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Regional Poultry Project In West Africa B-145883

Agency for International Development
Department of State

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

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MAY 10, 1973

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-145883

The Honorable H. R. Gross
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Gross:

In response to your request of December 22, 1972, we reviewed a regional poultry project in West Africa financed in part by the Agency for International Development.

In accordance with discussions with your office, we have not followed the customary practice of obtaining advance agency comments on this report.

We believe that this report would be of interest to committees and other Members of Congress. However, we will not release it unless you agree or publicly announce its contents.

Sincerely yours,

Elmer B. Staats

Comptroller General
of the United States

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS

AID	Agency for International Development
GAO	General Accounting Office
OMVS	Organization for Development of Senegal River Valley

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D I G E S T

WHY THE REVIEW WAS MADE

Congressman Gross asked GAO to review a regional poultry project in West Africa financed in part by the Agency for International Development (AID). GAO's fieldwork was completed in March 1973.

In accordance with the request of Congressman Gross' office, GAO has not followed the customary practice of obtaining advance agency comments on this report.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The economic viability of the regional project has never been demonstrated by adequate studies or through operating experiences. (See p. 5.)

Management actions by AID to execute the project were inadequate. (See p. 10.)

AID did not obtain competition in negotiating the contract for technical assistance with an educational institution. Long delays occurred in placing technicians at project sites. Some problems have been resolved through efforts of contractor representatives. (See p. 15.)

Host governments and the complex regional organization they control are primarily responsible for the project. One of the basic problems has been a lack of specific direction and necessary cooperation between these parties and AID.

The regional organization has not operated effectively, and an adequate accounting for participating government and AID contributions has not been made. (See p. 18.)

Although GAO concluded that expenditures for this project have in part been wasteful, it may not be considered representative of AID's worldwide technical assistance program. The success or failure of AID's projects depends largely on the host countries' efforts, because they control and manage the projects.

AID attempted to set guidelines to restrict its involvement in the project if the project failed, but, to date, AID has not disassociated itself from the project. Here, GAO believes, lies AID's primary management weakness in this project.

AID, in GAO's opinion, should not have incurred substantial expenditures over a considerable period of time without assurance that the project was both economically viable and adequately managed.

MAY 10, 1973

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The General Accounting Office has reviewed a regional poultry project in West Africa financed in part by the Agency for International Development (AID). This was the first AID poultry program in Africa oriented toward providing poultry meat rather than eggs. AID assistance was to be terminated by June 1971 unless broiler production proved to be economically viable for West Africa and other countries. According to the project authorization, the project was based on work done under a prior bilateral project.

During our review we visited project sites in Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania. We discussed the project with AID, Department of State, Peace Corps, and host-country officials in these countries and with AID officials in Washington, D.C. We also reviewed files and information made available to us by AID, Department of State, and host-country officials at these locations.

The United States has committed about $1.4 million to this project and prior related bilateral assistance beginning in the mid-1960s to promote the establishment of a high-protein, meat-producing poultry industry in countries bordering the Senegal River in West Africa. We found it difficult to compile this data and based it on the best sources available to us. The $1.4 million includes AID's commitments for (1) technical assistance and commodities for a poultry hatchery at Bamako, Mali, and for poultry projects in Senegal and Mauritania under bilateral and regional projects, (2) technical assistance for the regional project under a contract with Tuskegee Institute, an educational institution in Tuskeqee, Alabama, (3) grants of Public Law 480 grains to support feeding of poultry, and (4) a small amount of AID-source self-help funds allocated by United States ambassadors for related assistance.

AID officials commented that no additional grains will be made available under Public Law 480 and no additional self-help funds are scheduled. AID officials also indicated that consideration was being given to phasing out financing for the project after fiscal year 1974.

CHAPTER 2

ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF PROJECT

The economic viability of the regional project has never been demonstrated by adequate studies or through operating experience. AID committed itself to finance the regional poultry industry without making a feasibility study and without determining the success or failure of the prior bilateral project. Although AID in Washington was aware of the circumstances, it authorized the regional project.

