs. Possibly with the exception of the Development office of the diocese of Navrongo/ Bolgatanga which was established in 1981 and the AMSS, which was established in 1991/92, but which had a predecessor which was also funded by ICCO. In the course of the years, they have all had the opportunity to grow and develop as experienced institutions in their respective regions. The budgets indicate that whatever the extend of their activities, these are large organisations in their respective regions, and quite possibly dominating in the development budgets of the regions as a whole, in some cases competing with those of the regular government development budgets. This applies for example to ACORD in Mali and ADRK in Burkina Faso. As far as the role of NGO's as '*key players*' is concerned, one can certainly say that they are precisely that, within their region of intervention. In combination with a certain territorial segregation of intervention villages of the various NGOs and government projects and programmes, a feature very typical of these Sahelian countries, the NGOs, in the villages in which they are active, can be considered *the* player. Quite often, there is no other player, apart from limited government presence in the form of infrastructure activities (roads, water, grain storage). This is one of the reasons why these NGOs are so large and multi-sectoral. If we look at the sectors in which these NGOs are active, it is clear that the agricultural sector (primary production/ sustainable agriculture) receives the largest share in most NGOs, but never exclusively<sup>17</sup>. This, as we saw in the previous chapter, is very much in line with the priorities of the CFAs, with the proviso that Cordaid will turn away from those priorities in the coming few years. Large percentages go to institutional support, training and education, and health. Small enterprise development and many other activities fall under the category 'other'. It will be evident that if an NGO takes the position of a multi-sectoral development agency, almost to the degree that they take up the role of the government, that large and complicated organisational set-ups are almost unavoidable. It is no surprise that almost all NGOs are considered 'intermediary'. If they are not that, they are service deliverers even when farmers' groups and associations are formally considered the 'owner' of the NGO, as in the case of ADRK. Probably, this role of 'semi-government development agency' has been forced upon many NGOs as in the early 1960s and 1970, there was very little government presence, and by the time that was about to happen through a steadily increasing responsibility of those governments, structural adjustment reduced the roles and apparatuses of these governments again. There is a keen interest among development agents at all levels in the possible impact of decentralisation, because this will again bring the role of government closer to the population, but now with the possibility to use the local development funds provided to hire the services of NGOs and government, even private enterprises alike.

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<sup>17</sup> Of course, the boundaries are vague, and some expenditures on farmers' training courses may as well be considered educational or training in character. Education/training are those expenditures, which can not easily be earmarked as falling under one of the other sectors.

Indicators for the NGOs for the period 1990-2001 (if available), in % and €

### NGOs

Variable Country NGO	NOVIB Mali ACORD	ICCO Burkina Faso ODE	Ghana PCG	Mali AMSS	Cordaid Burkina Faso ADRK	Ghana DNB
NGO started	1975/6	1972	1963	1991/2	1969	1981 (DDO)
CFA support since	1982	1977	1965	1992/3	1973	1994
Number of donors (2001)	±7	±6	1 dominant, 4 other,	2	2 main structural donors, 6 smaller incidental	4 major, many small (church groups Europe)
Avg annual budget	±1.2 mln total	±90,000 (1999-2000) fonctionnement ODE 1.3 mln (2000) PLCP <sup>18</sup>	200,000 (1992-2001) excl overhead HQ	31,061 (1993-1995) 124,726 (1996-1998) 166,097 (1999-2001)	574,823 (1991-1995) 1,053,307(1996-2000) 916,814 (2001) <sup>19</sup>	1.8 m (DNB) 250,000 (1994-2001) BAFP
Avg share of CFA in NGO budget	60%	ODE HQ: 30%. Projects 10-50%	90%	57 % (1993-2001)	80% (1991-2001) <sup>20</sup>	80-85 %
Avg share other donors	40%	100% (small projects) to 50 % (dams and PLCP)	10%	43 % (1993-2001)	18% (1991-2001)	15-20%
Avg share own funding <sup>21</sup>	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited; up to 2 %	Limited
Trend in share of CFA in total NGO budget	Stable until 1998 (end of relationship)	Decreasing	Stable	42 % (1993) to 73 % (2001)	Stable until 2000, decreasing to 0 in 2003.	Increased since start
Avg number of staff	8-10 (Timbuktu)	Unclear	Garu: 15	13	± 70-80 until 2001, 46 (2002)	8 in DDO, 14 in BAFP as extension off.
Trend in number of staff	Decreasing	-	Stable	2 (1992) to 15 (2002)	Decreasing	-
Characteristic of the NGO	Intermediary	Intermediary	Intermediary	Intermediary	Farmers´ association	Intermediary
Main target groups	Small farmers and Agro-pastoralists, women	Women, small farmers, rural population	All inhabitants of Garu	Whole population	Small farmers, women	All inhabitants of Bongo
Sectors <sup>22</sup>			PCG as a whole:		(recent situation) <sup>23</sup>	DNB as a whole:
Primary production	40	68	57	34	50	19
Organisational support	10	10	7	24	30	28
Training/ education	25	4	3	12	20	-
Health and other	25	18	33	4	10	53 (credit/enterprise:30)

<sup>18</sup> The financial situation at ODE is extremely vague. Budgets are presented for each separate project, and for ODE HQ (frais de fonctionnement). PLCP is the annual budget for Programme de Lutte Contre la Pauvreté. Spending lagged at 52.000 € in 2000.

<sup>19</sup> These are regular budgets of ADRK, including an average for project related activities. During much of this period, additional funding was obtained for specific projects, but the data are not adequate enough to be able to calculate precise annual budgets including these amounts. Therefore averages have been added to the regular budgets.

<sup>20</sup> the position has reversed since 2001 and the Dutch Embassy is now the main donor, Cordaid contributing about 15 percent of the Embassy funding.

<sup>21</sup> The contribution of the population is not taken into account. This consists mostly of labour, materials and local financial contributions

<sup>22</sup> This applies to the funds donated by the CFA.

<sup>23</sup> This is an estimate at best, as the financial reporting of ADRK is notoriously complex, and the activities are integrated, so that splitting of budgets is difficult.

Another point is the limited number of donors that each of the NGOs studied had. Between 2 and 7 major donors support the cases studied, and in most cases, the CFA donor figured among the bigger donors, if not the biggest donor by far. Nowhere is the percentage that the CFA funding forms of the total budget below  $\pm 60$  percent, which is quite substantial. But it may equally reach around 90 percent, so that the NGO is fully dependent on the CFA for its funding. This discussion applies to financial inputs of course, and even though the financial input by the local population is limited, their contributions in the form of local materials, labour and other inputs may be considerable. The opportunity cost of labour however is very low, and lower even in the period during which most of the labour is used (the dry season, as in the rainy season no labour is available for communal activities). Therefore, the financial equivalent value of this contribution may still be low. The discussion on whether an NGO should be dependent on only one donor to the degree illustrated here has been raging for more than a decade, as even in the earlier 'Impact study' in this area, a similar situation was found (Zaal *et al* 1991, Zaal 1991). In terms of trends in funding, there is very little to say about whether old established NGOs continue to receive increasing sums of funds from the CFAs. This depends on the growth of the NGO, which necessitates a steady increase of funding, and whether the CFA wants to continue to fund these NGOs. After a certain period of time, the changing policy of the CFA in terms of country involvement (Cordaid in Burkina Faso) and involvement with certain types of NGO (as in the case of NOVIB) may lead to the decision to stop funding even when the NGO is performing well. In the case of ODE, there is a clear and systematic policy to reduce the weight of the NGO in the CFA budget, but in this case this is rather less problematic as the NGO has a larger number of donors, with which it has a regular and well-established form of discussion about these funding issues. Incidentally, the financial situation of the NGOs is not always very clear, and this relates probably to the issue mentioned in chapter 6 on flexibility. This time, it is not flexibility of goals, objectives and approaches (making it possible to express a clear commitment on the one hand, and implementing that commitment as the situation dictates on the other), but financial flexibility. For various reasons, it is needed to temporarily use funds from one budget line for purposes for which they may not have been meant (see the case of DNB funded by Cordaid). This occurs when funding decisions on the part of the donor is delayed, and work has to start or continue due to seasonal implementation periods. In addition, controlling boards or the government may want to have some influence over spending that the directorate of the NGO wants to avoid. The fact that the Burkinabé NGOs in particular show this tendency points to the fact that in the recent past, NGOs in that country have been monitored very closely by the government during the period of Sankara and even more recently (Zaal 1991). The national 'Bureau de Suivi des ONGs' (BUSONG) was established for that purpose, and it is still an issue in the NGO world in this country.

*The CFAs: ICCO and its relations with NGOs in the three countries*

In the subsequent paragraphs, we will now turn to the CFAs and see how their relationships with the NGOs studied and with other NGOs in the three countries have developed. Data on the CFAs is presented in the table on the following page.

Fact sheet evaluated CFAs/ NGOs,  
Indicators for the CFAs for the period 1990-2001 (if available), in % and €

CFAs

Variable Country	NOVIB Mali ACORD	ICCO <sup>24</sup> Burkina Faso ODE	Ghana PCG	Mali AMSS	Cordaid Burkina Faso ADRK	Ghana DNB
Avg. total annual disbursement to country (€)	750,000	750,000	North: 400,000 Gh total: 600,000	800,000	±190,000 (last four years)	North: 1.0 mln. 1,474,000 (total GH)
Trend in total annual disbursement	Increasing from ± 100,000 in 1990 to ± 1.1 mln in 2001	Decreasing from 566,741 in 1990 to 728,313 in 2001	Increasing	Increasing from ±60,000 in 1990 to ± 1.3 mln in 1997-2001	Decreasing	North: up from 230,000 in 1992 to ±1 mln. Total GH: ± 500,000 in 1992 to 2.2 mln 2001
Number of partners	22 total, avg 11	1 (1990) to 7 (2001)	North: 7 GH total 21	Average 7, increasing from 2 in 1990 to 11 in 2001.	10 mid 1990s to 0 (2003)	North: 9, up from 5 in 1993, stable since 1997/8. total GH: 24 (ongoing 2001)
Avg amount received by case NGO per year	246,163 <sup>25</sup>	770,105	300,000 (PCG activities in Northern Ghana); 20% to PAS-Garu	115,205 <sup>26</sup>	211,000	200,000 (DDO N/B) 17% to BAFFP
% €of total to case NGO	Avg 34 <sup>27</sup>	Avg 80 (total period)	77% of funds to Northern Ghana (1992-2001)	14 <sup>28</sup>	95%	19% of funds to Northern Ghana to DDO N/B
Trend in % €to case NGO	50 in 1992 to 30 in 1998	100 in 1990 to 21 in 2001	Relatively stable.	Around 20 in 1992/3 to 10 in 1999/2000	Decreasing from 1999 onwards	Decreasing

<sup>24</sup> Based on ICCO partners only, SOH partners before the merger are not included, e.g. IBFAN.

