

## U.S. NGO WORKING GROUP ON AFRICA

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The Development Fund for Africa was established by Congress with an appropriations bill in 1987 and has been operational since 1988. In 1990, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 was formally amended to include more specific and comprehensive DFA language and directions. Part of the impetus for the DFA was an interest on the part of AID for greater program flexibility, but it also resulted from U.S. NGO activism to increase and better target development aid to Africa. This process, which included consultation with African NGO partners and advocacy with Congress, played a key role in determining both the language and intent of the legislation. In the wake of the Arusha Conference on Popular Participation in 1990 and the UNPAEERD process which ended in 1991, a sub-set of these NGOs formed the U.S. Working Group on Africa, an ad hoc group which seeks to hold USAID accountable to the foreign assistance mandate.

With USAID now operating under DFA guidelines for over four years, the Working Group is taking a close look at AID's compliance with the DFA legislation. Of particular interest is the nature and extent of close consultation with local groups on both project and non-project assistance that is required under the legislation and the extent to which AID's overall program helps... "the poor majority of men and women in sub-Saharan Africa to participate in a process of long-term development through economic growth that is equitable, participatory, environmentally sustainable, and self-reliant." To assess this in Senegal, The Development GAP, on behalf of the U.S. Working Group, supported two months of research in Senegal consisting of a review of project documents and interviews with over 40 USAID staff and U.S. and Senegalese NGO representatives.

The research revealed the following:

- o No internal directives on the DFA were issued by the Mission Director, and Mission staff understanding of the legislation is very uneven. For example, no one at the Mission mentioned issues of collaboration with NGOs or a larger role for women when asked about the DFA legislation.
- o Mission staff are ill-informed on the question of whether or not the DFA is funding non-project assistance. Some senior Mission staff incorrectly believed that no DFA monies went to fund non-project activities.

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- o Mission staff awareness of the DFA appeared to be limited to administrative issues such as the greater flexibility with funds and more authority given to the Mission, the more stringent reporting requirements that called for people-level impacts, and greater freedom from the "buy American" rule.
- o Virtually no consultations were held with local or international NGOs on non-project assistance. During the planning or design of the Agriculture Sector Grant, for example, a \$36 million program to support the GOS's new agricultural structural adjustment program, no women farmers or women's farmer groups were consulted. The Mission did not even consult the organization which it recognizes as a major voice for Senegalese farmers, the Federation des Organisations Non-gouvernementales (FONGS).
- o With the exception of the PVO/NGO Support Project, which funds NGO activities, the Mission's record of consultation with, and participation of, international and local-level NGOs during the planning and implementation of project assistance is very poor. For example, as in the case of non-project assistance, and despite clear guidance from the DFA, women's groups have rarely been consulted by the Mission, nor have they actively participated in the design and implementation of projects. This is true even in projects where women are the major targets, such as the family planning program. And although target participation rates for women have been established for some projects, this in and of itself does very little to ensure that they provide meaningful input into, or benefit from, the project.
- o The Mission views its PVO/NGO Support Project, which provides grants and institutional support to Senegalese and American PVOS, as its main area of interaction with NGOs. This US \$15 million project is funded entirely with DFA money and is scheduled to run from 1991-99. While there was significant NGO input into the design of the project, it accounts for less than 4% of the projected Mission budget from 1992-1997 and merits only three passing references in the Mission's 62-page Country Program Strategic Plan.

Local consultation in the definition, design, and implementation of AID's project and non-project assistance is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for ensuring that USAID funds... "help the poor majority of men and women...to participate in a process of long-term development through economic growth that is equitable, participatory, environmentally sustainable, and self-reliant." The near total lack of NGO participation in USAID/Senegal's programs essentially precludes success in achieving that goal. In addition, many believe that AID programs and projects can actually work against the poor, especially as regards non-project assistance. Senegalese NGO leaders pointed out, for example, that the liberalization of both input and output marketing and the elimination of agricultural subsidies supported by USAID non-project assistance have resulted in an increase in both production costs and consumer prices at a time of stagnant national incomes, hurting poor farmers and consumers alike. These effects are clearly counter to the goals of the DFA.

*Extracted from a forthcoming report by The Development GAP on the DFA in Senegal, written by William Warshauer and Lisa A. McGowan.*