Therefore, it appears that the regional project was based on a number of assumptions. If these assumptions had been correct, the project would undoubtedly be on a sound footing; however, the project's viability remains doubtful. The assumptions are discussed below.

The extent of demand for chicks hatched at the Sotuba hatchery in Bamako, Mali, may be dependent in part on the availability of feed. In 1971, when the hatchery production was about 50 percent of capacity, chicks could not be sold to poultry farmers because the shortage of grains for human consumption left no grains for chicken feed. Many of the 44,000 chicks on hand in September 1971 were purposely destroyed and the layer flock was reduced to bring down chick production.

It seems doubtful that low-income groups will have enough money to generate continuing demand for chickens. AID officials now believe that the market in West Africa is not nearly as extensive as originally thought and that the target market should be only the known demand for chickens--restaurants, foreigners, tourists, and high-income local groups.

Sufficient grain has not been produced in these countries to feed the people and to maintain the poultry industry. To date, corn imported under the Public Law 480 program has been used at the hatchery and for feed mix sold to farmers. After these agreements expire, grains will apparently have to be imported from other sources because AID policy prohibits supporting new livestock feed programs. AID officials do not expect that participating countries will be self-sufficient in grain production in the near future. Importing grain would raise the cost of poultry to the consumer and would work against the foreign exchange benefits attained by in-country production of poultry. The project plan for dealing with the scarcity of grain called for a large grain storage capacity to be constructed so that in good harvest years the project could store excess grain for use in poor harvest years. In addition, it was assumed that increased consumption of poultry would stimulate grain production. These circumstances have not materialized.

There have been problems insuring the availability of water at Sotuba. The two shallow wells ran dry and the chickens were without water during the hatchery crisis of 1971. A deep well was drilled; however, a water pump has not been installed to make it usable. Consequently, water is being trucked to the hatchery.

It has not been demonstrated that chicks can be produced and marketed at a profit. Costs and statistics made available to us indicate that the present price of day-old chicks falls short of recovering hatchery costs and raises questions on the possibility of competing with the price of imported day-old chicks. Some of these are currently being air freighted from France.