<sup>25</sup> Average amount for 7 years in which ACORD received funding (1992-1998)

<sup>26</sup> Average amount for 9 years in which AMSS received funding (1992-2000)

<sup>27</sup> Average percentage for 7 years in which ACORD received funding (1992-1998)

<sup>28</sup> Average percentage for 9 years in which AMSS received funding (1992-2000)

### *ICCO and its partner NGOs in the two countries*

ICCO seems to have operated inadequately with respect to its Ghanaian partners over the last 10 years. However, according to spokespersons, ICCO is now 'out of the crisis', and support from ICCO was extremely important in several areas. This specifically referred to the implementation of a gender policy, the setting up of a better quality-assurance policy and a more strategic reflection concerning the potential investment guidelines. In this regard, it is interesting to note how important the intermediary organisations are: ACDEP in particular, but also the support offered from the Netherlands by I/C Consult and the officer responsible for the country at ICCO. It is also important that a sizeable 'development structure' has been established. Individuals from North Ghana who have worked for NGOs and who did consulting work for them seem to have all kinds of links to the 'development lobby'. This lobby encompasses the NGO sector, local universities and local authorities. Considering the relative importance of the NGO sector in bringing about innovations in agricultural, environmental and organisational areas, it is defensible to state that the NGO sector was of crucial importance for rural development. Its broad social scope and reach also contributed to continued combating of poverty, reaching a large, relatively poor group. The fact that the development activities of PCG is linked to churches in some of the villages (which are socially important institutions), supports the carry-over effect, the sustainability and the breadth of activities. The drawback is that groups that are socially isolated from these churches benefit less. The size of the disbursements and the fact that continuous support is given to a large NGO, which is very central to the success of the development scene in northern Ghana. PCG has played an important role in the development sector, and this supports the idea that the choice for continuation of this relationship was a sound one.

In Burkina Faso, too, ICCO has long had contacts with mainly one NGO (over the last ten years starting in 1990 to the present), ODE (Zaal *et al*, 2002, ch 9). Of the money spent in Burkina Faso, 83 percent went via this organisation. However, from 1993 onwards, the small group of NGOs supported was supplemented very slowly with NGOs that were initially busy with comparable activities but which in recent years have also been active in sectors other than integrated rural development. ADRA was the first of these in 1993. However, from 1999, more NGOs became involved. Their activities are less extensive. For quite some time there has been a much more open relationship between the donors who provide funding to ODE directly but discuss the modalities via the '*Table Ronde*', a forum for discussion between ODE and its donor partners which incorporates the major donors among which ICCO and Brot für die Welt. It is a forum where, on the basis of equality, discussions take place about the relationship and policy. Recently there were some disagreements among the partners concerning the added value of this relationship on the one hand and the lack of flexibility on the other<sup>29</sup>. This touches on an interesting discussion: should the donors with their protestant identity continue to support similarly focussed NGOs exclusively, or are other NGOs equally likely to be partners. ODE felt strongly (at least, expressed this view in communications to its board, partly to convince that board that financing could come from non-protestant donors as well) that the choice for other partner-NGOs by ICCO (see the reduced funding from ICCO to ODE in terms of percentage of aid given to NGOs in the country) was an indication of reduced confidence on the basis of its protestant worldview. Both ICCO and BfdW expressed

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<sup>29</sup> There was slight disappointment at ODE for instance at the suggestion that policies of the donors could change, and so would funding commitments. The suggestion of ODE was to make the individual donors responsible for separate parts of the programmes, so that ODE could also look for new donors for the parts left out. The response was not to do this and to see the *Table Ronde* as a forum for discussion of policy and a means of accommodating funding and reporting procedures rather than a donor 'consortium'. There was much trust in the NGO.

their continued commitment to ODE. However, the *'Table Ronde'* is an exceptional institution that provides a certain amount of openness. This discussion and bilateral discussions between ODE and its financiers have in any case resulted in a large degree of sensitivity to new tendencies in development thinking among both the donors and ODE alike. Although late, at the insistence of the donor, gender was introduced as a major issue. That also applied to the methodology in formulating and monitoring projects. These issues have now been incorporated satisfactorily.

In Mali ICCO is one of the many development organisations working together with local NGOs. Qua scope the contribution via CFA's is small, 4.0 percent of total development assistance to Mali, but at the level of local NGO's and the intervention villages their contribution often is important. This aid is visible and appreciated. The population has the impression that there is attention for their situation and that something is actually being done about it. This is important, considering the unrest that prevailed in the 1990s, especially in the north of Mali. One should not forget the reason of the 'rebellion' of some Tamachek groups: the deteriorating economic position of the group and the lack of government investments in the region. The presence of CFA's such as AMSS is much appreciated by the population.

The relationships between ICCO and AMSS generally are good. The NGO has much freedom to design its own policies, policies that are subject to critical evaluations and frank discussions with the regional representative of ICCO. The head office of the NGO is visited twice a year by ICCO staff, which is relatively frequent and at least each year some activities of AMSS are being visited in the field. Although ICCO is not steering AMSS into a defined direction, AMSS knows by experience the direction proposals need to have if funding is to be obtained. The relative freedom granted by ICCO also has its down side. It does not compel the local organisation to be critical of its own policy and actions. On paper, AMSS's plans look great, in practice there were sometimes major problems that more or less were swept under the rug. An example is the school in Wana. According to the documents, there should be 137 pupils enrolled. During the visit of the research team there were only 40 pupils. In the most senior form (children of 12 years old) no longer a single girl was participating. The health centre was confronted with similar problems: attendance was far below the estimates made beforehand. In general, one wonders whether it makes sense to establish a school and a health centre in a village with a maximum of 450 inhabitants, of which only a hundred were present at the time of the research. Not surprisingly, the inhabitants complained about the high costs, though they had been instrumental in starting this school. AMSS should perhaps have assisted in calculating more precisely the costs and benefits of such an endeavour to the population. The location of school and health centre, both financially supported by ICCO through AMSS from 1999 till 2001, however, had a political dimension. Wana aspired to become the seat of the new rural commune, at the cost of the village with the actual commune seat. In the new decentralised reality, it is usually the village with the commune seat that gets the social service institutions. The director of AMSS placed the responsibility of these ideas and actions with the population of Wana.

The relationships between NGO and government are complicated. Partly the NGO's filled and fills up the gaps left by the national government with respect to development investments and institution building. Sometimes AMSS and local government services work together, and it is not exceptional when the NGO pays for the services. However, sometimes their actions are not tuned at all. AMSS is well aware of the changing reality with decentralised government and local representation. It has implemented courses to instruct the population on the new situation and courses to alphabetise and train the new local representatives. AMSS keeps up regular contacts with local authorities and discusses its activities. The situation of the general director of AMSS is peculiar because of his different political positions as president of the

regional council and as a representative to the *Assemblée Nationale*. The other, smaller donor of AMSS, Brot für die Welt, does not approve this entanglement of functions. ICCO does not agree with Brot für die Welt over this question, which has caused tensions between the two donors. The last years Brot für die Welt is decreasing its contribution to AMSS, to less than 25%, which makes AMSS more dependent on ICCO. Although ICCO tried to convince AMSS to look actively after other donors it has not succeeded. Neither has AMSS attempted to participate in tendering for the implementation of government sector programmes (in the field of education and health care).

#### *Cordaid and its partner NGOs in the two countries*

There seems to be a major difference between the way in which Cordaid and ICCO have operated in recent years in relations with their partners in North Ghana. In this regard, it is notable how important individuals are, which add a human face to the relationship, and how problematical the lack of continuity and institutional memory can be. Both ICCO and Cordaid seem to have operated inadequately with respect to their Ghanaian partners over the last 10 years. Only at ICCO can it be said that they are 'out of the crisis' (Dietz *et al* 2002, ch 8). According to spokespersons on the subject NGOs, support from ICCO (and a little from Cordaid) was important in the areas of gender policy, a quality-assurance policy and a strategic reflection concerning the potential investment guidelines. However, the relationship between Cordaid and its partners, in particular the DNB, has been worrisome for a number of reasons. The combination of a considerable number of relatively small partner NGOs with very many small projects (2001: 23 partners with 57 on-going projects) and a very rapid turnover of staff at Cordaid for a variety of reasons means that the relationships of Cordaid with individual NGOs should be described as one of instability and discontinuity. One visit by a Cordaid staff member every three years was the rule rather than the exception and 'donorship' is hard to establish that way. Trusting the NGO on the basis of its catholic background can again be too 'cosy', and leads to a lack of checks and balances. If the local NGO is also rather spread thin in the location of its projects, than the impact is very hard to measure. Also, with Cordaid staff having to get acquainted every time with new dossiers, financial schedules are seldom maintained, and there has been a huge problem with funding of projects, with delays of between half to one year for 47 out of 57 projects (Dietz *et al* 2002). Cross financing of projects that did receive funding means bending the rules a bit, a practice which should not be necessary. Shifting to bigger intermediary NGOs such as National Catholic Development Council (NCDC) and think-tank like NGO such as ACDEP is seen as too risky in the context of Ghana though the latter more for reasons of dominating a well functioning establishment than for other reasons. Recent experiences have made Cordaid a bit reluctant to take the step to umbrella NGOs. Another conception at Cordaid in the 1970s was the idea that a government was virtually absent and that the large NGO sector in the area were a sort of pseudo-government. Much like in other areas in the Sahel, notably Burkina Faso, this may have been true and this situation remained until the 1990s, when governments were considered as blocking rather than supporting development. This led to the idea that NGOs were to be multi-sectoral in their attitude and approach. However, in Ghana now, with the support of the World Bank and other donors, the government is seen by Cordaid to be certainly active in at least some sectors such as infrastructure, health and education. Decentralisation offers new opportunities as well. Needed now are NGOs which can tap into these resources, not providing these services. Along the same line, a more balanced set of donors would be preferable. The 'cosy' situation has led to a high degree of dependence on only one donor (see the fact sheets above), and the very idea of partial withdrawal is a breach of trust that shocks the NGO. And here, much like in Burkina Faso, the catholic church sees the change of approach and the apparent lack of support from Cordaid as a potential threat to

its position of provider of services, and thus its being an attractive proposition. Cordaid's pool consists of a larger number of NGOs, which are still mainly Catholic organisations. Cordaid's dissatisfaction with the slow rate of the desired change and Cordaid's own policy debate has resulted in a search for new NGO partners beyond the traditional reach. A conflict-ridden situation is developing.

The fact that relations between Cordaid and its partners were uneasy for a long time also applies to Burkina Faso, although relations were less strained in Ghana than between ADRK and Cordaid, with disastrous effects there (Zaal *et al* 2002, ch 8). For the most part, this NGO also has to rely on an extremely limited number of donors, of which Cordaid is traditionally the most important. Although there is a degree of confidence based on the Catholic background, in the past this dominance of one donor has had some undesired effects. ADRK is part of a tense world of Roman Catholic organisations and a State in which each has its own goals and to which ADRK has to listen for guidance as to policy and institutional set-up. The Catholic Church exerts a continuous pressure, while that of the state is very fluctuating, varying with the character of national politics. The revolutionary period under president Sankara was particularly influential in this respect<sup>30</sup>. As a result, ADRK has become cautious. In its financial reports, it is careful to smooth over certain details that would give too much away about its internal workings and reserves, to put it mildly. Although there do not appear to have been any misappropriations and everyone within the organisation sincerely works for the common good, not everyone can easily verify this. In addition, various outside parties, including donors such as Cordaid and the embassy, feel that ADRK should become a professional organisation. There has been considerable pressure to implement this multitude of policy influences and pressures. Cordaid wished to convert part of the staff and the management of ADRK into a more professional service provider against the wishes of the church (juridical responsible and afraid for overextending its reach), the mission (in favour of a small CBO), the members (for fear of high costs) and part of the staff (the earlier lower paid staff not necessarily taken on for specific professional tasks), each for their own reasons. This pressure resulted in a fierce conflict between the institutional environment (mission, church, Cordaid, the male and female farmers who are members) and the various parts of the staff and management of ADRK. Following a lengthy process, control finally returned to the church. The organisation was thinned out, with part of the staff leaving. There were two successive directors and, for several years, much of the work laid idle. This conflict often involved individuals, and it is difficult to draw a general conclusion about it. At present, there is not much communication from Cordaid due to the phasing-out stage in which the CFA finds itself vis-à-vis Burkina Faso. Cordaid still has a small number of partners (including ADRK, which is the largest), but is now cutting back its activities. In 2003, it will only provide funding to ADRK, the Diocese of Kaya and OCADES (also in Kaya), and to Benepnooma and AMUS (both in Koudougou). All these organisations are related to the church or mission in some form. Financial support will also be given to GRAAP in Bobo-Dioulasso. From 2003, Cordaid will no longer have any obligations in Burkina Faso. This makes it difficult to devote much attention (other than financial) to ADRK's problems, despite the fact that Cordaid seems to be at least partly accountable for proper institutional support. Apart from all this, the forced cooperation between ADRK and other agencies<sup>31</sup> and the difficulty of implementing

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<sup>30</sup> At the time, ADRK had put much effort in decentralising its activities to the point that the unions of local groups were at the point of becoming separate NGOs, or rather some form of cooperatives, so as to avoid control on NGOs imposed by the government.

<sup>31</sup> The Netherlands Government funded PEDI project handed over its credit programme, which was based on other principles however, which caused motivation problems at village level and much sorting out at the HQ of ADRK.

nationally formulated policies (*Gestion de Terroir* for example) with a very specific kind of farmers' organisation such as ADRK caused many difficulties. The establishment of a '*Comité de Réflexion*' did not solve much as one of the dominant actors in the conflict, father Balemans, was member. Cordaid's years of concentrating on development offices of Catholic Dioceses and their fairly traditional '*catch all*' approach in that country (with much emphasis on health care, primary production and the environment), along with Cordaid's current attempts to reduce direct support to combating poverty may lead to a major confrontation. However, it should be noted that this is not the only case and the only country where communication problems exist. It is clear that Cordaid has not yet emerged from the 'crisis' to the same extent as ICCO has. Interestingly, staff members of ADRK who departed all found work in the active NGO, project and government sectors, where they are greatly appreciated. It was previously noted that the staff of ADRK received good in-service training, but were only modestly paid. This led at the time (early 1990s) to a relatively high staff turnover. Training new people was a constant concern and an expensive process. Former ADRK employees can now be found in all kinds of organisations in various jobs. Without hesitation, one can say that ADRK has played a major role in creating the necessary human resource framework for development in the region and beyond.

#### *NOVIB and its partner in Mali*

As already described before, ACORD-Timbuktu is an intermediate organisation supported by a group of donors, organised in ACORD-LONDON. When a donor deals with ACORD-Timbuktu it passes through the executive secretariat in London. This executive secretariat proposes and identifies the activities for the next programme. The different members of ACORD London choose to support certain activities of the programme and demand an evaluation according to their own criteria. Among these donors NOVIB was a rather important one for ACORD-Timbuktu. But NOVIB is going to terminate its financial support of ACORD-Timbuktu (not ACORD-Mali as a partner, only the Timbuktu program) at the end of 2002 in favour of one or two local NGO's created by ACORD-Timbuktu in the 1990s. In addition, in 2003 ACORD-London organisation will change into an international organisation with headquarters in London and in Nairobi. The consequences for ACORD-Timbuktu were not yet clear.

The relationships between NOVIB and ACORD-T were considered as good by both sides. In general NOVIB transferred the finances in time. Only once payment came late, which caused much trouble. Apart from finances NOVIB supported ACORD-T also by organising meetings of discussion and reflection. The exchange of ideas, resulting from visits by country experts, assessment studies and discussions, was much appreciated by ACORD-T. NOVIB also executed useful studies on the specific problems in the region and the desired direction of developments. This knowledge was used to design interventions that corresponded better with the needs and possibilities of the population. NOVIB and ACORD-T claimed that the latter was autonomous in the implementation of programmes. The methodological support of NOVIB with respect to the evaluations was also much appreciated. Every year the NGO compiled a progress report, and at the end of each long-term programme an evaluation by outside experts takes place. NOVIB devoted considerable attention to monitoring and assessment. However, little attention is given to the asymmetric relationship between CFA and NGO. Local organisations are supposedly given sufficient freedom to make proposals. From the assessments and exchange of ideas the local organisation understands the direction required in writing new proposals and it attempts to meet expectations from the start. There were also tensions with respect to the results of the interventions. NOVIB wanted quicker results, also with respect to changing positions of women, to social exclusion, individual responsibility, attitude towards the environment etc. ACORD-T found NOVIB

impatient with respect to these desired social changes. Another source of tension is the exit strategy of NOVIB. The logical phasing of interventions is those directed to advancement, followed by those directed to the social organisation, to self-promotion, followed by cutting back in support and departure. The NGO is forced to follow the same line with respect to local organisations and is confronted with a population that does not want to be left without support. NOVIB prefers to work with local organisations; the creation of the intermediate organisation ACORD was necessary because of the absence of local organisations at the time. Now, these local organisations have been detached from ACORD-T and the latter is considered redundant. NOVIB expects to realise its goals through cooperation with these recently created local organisations.

#### *The institutional context and comparison*

In general, the CFA is of course dependent on incoming requests for funding. Subsequently, there is a process of decision making and selection at ICCO. Partly, this decision is based on whether the principles from which the NGO departs can be accepted by ICCO (which, in case of Protestant organisations is often the case understandably) and whether the NGO meets a number of other criteria (quality of the organisation and the proposal, etc). ICCO sets the percentage of Protestant partner organisations in 2001 at 28 percent. In Ghana perhaps less than in Burkina Faso, there has been a conscious effort to diversify. In Mali, ICCO does not automatically align itself with the small Christian section of the population either. On the contrary, no distinction is made according to religious background, which would be very difficult in this predominantly Muslim country. In Ghana, many other Protestant NGOs (there is a diverse religious community) seem to have their own donor lines, not necessarily involving ICCO.

At Cordaid there is an identity crisis as far as Ghana is concerned (Dietz *et al* 2002, ch 8). They seem to be ashamed of their Catholic partners and their 'old-fashioned' approach to development. They are diligently looking around for partners with greater strategic and intellectual scope. They would like to achieve an equal distribution of Catholic and non-Catholic organisations that, however, would all have to be 'faith-based'. In Burkina Faso's practice, this has not been fleshed out because of its withdrawal from the country. Both Cordaid and ICCO are involved in the more prominent umbrella organisation in Ghana, ACDEP. They are also involved in one of the most successful credit organisations for women (BESSFA, arising from PCG-Garu). In Burkina Faso, besides the national NGO collaboration platform SPONG, there are several umbrella organisations operating on a religious basis that, however, are partially international in nature or serve as the national offices of international umbrella organisations such as CIDSE. Other thematic national umbrella organisations are also active in Burkina Faso and both NGOs (ODE and ADRK) are active within them. SPONG, the national co-ordinating office of all major NGOs in Burkina Faso, is not sponsored directly by the CFAs.

NOVIB says that it selects its partners on the basis of applications that they receive. These applications must fit in with general policy and are judged by a country expert, assisted by others at NOVIB and by financial experts. At NOVIB, there is comprehensive assessment and, if the request concerns a major project, more levels are brought in. The existence of a CFA channel has led to broad, effective support in North Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mali to some of the major (religious) development organisations active in the area. It has also resulted in a large number of individuals that, thanks to CFA support, managed to expand to a 'development staff pool', which is politically and strategically important at higher pay-scale levels and at other organisations. Support from the CFAs (especially from ICCO and NOVIB)

for quality improvement has been important for the work of the NGO sector in North Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mali. On the other hand, much support has also led to a certain ‘freezing’ of approaches and policy within a NGO or even the NGO sector as a whole, a sector that has simply become accustomed to a specific approach. This is certainly true if the discussion between donor and NGO was not sufficiently geared towards formulating policy in a changing national context. ICCO and NOVIB seem to have been most innovative and challenging in this respect. The same can be said about the ties between donors and NGOs. For too long, the NGO sector has trusted blindly in the long-lasting continuation of the ties with NOVIB, ICCO and Cordaid and the financial independence that has long been the case gives cause for concern, certainly in view of the drifting policy of Cordaid (a good share of the ‘development intelligentsia’ depends entirely on the CFAs for their salaries). In Mali it proved difficult to convince the NGO to participate in government programmes or find other donors, and the same can be said for ADRK, which has only started in the last few years to ask other donors for support. The way this is done seems not to be thought out well.

Of course, support to the NGO sector could also come from embassies or country offices of international organisations and, somehow, this does take place in Ghana and certainly in Burkina Faso, though hardly in Mali. The question is whether this could be done with the same commitment and long duration as was the case with ICCO and, every now and then, with Cordaid. In Burkina Faso, for example, the NGO sector is considered an extremely valuable development force, but it is primarily supported only in subsections that the embassies find of interest. This interest is especially fed by the need to gain practical field experience, to experiment with approaches in order to feel the impact of government-stimulated policy on civil society. The embassies in Ghana and Mali seem much less interested or committed, or consciously have a policy of non-intervention in the NGO world.

However, the added value of the CFA channel (in terms of commitment and long duration) could have been better exploited than was the case, and the CFA sector could have been more successful in building bridges between small-scale capacity structures there and small-scale involvement by the Dutch people. The experiences in one of the PCG villages in Ghana, for example, with this ‘development aid with a human face’ show this effect, but they are diametrically opposed to a more bureaucratic method of development assistance, of the kind employed by the large bilateral and multilateral donors. In this way, active individuals can have an enormously favourable impact. If not part of the CFP programme proper, they are certainly an interesting part of the environment of the partner NGOs.

## 8. Conclusions

Together with the country reports, this synthesis report has tried to provide the data needed to answer the questions posed in chapter two of this report. We refer to the country reports, because obviously there was more room there to adequately answer these answers with the detail needed. However, we will in this last chapter give a brief resume of the data.

### *Changes in livelihoods in the Sahel*

First, we have provided information on the general trends in the region of the Sahel. After a period of steadily reduced precipitation, by up to a third of what was received in the 1950s and 1960s, the last few years have seen a steady improvement to the long-term average precipitation, though with the occasional drought year. Meanwhile, the economic situation has improved in the sense that improved infrastructure, liberalised markets, reduced levels of bureaucratisation along borders, privatisation and the devaluation of the CFA have provided opportunities that the Sahelian population have not neglected to grab. A degree of political stability has been reintroduced in Mali after the uprising in the north, in Burkina after the period of Sankara and the first few years of the presidency of Compaoré, and in Ghana. First, increasing and later steady flows of development assistance after the 1970s and 1980s have given the governments and NGOs the means to establish a basic level of services, social organisation, and capital for investment, though the remote areas in this region are still very much in need of those means. On the other hand, populations have continued to grow, and with limited means, investments in agriculture have had to be limited, and the pressure on land, despite a steadily rising productivity of land, has increased. A process of further degradation has been slow to stop. After a high level of migration to the coastal countries, many of the opportunities have been reduced due to political unrest in those countries, further increasing pressure on resources. However, after the very harsh period of the 1970s and 1980s, when people had to adapt to very low levels of rainfall, the technology was developed, often with the help of NGOs as studied here, projects and the farmers themselves above all. When the rainfall returned to higher levels, this knowledge has helped to bring agriculture on a relatively efficient and productive level. In Mali (as in many other areas in the pastoral regions of Africa), sedentarisation among the former nomadic groups has occurred, hand in hand with a change from a dominant pastoral or transhumant way of life to a livelihood comprising in the first place agricultural activities and in the second place animal husbandry, besides commercial activities and/or handicraft. The pressure on arable land increased and has sometimes led to growing tensions between traditional and new agriculturalists. The combination of different economic activities at the same time or in different seasons or years, of local and extra-local resources, sometimes including migration, is typical for the Sahel and is sometimes referred to as the Sahelian way of life.

Change and adaptation to change have become ever more necessary, and for this, instruction, information, organisation, cooperation, social skills and management qualities are essential. The NGO's all are active in these fields. Locally they created many development related jobs. Against this background, livelihood strategies have changed. Instead of a high level of specialisation in grain cultivation and pastoral or transhumant pastoralism, integration of farming systems has occurred. Cooperation between cultivators and pastoral peoples has deteriorated because of this. Off-farm and non-farm employment has become important, both in the region, and in the in-migration areas further away, so that multi-sectoral and multi-locational household livelihood strategies have developed. Cash crop farming has become important, both for local markets, regional capitals, large cities along the coast, and even in Europe. The use of irrigated agriculture has increased wherever the resources (land, labour,

water, knowledge and a market within reach) were available. In Mali, sedentarisation has occurred, with a change from nomadic pastoralism to sedentarised cultivation along the river Niger. Change and adaptation to change has ever more become necessary, and for this, information, cooperation, social skills and management qualities and an educated population are essential. The development-related jobs are very important locally. In whatever combination, by which ethnic or social group, the available resources or capitals as we have called them here are used in the whole of the Sahel in a very wide variety of ways, but generally we could call them the Sahelian way, the Sahelian way of life.

We have seen that many of the people interviewed have formulated positive ideas about this change but also negative ideas, and the availability of the capitals has certainly not increased for everyone. The methodology adopted has allowed insights into the *perceptions* by the population of the above changes, changes, which might be called 'objective', or 'generalised', or 'averaged'. Averaged, because these changes, to the individual or social group, are not always positive or negative, as described above, for all people or groups of people. We will come back below on which changes were assessed positively by which group. Locally and for certain groups, they more general trends have been influenced by more local trends, and the one we were interested in mostly was the influence of NGOs sponsored by the CFAs of study. These NGOs, and the CFAs, also have their perceptions of the situation, and this of course influences their actions as well. The same can even be said for the governments in all its varied forms of organisations and responsibilities.

The methodology has also allowed us to have insight in the perceptions of the success or failure with which the CFA supported NGOs have been able to change these wider trends into the desired direction, the direction of reduced poverty and sustainable rural development. In particular, we have tried to find out which group was affected by what form of change, and in how far this has been the result of the involvement with the NGO. Finally, we have tried to relate these perceptions with data from the field, with information about actual change in the peoples' individual and household capitals. The latter has proven to be very difficult, not only on theoretical grounds, but on practical grounds as well. However, in at least one case, in Ghana, this has been successfully concluded, while a more qualitative picture has developed in the two other countries, Burkina Faso and Mali.

#### *Effects and impacts of NGO intervention*

The chapter on trends and perceived changes (chapter 3) showed the information on the generalised trends, and the perceived trends from the perspective of the populations. There have been many changes identified, of a much more varied nature than expected. We will only discuss them very briefly here per capital, and relate them to the activities of the NGOs. On natural capital, it is clear that the trends as described in the first part of that chapter, of a general tendency of degradation, were perceived by the local population in the study villages as the negative changes. Lower rainfall, degradation, fewer useful trees, erosion, those are the terms. The positive changes are related to a reversal of those developments, with formulations such as more and more varied crops, higher yields, soil and water conservation, larger farm sizes, more trees and regeneration of grazing areas, and more livestock (for fattening). If we then look at the activities in these areas, we establish that the NGOs have been active in this field of natural capital, and has been almost the exclusive actor due to the tendency among NGOs in the Sahel to refrain from working in each others' villages. The exception may be the introduction of other varieties of crops, although even here the NGOs have contributed. We observe therefore that the activities of the NGOs in this field have changed the more general trend, have had effects as described, and these effects can be attributed in a large degree to those activities. The impact has been an improved food situation, better health, and more stable incomes. In terms of rural development, more structural integration of the production of

crops and livestock in the market has been possible due to the steady and increased production levels, though probably the livelihood systems have not changed from subsistence based to fully commercial. There is a marginal increase however. The CFAs have contributed to this change with their support, as much of the funding of the activities in these villages has come from the CFAs due to the fact that they are so dependent on only one donor, the CFA<sup>32</sup>.

Whether this in itself is a good thing is another question answered below, but it does make the problem of attributing these changes to the activities supported by the CFA easier. There is a difference in impact dependent on the social group one belongs to. (Male) landowners have benefit more from soil-based improvements, women and various cultural (ethnic, religious) groups not centrally located in the NGO have benefited more from natural resource based, water based and livestock based improvements. The poor in some areas have benefited by the better access to resources (Mali), small-scale non-soil based activities (Burkina Faso) and specifically targeted activities (Ghana).

In terms of physical capital, the general trends are mixed. There is a general trend towards better roads, larger networks, lower transaction costs, and better (private) services (information on markets, mobile telephones, less harassment at borders and in the countries by officials, etc). However, the roads and dams are not always maintained, and this is a problem of government investment and maintenance budgets. In addition, inputs in agriculture (materials, fertilisers) have become more expensive due to the devaluation of the CFA. The locally perceived changes are related to better water sources, better quality water, more livestock, better agricultural equipment and infrastructure (ploughs, pumps, small tools, irrigation facilities, etc), more and better roads, more and better buildings with a social function, including schools, churches and mosques, and grain banks. The water sources, buildings and roads have been the responsibility of both NGOs and the governments, the other improvements can be ascribed to the activities of the NGOs, who have all been active in these sectors. Negative effects have been caused by the higher costs of these innovations and changes, and this means that the population is forced into commercialisation more than it would otherwise probably have been. The agricultural based physical capital improvements have benefited men. Other improvements have benefited all groups (water for example), while also the buildings and their function were available to all groups. Again, the attribution of the NGO-based effects and impacts to the assistance of the CFAs is not very problematic, though part of the success is based on the general trends and government assistance.

In terms of human capital, the general trend is a very slow improvement of educational and health levels, and an awareness of family planning, and the value of migration in terms of knowledge. Negative changes are also based on negative trends, not on the role of interventions (though perhaps a lack of effective interventions, such as is the case with new diseases such as AIDS). The positive changes in the villages focused on more and more healthy people, better educated and trained people, both in local livelihood-supporting skills and in new skills such as accounting and group management, and above all, better educated, trained and health women who have acquired a sense of self-esteem. However, negative changes have also been found to be related to both general trends (changing society at large) and, unfortunately, to the impact of the interventions. This applies for example to the fact that new ways of behaviour, partly introduced or supported by the interventions have their negative effects and impacts as well. The exodus of the youth, the reduction of the number of children, health problems due to 'modern behaviour', higher levels of costs related to schooling and training, or time consumed through the participation in the (social) activities of the NGOs, and problems of drop-out and lost skills due to a lack of practice are all mentioned.

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<sup>32</sup> The choice of NGO has been important in the methodology, and the fact that much of the CFA's funds for each country went to the single NGO studied, and that much of the NGO's funds came from that CFA, has helped in attributing the results to the NGO and CFA in question

These case partly be attributed to the effects of the interventions, though they can also be seen as the consequence of change in Sahelian society. Much of the perception of these negative effects and their impacts on life depends on which social group is referred to however. The men have benefited from much of the activities but assess many of the changes as negative, as described above. For many women and the youth, these are benefits, not negative impacts. However, health problems due to for example sexually transmitted diseases being a problem among youth and men through loss of control and morale are a negative impact for all. In terms of economic and financial capital, the general trends are one of improved availability of resources (though perhaps not always an improvement in accessibility, though even this has improved in Ghana and Burkina Faso for example) such as formal credit facilities. Inflation and devaluation have caused problems for those with savings (but these people are few in this area). Positive changes in this sector can probably wholly be related to the activities of the NGOs. More jobs, more credit facilities, more financial independence for youth and women in particular, higher incomes due to higher levels of commercial crop production (irrigated market gardening) and livestock production (livestock fattening) are all the effects and impacts of their activities. Negative effects and impacts can also be mentioned, likewise probably attributable to their activities. Differences in wealth have occurred where they did not exist before, and those lagging have been set back relatively to those who have been able to participate early (innovation rent). Problems around credit facilities (misappropriation, indebtedness, feelings of shame when debts can not be met, inflation and management problems of the facilities have been negative effects, leading to the impact of increased levels of social strain and conflicts. However, all groups, to varying degrees have benefited (and have likewise experienced the negative effects and impacts as well). In terms of social-political capital, the context is very important, and the trend has both been helpful (more open societies, better relationships between government and (civil) society, better position for women and disadvantaged ethnic groups) and negative (strain between ethnic and ethnic-religious groups, and the problems of changing Sahelian society in general. The positive effects locally are precisely that: local. They can be attributed to the influence of the NGOs. For example, better group management, group formation, productive groups establishment, greater freedom of expression and association, the participation of women in more formal fora of decision making, and improved leadership in the villages have been these affects. There are of course negative impacts as well, related to the interventions of the NGOs. This related again to the perspective of the social groups. Men of established character have generally seen the social changes as negative effects, and their political position has deteriorated, to the benefit of the women and formally marginalized groups in society. This is an effect that was wanted by the CFAs and the NGO (though the latter not always wholeheartedly), but not by large groups of the local village society. It is the consequence of development if there is one. Lastly, cultural capital has seen changes as well. The general trend is hard to fathom, but in the villages, the positive changes may be attributable to the influence of the NGOs in quite a large degree. Both general trends and the effects of the NGOs interventions, probably support positive effects such as more non-indigenous people, more interaction between ethnic groups and more languages being spoken, and the change of the roles of women and youth. However, cultural capital related to religion did change because of their actions, both in a positive sense and in a negative sense. On these issues, the fact whether a change was perceived positively or negatively depended on the point of view of the social group encountered. Those in power saw change as threat, those in a process of emancipation saw it as beneficial. We saw it most often as a positive change, as we feel develop should be in favour of the most deprived, and it often means conflict. Positively perceived by most people were changes such as more religious activity, more festivals, and more interest in cultural activities. The women and

youth obviously saw more positive roles for women and youth, fewer practices such as forced marriage and circumcision of girls, and more urban ways as positive. The elderly people saw many forms of cultural capital decreased such as taboos, morale, authority, respect and the ability to address conflicts, loss of language purity, the loss of practices such as forced marriage and circumcision of girls, and more urban ways. From the point of view of the CFA, and probably the NGOs, the balance is favourable. In the villages, views differ between social groups to which one belongs. One has to realise that even though we call this process development, an improvement of emancipatory values, some groups may complain that it is non-development.

Overall, the effects and impacts of the NGO's work in North Ghana, Burkina Faso and Mali is substantial locally, and demonstrable the influence of the NGOs of study. The activities of the NGOs in the Sahel are very practical and seldom imbedded in a 'Great Debate' about the future of the area or of the 'peasantry'<sup>33</sup>. The major social changes in the Sahel (particularly the spatial mobility and the break-through of commercialisation, decentralisation and democratisation) still play a minor role in the strategic discussions of NGOs. The exception may be Mali, where certain social changes are factors in the strategic discussions (gender, decentralisation, democratisation, violence and solutions for these problems at AMSS and ACORD, changes in traditional hierarchical structures, poverty and marginalisation at ACORD, not the more economic factors such as commercialisation).

#### *Responding to need; policy coherence*

The question is, whether the various levels in the process of assistance have policies that respond to the need of the population, or to an objectively established need at a certain other level? Is there coherence in that multi-level policy framework, or is there a break at one or more of them? And if so, does it matter for the situation on the ground, where the population has developed a livelihood strategy that the various levels want to support and improve? We have presented policy matrixes to show that there is indeed a shift in the objectives and approaches, but whether this is a sign of policies that do not show coherence or whether this is a sign that general policies are progressively operationalised is not very clear. In the case of NOVIB and ACORD this whole process must be evaluated as rather successful, in view of the fact that the priorities of the population were met by the NGO (Acord-T). This NGO showed a high degree of policy coherence with the level of the donor (Acord-London). The activities were indeed deemed successful by the population, with the proviso that more intensive and additional activities were suggested by the population as well, and that certain groups had unmet agendas. This is rather interesting as apparently, such a process can be successful even when (or perhaps precisely because) there is very little difference of policy between CFA and NGO, because they are so closely related, institutionally spoken. Not only did receive ACORD a high degree of funding from NOVIB, it was practically set up by NOVIB. Quite a similar case can be given for AMSS, which has a similar agenda as ACORD, works in at least part of the same areas as ACORD, and serves the same population. Other cases show a higher degree of discord between policies and priorities. For example, there is a certain tension in policy priorities between Cordaid and ADRK, and there might have been even more had Cordaid continued to fund ADRK. In addition, there are differences of opinion between ADRK and certain social groups, depending on their location, about what the priorities are (women, FulBe, and the youth see matters differently than ADRK, and this applies more in

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<sup>33</sup> At least, no longer. In the early 1990s the debate raged about the Sahel and its inhabitants, leading to heated discussions among evaluators, academics and policy makers. To a certain extent, the debate passed by the NGOs or they ignored it. Wherever they took part in the discussion, this seems to have been due to pressures from the donors.

the more remote areas than in the well-connected village). In addition, there are differences in opinion about the approach (many do appreciate the innovations, but they prefer a more individual and flexible approach). Not all the priorities of the population are met, and there is a tension as well as far as cultural capital is concerned. Of the latter we can see there is a high degree of coherence between the CFA, NGO and certain sections of the population (most women, and most younger people, and many men in the well-connected areas) as far as gender is concerned. In Ghana, the situation is different, as there seems to be a high degree of coherence between ICCO, PCG and the population, now that problems around the institutional environment of PCG have been cleared away. Many activities proposed by the population are taken up by the NGO, and the degree of success is high. It is also clearer that the changes can be contributed to the activities of the NGO. There is a high degree of coherence as well between the CFA and the NGO, on the basis of adequate attention being given to discussions between NGO and CFA. Whether this applies to all social groups in the area is a point of discussion still, and one wonders whether the youth and certain culturally different groups would support this statement to the same degree. However, with the relationship between Cordaid and DDO-DNB, there seems to be much more tension between policy goals and approaches. In addition, with the proposed change of policy, there may be even more difference of opinion as to how and with whom development efforts should take place. The positive effects are less easy to contribute to the activities of the NGO, and there remain many priorities of the population unmet. There may be coherence between the CFA and the NGO (or its institutional environment), there certainly is not between the NGO and the population. Of course, certain priorities are not adopted, neither in Ghana, nor in Mali or Burkina Faso. Infrastructural services are lacking in Mali and will certainly not be built by the NGO. The available roads in Ghana need repair and other facilities need maintenance as well, but the NGOs are not likely to be involved. This applies to the more remote regions of Burkina Faso as well, though in that case study village, the issue was more of lack of sizeable input from ADRK, and the cultural change that it had brought already that was considered a disadvantage (by the men of a certain age). This issue of infrastructure should be the priority of the government, not of the NGOs.

What has become clear from this study is that distance, the geography of development, is important. In the one sense, local conditions may vary and thus the development policy should vary accordingly. However, CFAs and NGOs are part of the development establishment, and thus the general development discourse permeates their thinking. This influences their vision on local conditions and the way they should be improved. In addition, they are organisations, and they have their institutional needs. A most marked example gives the Mali case, where the extreme climate clearly favours livestock, but where the need for control and the idea of pastoralism being an occupation of a bygone age have led to the neglect of this economic activity. Similarly, the stress put on agricultural development, agriculture supposedly being the major income earner, has neglected livelihood options in other regions, countries or even continents being exploited by the local population. In another sense, local conditions are related to conditions in nearby areas, which are better developed, offering opportunities that may have been neglected earlier on. The synergy found when the introduction of agricultural innovations, new forms of credit or new crops took place under conditions of improved access to markets, reduced costs of marketing, and growing demand through urbanisation, points at the fact that support to the agricultural sector at least should be done subject to an analysis of these local and national conditions. These may change rapidly, and the challenge is to design ways to make NGO policies and local activities with the population receptive to these changes, through a participatory process of policy formulation and decision-making.

The north of Ghana shows that with the proper combination of external supporting measures (infrastructure, water development), local innovations through NGOs, and the proper combination of resources at the level of the households and individuals (land, knowledge and human resources, social capital through the church community), a true take-off may take place. The difference between the two villages in Burkina Faso shows that this pattern applies there as well. The north of Mali shows that innovations and other supporting activities by NGOs bear fruit with much difficulty as the context is much less conducive, and the available capitals at the household and individual level often scarce. Much of the context is provided by or through the state, and a beneficial environment through proper state regulations and interventions goes a long way in improving the effects and impacts of NGO activities.

A very important issue of course as far as priorities is concerned, is cultural capital; identity, ethnicity and religion. This is the first of the factors that potentially excludes people from participating in the NGO's activities, and even in society. Social exclusion based on religion, culture and ethnicity is widespread everywhere in the world. It should probably get as much attention in specific policies as gender has received. Attention given to cultural identity is not very prominent in the NGO approach in the Sahel, even while there is a very apparent need for it in view of the ethnic variety in this region. However, it plays a vital role in the thoughts and lives of the inhabitants in the research areas. Much meaning is derived for their own activities and for those of the NGOs from religion, ethnicity, and social status. In addition, the elderly and young people sometimes stand in opposition to one another, as do men and women, when it comes to cultural, social and political discrimination.

Underground – and, for a part, already surging to the surface – the strategic use of identity by politically motivated manipulators in North Ghana is becoming a problem that receives little attention. When the religious frameworks became localised (the leadership is now localised nearly everywhere, with virtually no 'white' priests, nuns and ministers anymore), the local identity received extra emphasis (if only because of the 'ethnic' language used in many church services and meetings). In that regard, Cordaid understands that there is more support needed for NGOs that concentrate on human rights and peace activities (including preventive activities). The situation in Burkina Faso in this regard is much less explosive than in many other countries. The recent elections there show that large political shifts can take place without large-scale violence. Recent experiences in Mali should make people aware that cultural identity, however defined, can be quite detrimental to development as well (much as it can help of course), and the NGOs there have recognised that and have taken action towards it.

Another important factor of social exclusion is gender. Gender issues were slow to be mainstreamed, in the context of the Sahel, and in the context of some of the CFAs. This only happened fully in the 1990s, when both the CFAs had fully developed gender policies, and the partner NGOs had acquired a full knowledge of the outlines of the discussions and CFA policies. Even more so than with religion (either support organisations of similar background at the risk of stressing ethnic-religious divisions, or choose different NGOs at the risk of confusion) gender is a contentious area. Not only was it clear in our study that women had very different ideas about wealth and poverty, and about preferred activities of NGOs, the idea of developing human capital meant for them emancipation in society way beyond anything many men and elders initially wanted to allow. The dilemma of supporting local cultural and institutional capital at the cost of keeping certain groups (women, youth) in society away from the benefits others received is easily solved it seems. The local NGO may be expected to assess the possibilities for change and the timing needed, and the CFA may trust that assessment, but the CFA may also assume that the leadership of the NGO, often men of a certain status, are not very active in implementing these changes. This dilemma does exist, and is solved on the ground by actively training staff, including women as appropriate

partners in the discussion with local people of authority, and redesigning the outlook and approach of the NGO continuously, to achieve a gender-balanced approach. This includes changing the type of activities over time in villages where the NGO is active. Certain activities (water, health, higher food production) are appreciated by all, and certainly also benefit women. Later, activities targeted at changing the power relationships between men and women are needed, and from then on, men are a very distinct target group for gender policies. This idea may not be new, but it was still relevant in the villages where we did our study. It has been a successful approach in one of the most conservative areas of the Sahel, the Mossi area of the Central Plateau in Burkina Faso, but it took time, and in Mali a similar situation existed. The NGO needs to be supported in this lengthy process, and again trust is necessary that goals and targets for change are understood and supported.

The third factor that we identified as continuing to be source of social exclusion is age. This idea also is not new, but ACORD in Mali is the only NGO in this study, which specifically identifies the younger generation as a disadvantaged group for which specific activities are needed. Youth are in a difficult position. They have little control over the resources needed to profit from the activities of the NGOs, while they *are* required to invest their labour, being the able bodied and strongest people in the village. This applies even for many of the activities proposed by the NGOs. Neither do they benefit from improvements in social and political capital as they have hardly any status to begin with. In some instances, it was recognised that the effect of this position, a propensity to migrate and 'get away from it all' by the youth (which to our experience during the study is at least as important as the need for more income) had to be counteracted. Therefore, irrigated agriculture, '*contre-saison*' market gardening was often seen as one way of keeping this valuable but undervalued resource in the village.

The last category to receive specific attention here, ironically perhaps, is that of the poorest. In this area, everyone feels himself or herself poor, compared to the population in more centrally located areas and cities, or compared to the past before the droughts. However, at the same time, it was realised that some people were more poor than others. In every case in this study with the exception of the poor in the Ghanaian villages of Anafobisi and Tambalug, it was recognised that the very poorest were either not participating, participated at a late stage or gained less than the middle class and richest groups. There *were* a few exceptions, but it is remarkable that certain groups among the very poorest did not participate. Sometimes this was because of one of the above reasons (exclusion because of low status, cultural position, gender, age). Sometimes this was because of more than one of these reasons, and in that case multiple sources of exclusion work strongly against the individual participating. This was often realised by the NGO and its staff. However, apart from the poor not being visible, they often withdrew themselves. Especially in Mali and Burkina Faso, there were explicit cases of auto-exclusion. Whenever obligations had to be taken up, many of the poor would refrain from participating, for fear of not being able to comply and meet the obligations. The shame of not being able to do so would be added to their already shameful position<sup>34</sup>. Apart from that, with the little capital the poor have, the synergy is often not achieved when those capitals are combined with the innovations from the NGO. Perhaps this points at a lack of imagination, or flexibility, on the part of the NGO. Only in Ghana have we seen examples of the poor being better off than the other groups after the NGO interventions, and local church groups certainly play a role in this. This is one of the examples where the particular aid canal of church institutions had a particular practical benefit.

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<sup>34</sup> In the Mali report the example is given of the family that lights a fire but has nothing to cook and eat.

### *The CFAs' contribution; the aid chain*

The relationship between CFAs and partners is complex, often strained and occasionally problematical. There are several dilemmas especially if the NGO is very dependent financially on a single donor, as we saw is the case in all three countries.

- Steering towards a professional organisation that provides services could be at the expense of participation and autonomy, along with adjusting to local realities. The challenge is to find new forms of popular control for new forms of local NGO intervention and organisation;
- A preference of CFAs for intermediary organisations as local partners means that the potential conflict between policy and funding on the basis of it, and practical activities that can not always comply with the high-headed ideas one started out from, will be beyond the reach of the CFA, and located in the country of the NGO one supports. Nevertheless, it will still be there. The sometimes 'strained' relationship between donor and truly autonomous NGOs (because it is accountable to the population) will be shifted southwards. On the other hand, there is the question whether there should such a close relationship, institutionally, between donor and NGO, as in the case of ACORD.
- Openness in the relationship is important, but can only be gained on the basis of trust that, once damaged, takes time to recover. There has to be the confidence in the donor that there will not be a sudden termination of specific support due to policy changes; at the same time a misplaced feeling of security once the relationship has been established leads to lack of awareness that change has to be accommodated. A common religious background can be the basis of this trust, but it does not guarantee a successful relationship.
- Communication is important, but costs much time and effort. Forms of consultation should be found that meet both requirements. In the long run, communication is the only way to fine-tune the various needs of the parties concerned in development.
- The 'learning organisation' needs information on its own performance, and the CFA can (and often does) assist the NGOs in designing methods to monitor and evaluate progress. The favourable examples found show that it is possible to do this, but it takes a large organisation to organise it and it is costly. In addition, it needs a context of 'development intelligentsia' to enable it. Support for intermediary organisations and 'think-tanks' such as ACDEP in Ghana is crucial.

Considering the experiences during this evaluation in general, partner policies were meticulous and correct, with the possible exception of Cordaid, which to our appearance considers that it will be difficult to implement major policy changes without changes in existing local partnerships. Insisting on the (religious) backgrounds does not seem very innovative, and as we saw it may have the added danger of strengthening conflicts along religious-ethnic lines. However, it also creates confidence and transparency for the partners. In that regard, ICCO conducts the most consistent policy, while Cordaid distances itself from this and NOVIB does so within the Malinese context (without fully knowing what the consequences are, but fully willing to experiment again, trusting present progress). Especially when there is strong financial dependency, there is either a tendency to work on greater openness in the relationship (in a professional organisation) or to make the relationship defensive, which will not contribute to clear communication and runs the risk of mistrust and an aborted relationship.

The findings in relation to the embassy have been given less attention than that between CFA and NGO. Experiences here are somewhat mixed. The embassies may play an important role

in providing funding to local NGOs, act as the donor physically located most closely to the NGO, and as a link between the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CFA and the NGO, much as some do now. Embassies can have a role in generating information on these NGOs and their activities, play a role as critical discussion partner, and temporarily act as donor for activities that may have a national impact as they have done in Ghana and Burkina Faso. However, from discussions with embassy staff it became clear that the major part of embassy funding will probably never be spent through NGOs but through government programmes, given the sectoral approach and the government orientation at present. Funding of NGOs may act as the necessary experiment, there to see how local level development through this channel works out, and how conditions on the ground change because of the support of larger scale and sector-wise interventions. The embassies may perhaps also play a role in the discussion between governments, NGOs and private organisations, in the sense that the context in which the NGO works may be more conducive to change when infrastructure, literacy, training facilities etc are provided. These may be funded through government institutions by the embassy. In Ghana, the break-through of health support, as a co-production of Ghanaian government, NGO and Embassy agencies can be seen as a promising route. On the other hand, physical distance might easily mean that embassies prefer 'nearby' headquarters of NGOs with their base in the capital city. In both Ghana and Mali there was a fear among the NGO leadership that there will be a sort of 'out of sight, out of mind' process, unless they develop pro-active policies on that themselves. It is no coincidence perhaps that the majority of NGOs supported by Dutch CFAs in Mali have their HQ in Bamako, even when their work is spread out or located far away from the capital. Even AMSS has a local office in Bamako.

Some thought could be given to the proper role of the embassies, as the experience in Mali has shown. At present, according to the NGOs, the embassy participates in workshops on a yearly basis to inform the NGO sector on its activities and on the supported programmes. There is confusion among the NGOs about the degree of commitment to the NGO sector of the embassy, and about possibilities of funding. The Embassy in Bamako itself is clear and focuses on funding of Government programmes in certain sectors exclusively.

#### *New areas of policy; mobility and commercialisation*

Mobility is largely being ignored. If it is not, than this is partly because it is seen as an undesired development (which is understandable from the standpoint of a recruiting strategy: fluid, mobile people easily slip away from sedentary local frameworks). Much policy, either at the level of the CFA, NGO, or population, is geared towards preventing migration, even while from experience and from the literature it is identified as an important option in the development of a sustainable livelihood. Activities are set up in the region for potential migrants, designed to keep them in the area. Even the inhabitants themselves often see it like this, although at the same time they are totally dependent in crises on remittances from migrants. Studies have shown the importance of these remittances, and of mobility in general in the Sahel. If there is one characteristic aspect of life in the Sahel, it must be the continuous adaptation through social, economic and spatial mobility to ever changing circumstances. For the second factor, commercialisation, there is interest in NGO circles, but many do not dare to accept the challenge it offers. To do so, they would have to think on a larger scale and be willing to take the lead in large-scale public-private partnerships. Nor do the CFA donors seem to want to follow this path, with the exception of the health-care sector in certain countries (Cordaid, ICCO) small-scale agricultural export production for the Dutch market (ICCO), and some activities related to the production of Kartité butter by women groups in the Sahel, the cattle trade and some extractives from forest and the natural environment

(NOVIB). These first experiments could be expanded. Burkina Faso is the only country where government policy has started converting local groups into a specific group-orientated market channel, partly through national (Burkinabé) development policy designed for this purpose, which people perceive as useful and necessary.

*In summary*

There is not one single conclusion as to the effects and impacts. The country reports and this synthesis have shown in which areas, sectors and groups in society positive effects and impacts have been identified. The population generally acknowledges these positive effects and impacts. Sometimes they are assessed as inadequate in scope (certain activities in Mali), disappointing in results (the more marginal villages in Burkina Faso), or too scattered (Bongo area in northern Ghana) for example. Above all, certain groups in society have benefited more than others, while to some, the effects and impacts are considered negatively, as it touches upon their status quo. As a rule, appreciation of the effects and impact of the NGOs is high, but it depends on which social groups one asks to assess those effects. Generally, for young people, the activities have not yet been very meaningful. Gender and the influence of women in organisations have become *mainstream*, although they still profit less than men. The very poorest are sometimes out of sight, cannot or will not take part out of shame and a fear of failure. 'Deviant' ethnic groups are still often excluded. The 'middle-class poor' with resources still benefit the most from the activities of the subject NGOs. The impact of activities seems to be greater in the Sahel than in many other areas in the development regions, perhaps due to better accessibility and, therefore, the effect of the context. The generally positive changes in the overall political, economic and environmental contexts (of Ghana and Burkina Faso in particular, but in northern Mali after the Rebellion as well) played an important role. As stated, we think there is a challenge facing the NGO sector in this area. Cooperation between NGOs, with their valued local activities, and with a government that makes the larger infrastructural, market-orientated investments, would provide added value for both players. Wherever infrastructure is good, the impact of the NGO players will be better. On the other hand, the little experience there is shows that while the effects can be considerable, there are many pitfalls as well, and usually careful design is necessary. In the Sahel, attribution has proven not to be very contentious issue, due to the typical tendency to segregate the work of one NGO from that of another. NGOs do not generally work in each other's villages, districts or regions. Only government authorities are always present in the work regions concerned, but often at such modest levels that there is no real competition in attribution. Also, much of the budget of the CFAs is poured into one or two large NGOs, the ones studied, while these in their turn receive most of their funding from this one NGO. All in all, we find the results of our study quite favourable, considering the general appreciation expressed by the local inhabitants. Although there remains much to be improved, it is clear that the NGO sector that we examined has made a major contribution to improvement of the rural poor (perhaps not enough for the very poorest) and to the rural development of the area.

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**Annex 2. Location of the research areas in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mali.**

### **Annex 3. Summary of perceived changes by the populations**

Mali (M), Burkina Faso (B) and northern Ghana (G).

#### **Natural capital**

##### *Positively perceived changes*

More varied crops, better adapted varieties (G)

Increased dry-season farming (M, G: mainly in Garu)

Better soil and water conservation and better soil fertility at some places (G); rehabilitated land stays humid longer (B); better use of compost and manure (M).

Erosion has stopped due to construction of the *diques filtrante* (B, M).

More bullock farming (G)

Women have strongly improved access to land and animals and independent use rights (G)

Larger average farm sizes (G in Garu; B, for those who could obtain oxen);

Higher overall harvests (M, G: in Garu and B: for those who have land; the middle income group participates most in this respect).

More trees and regeneration of *bourgoutières* (M), much more planted trees and more types of useful trees (M, G)

Reduced felling of trees (G: esp. in Bongo); More fuel wood available (B); Improved stoves (M).

More livestock, more livestock types, better distribution, better animal health (G); vaccination of animals (G, M).

More animals for fattening, though profitability unsure (B). More manure available (B).

(in B no mention is made of the improved rainfall situation since the late 1980s, compared to the 1970s and early 1980s; in G some people do refer to improved rainfall conditions since late 1980s).

##### *Negatively perceived changes*

Rainfall has deteriorated since the 1960s: shorter rainy seasons. Later start and less reliable. (G); Rivers have dried up in dry season (G); Lower groundwater tables (G).

Soils have become less fertile at many places (G, M); Degradation of the soils continues generally (B: Damkarko: especially with the land borrowers who are forbidden to implement land improvement techniques for fear of owners claiming the land back).

Production of organic fertilizer is too cumbersome and benefits are lower than costs (M).

Erosion has increased: more gullies; more bare rock exposed (G).

Yields of sorghum and millet have decreased (G, M).

Smaller overall farm sizes and overall harvest yields (G: in Bongo).

Land is scarce, and not accessible due to the difficult tenure situation (B; between local and government systems of tenure, and the uncertainty caused by changes in the latter. The poor, the FulBe and the women fare less well and are as dependent as before; M: conflicts about access to land).

Lack of water for irrigation during certain parts of the year has increased (M; it also hampers the production of building blocks).

Compared to 1970s tree cover has not yet been restored (G: esp. in Garu); In B. tree cover is reduced, certain fall-back sources of leaves and fruits (during droughts for cash and consumption) are almost finished. Planted trees do not survive (inappropriate species, no labour available to water them) (B).

Forests disappeared; trees now more dispersed (G); 'old' economic trees (dawadawa and sheanut) are disappearing (G).  
Natural pasture areas have become smaller (M); 'old' grass species are disappearing, partly due to overgrazing (G).  
Livestock numbers have decreased; loss of animals due to increased diseases, loss of mobility has led to fewer animals (M).

### **Physical (or produced) capital**

#### *Positively perceived changes*

Much better water sources (bore-holes, dams, wells; M, B, G) and much better quality of water (G, B); Water for animals, people, and cultivation has increased and is of better quality (B); Motor pumps are now available for irrigation (B, M).  
More and better school buildings (M, G: but not in all villages) and health clinics (M, G)  
Better markets (G)  
More roads (G), Improvements in means of transport (M)  
Far more bullock ploughs, carts, bicycles and farm tools (G); Improvement of availability of means of production, plough, cart and draught animals in particular, but also small implements for social groups (B).  
Grinding mills (G)  
Improved houses (G, M)  
More social buildings (G: churches, mosques in Garu, social centres; also in M)  
Materials for fattening and other inputs are more available, but unreliable (B).  
Cereal banks have begun (B, M).

#### *Negatively perceived changes*

Land is sometimes taken without compensation (G, M : grazing land occupied)  
Road quality maintenance bad and deteriorating (B, G); Because the roads are not maintained the area is falling back to remoteness (B).  
Siltation of dams and other water bodies (B, G).  
More difficult to get fertilizer and at much higher price (M).  
For those who have: improved means of production consume a large part of improved income (M).  
No (less?) machine power for agricultural production (M).  
Poor households now even lack the most simple tools like hoes and *daba* (M). loss of control over dependent people has meant loss of control over resources (M)

### **Human capital**

#### *Positively perceived changes*

Increased population and number of people who can work (G)  
More healthy people (G partly because of less water-borne diseases); (B: mainly thanks to better water quality)  
Much lower infant mortality (G, M, partly thanks to vaccinations, availability of medicine, better houses, latrines and treatment of water)  
Better general health (M, G; B: Damkarko: the health facilities are only available for the rich, the middle income group uses these facilities for necessities only, while the poor prefer local traditional methods).  
Traditional medical knowledge has regained status due to expensive modern knowledge and medication.

Better nutrition; improved eating habits (G)  
 The value of education, training and better health care has been recognised now (M)  
 Much increased school attendance of both boys and girls (G; B: but not for the poor)  
 More skills thanks to more training (G, M); new professions (M, like borehole attendant, vegetable producer)  
 Better-educated and enlightened women (G, B)  
 Training and education have opened up the village to the world; more knowledge, less ignorance, better management are general tendencies (B). Understanding of technical knowledge has improved (B).  
 Return migrants – although they cause banditry and unrest - have introduced ideas (B).  
 In general the people have more confidence thanks to training and group formation (M).  
 Because of sedentarisation there is more time now to learn and apply new skills (M).  
 The new local activities slow down the migration of the youth and the length of their absence (M).  
 Better position for ex-slaves (M); training has caused conflict management skills (M)

#### *Negatively perceived changes*

Many people cannot adequately use the new opportunities because of lack of funds, lack of access to transport or conservatism (M).  
 Fewer children are being taken as it is considered a road to poverty (B).  
 Exodus of the youth (M).  
 Increased incidence of malaria (G).  
 Risk of HIV/AIDS (G); There are many more new diseases (HIV/AIDS) that cannot be cured with either new or old methods (B).  
 Though the health facilities have increased in number and are much nearer than before, they continue to be unreliable (B).  
 Knowledge about traditional medicine goes down (G); Lack of practice causes a loss of skills (B).  
 Health problems related to ‘modern behaviour’ (G).  
 Increasing school fees and fees for formal health care have become a major problem for the poor (G).  
 Adults have to work harder because children now go to school (less child labour; higher costs) (G). (In M people also complain that the new production techniques have made work more demanding physically).  
 Poor(er?) quality of teachers (G).  
 Many children still do not go to school or become school drop outs (M).  
 Alphabetisation campaigns were not sufficient; people tend to forget more easily because basis is weak and application is limited (M, B)  
 The better roads and the dams have caused the FulBe to become sedentary, and this increasingly causes difficulties (B).  
 Loss of control over women and girls (complaints in B: older men; also some in G).

#### **Economic and financial capital**

##### *Positively perceived changes*

Slightly more formal (salaried) jobs, thanks to NGOs (G)  
 Commercial agriculture (onions, pigs) big success (G); Off-season market gardening has increased and yields good profits and better food consumption (B).  
 Women can now own livestock and have much better access to land (G)  
 Local handicraft industry has become very important (G).

Gold digging is now possible (B).  
 Production and productivity have increased (B).  
 Strongly increased income-generating activities for men and women; more businesses (G, M).  
 Much better credit facilities and much better access (M, G); Credit availability has improved enormously, though the poor refrain from participation (B).  
 Many women now have bank accounts (G); Better credit availability for women than before (B).  
 Linked to trade network of the South (G, B).  
 Devaluation caused better prices for export crops and animals (B).  
 High migrant income from Southern Ghana; more seasonal out-migration of boys and now also girls (G).  
 More financial independence for women (G, B, M).  
 Visibly rich households in many villages now (G).  
 Most people have much more assets and 'signs of wealth' (G).

*Negatively perceived changes*

More wealth differentiation in the villages (G); extreme poverty persists (M).  
 Lack of markets for garden and artisan produce (M).  
 Terms of credit have become problematic (G); lack of knowledge about credit procedures (M); Confrontation with *marabouts* about interest payments (M).  
 The level of credit availability is insufficient even though NGOs and the *Caisse Populaire* have come into the region (B).  
 Inflation became a problem for those with savings (G)  
 Poor have become indebted to the rich, as they borrow to pay back the ADRK loan (B).

**Social-Political capital**

*Positively perceived changes*

More organisational 'structures' for more layers of society (M).  
 More groups, more NGOs, better leadership, more mutual assistance (G, B, M).  
 Better contact with government via NGOs (G); After the revolution, the position of people vis-à-vis government employees improved (B).  
 Greater freedom of association (G).  
 More women take initiatives and act as spokes persons (B, G).  
 Women speak out during meetings (G).  
 Improved relationships between leaders (G: although fragile in Garu)  
 Sedentarisation has meant less work rebuilding houses, travel fatigue, better contacts among women (M), better position for ex-slaves (M)

*Negatively perceived changes*

'Social hierarchy has remained more or less intact in spite of innovations (M).  
 The group forming process takes too much time (B).  
 Attitude of dependence on NGOs (G, B).  
 Ineffective NGO networking (G).  
 Destruction caused by the rebellion (M). In some areas leadership problems (G).  
 The rich have better access to all types of facilities than before, but the poor continue to complain and this causes tension in the village (M, B). More tension between farmers now that SWC measures take water that would have flown to lower lying farms (B). More conflicts about access to land (M). People in local power positions had disproportional gains (M)

Position of ex-slaves has not improved, and their economic role remains very meagre (M).  
A loss of morale, with the young going out and drinking, contracting diseases (B).  
Sedentarisation has led to more conflicts about resources and strain in relations (M)

### **Cultural capital**

#### *Positively perceived changes*

Decreasing social inequality (M); improvement of position of women (M)  
More non-indigenous people around (G)  
More inter-ethnic contact (G)  
People speak more languages (G)  
Religious capital has improved (men in B). More Christians (G) and (G: in Garu) Muslims.  
Less taboos, less sacrifices to 'idols' (G)  
More nuclear families (G)  
Cultural revolution in women's behaviour and roles (G). Improvement (though limited) of women's social status, economic wealth and social participation (M)  
More festivals, more interest in cultural history (G, but Tambalug lags behind)  
More urban ways have been introduced (young in B).

#### *Negatively perceived changes*

Many types of cultural capital have decreased (morale, attitudes to older people, ethnicity, status, respect, the ability to address conflicts) (men in B).  
More teenage pregnancies, more broken homes, more incest (G).  
More 'bad behaviour' and youth more disrespectful towards elders (G).  
The NGOs and the government are increasingly seen as curtailing Mossi cultural habits (forced marriage, circumcision (excision) for women) (B).  
According to some: language purity threatened by 'mixing' (G).  
Much higher funeral costs (G).

## Annex 4. Summary of perceived changes by the populations

### Poverty profiles of four research villages based on 46 wealth indicators

Wealth indicator	Ana	Bal	Kug	Tam	Total
Husband had more than one meal yesterday	12	11	11	11	45
Husband owns chicken	11	12	10	9	42
Husband's floor is plastered	10	12	9	10	41
Husband owns goats	10	12	8	10	40
Husband has more cloth now than 10 years ago	9	10	8	9	36
Husband's house has door and window frames	9	10	8	8	35
Husband owns guinea fowls	8	10	8	9	35
Husband owns economic trees	8	8	8	10	34
Husband owns a bicycle	5	11	10	8	34
Husband owns cattle	4	10	10	9	33
Husband owns a radio	7	6	8	8	29
Husband owns sheep	9	1	8	11	29
Husband owns more than three acres of fields	4	8	9	7	28
Husband has more than one food barn on the compound	8	8	5	7	28
Wife's house has door and window frames	7	3	8	9	27
Husband owns a plough	3	5	9	9	26
Husband owns a cart	1	5	11	9	26
Husband owns a cutlass	3	5	8	9	25
Husband's house has a zinc or mud roof	5	8	5	6	24
Wife's house has a zinc or mud roof	4	9	4	9	24
Husband has bed and mattress	4	4	6	8	22
Wife has at least three different bowl types	2	6	5	8	21
Husband owns donkeys	3	7	4	7	21
Husband has a dry-season garden	1	2	12	5	20
Wife owns chicken	7	11	1	1	20
Wife had three meals yesterday	6	8	3	3	20
The 2001 harvest lasted for more than five months	4	3	4	9	20
Husband owns pigs	3	7	3	5	18
Husband owns wrist watch	1	5	6	4	16
Wife has more animals now than her mother had	4	6	4	2	16
Wife owns economic trees	7	6	1	0	14
Wife owns goats	5	7	1	0	13
Wife owns pigs	3	5	3	1	12
Wife has a dry-season garden	0	1	9	1	11
Husband's house built with blocks	4	3	2	1	10
Wife has more than three acres of fields	1	3	3	2	9
Wife owns sheep	1	1	1	5	8
Wife's house built with blocks	3	1	1	2	7
Wife owns a sewing machine	1	2	0	0	6
Husband owns a gun	0	2	0	4	6
Wife owns a bed and mattress	0	3	1	1	5
Wife owns guinea fowls	2	2	1	0	5
Wife owns a bicycle	0	2	0	0	2
There is a VIP latrine on the compound	1	1	0	0	2
Wife owns a wrist watch	0	1	0	0	1
Wife owns cattle	0	0	0	0	0
Wife owns donkey	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>249</b>	
Number of highest scores	7	25	9	13	
Number of lowest scores	22	9	19	14	