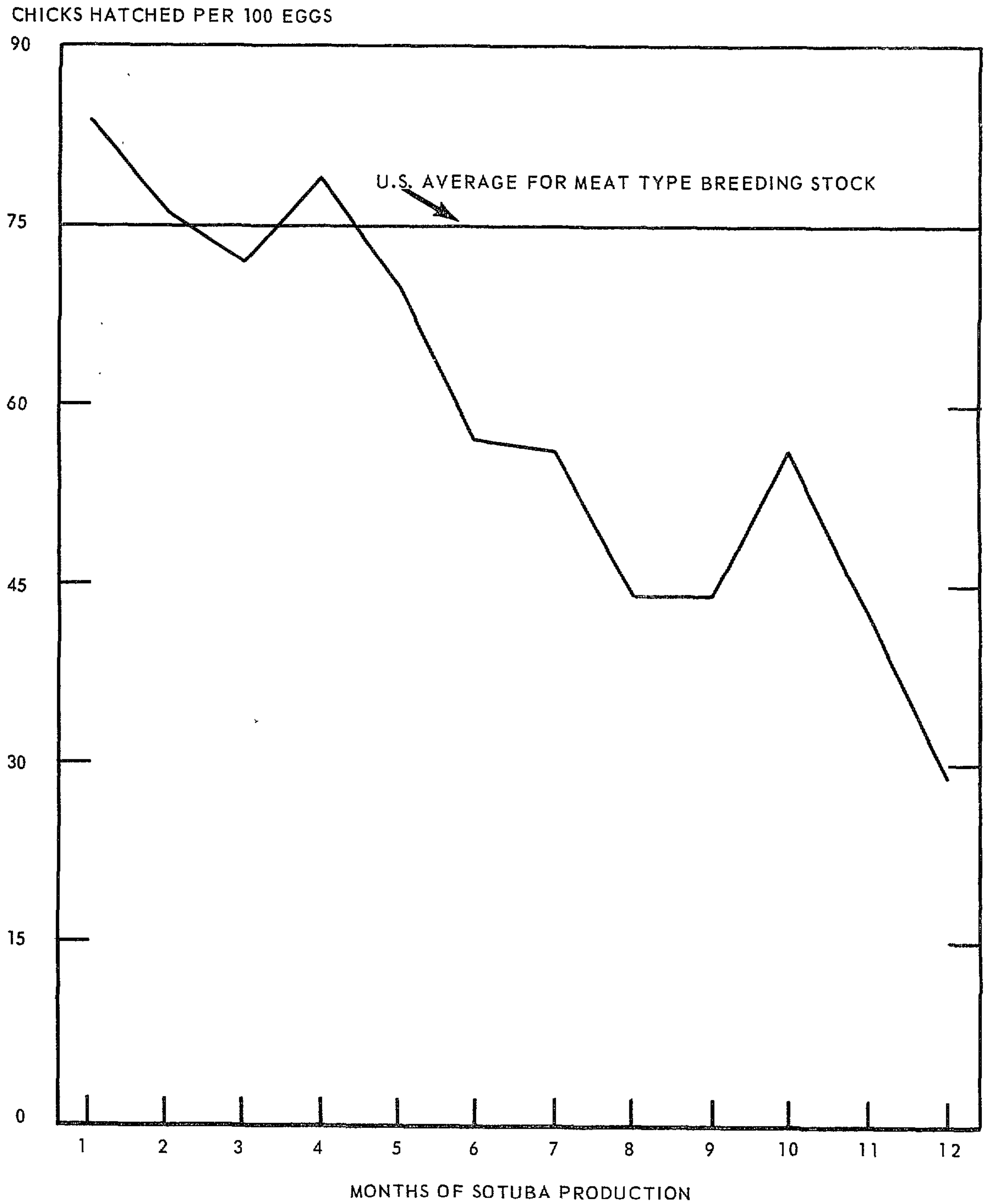
A Tuskegee representative estimated that during December 1972 the cost of local nationals' salaries and the market value of feed consumed at Sotuba amounted to $1,970. The hatchery earned about $972 assuming, however, that in December 1972 all chicks hatched and all breeder birds and eggs culled were sold at its fixed sales prices. Such information indicates that if grain had not been supplied under Public Law 480 Sotuba would have operated at a $1,000 loss during December--that is, only two basic cost elements would have totaled twice the revenue earned.

The number of chickens hatched per 100 eggs incubated at Sotuba during the 12-month period ended August 1972, as shown in chart I, is well below the level attained in the United States. The Sotuba hatchery did, however, meet expected levels of production for 5 of the 12 months. Sotuba's data was the most current made available to us.

An AID official commented that constant fluctuation of electrical current at Sotuba has contributed to the inconsistent hatchability of eggs.

CHART I

NUMBER OF CHICKS HATCHED PER 100 EGGS SET IN INCUBATOR SEPTEMBER 1971 – AUGUST 1972



As shown in chart II, the number of eggs produced per bird for the 12-month period from September 1971 through August 1972 is only about 44 percent of the level achieved in the United States. The U.S. level is 145 to 150 eggs per bird for a 9-month laying period, or about 16 eggs per month. For the first 3 months, the average number of eggs produced was less than one egg per bird monthly. The remaining 9 months indicated an increase in the average to about nine eggs per bird monthly.

An AID official commented that overaged breeder birds, grain shortage, and high temperatures all contributed to low egg production by the breeder flock at Sotuba.

Currently, all the breeder birds at Sotuba are past the peak of their productive lives. In February 1973 about 4000 new breeders (12 weeks old) were on hand, but they will not begin producing until mid-April. Half of these new breeders are layers as opposed to meat birds.

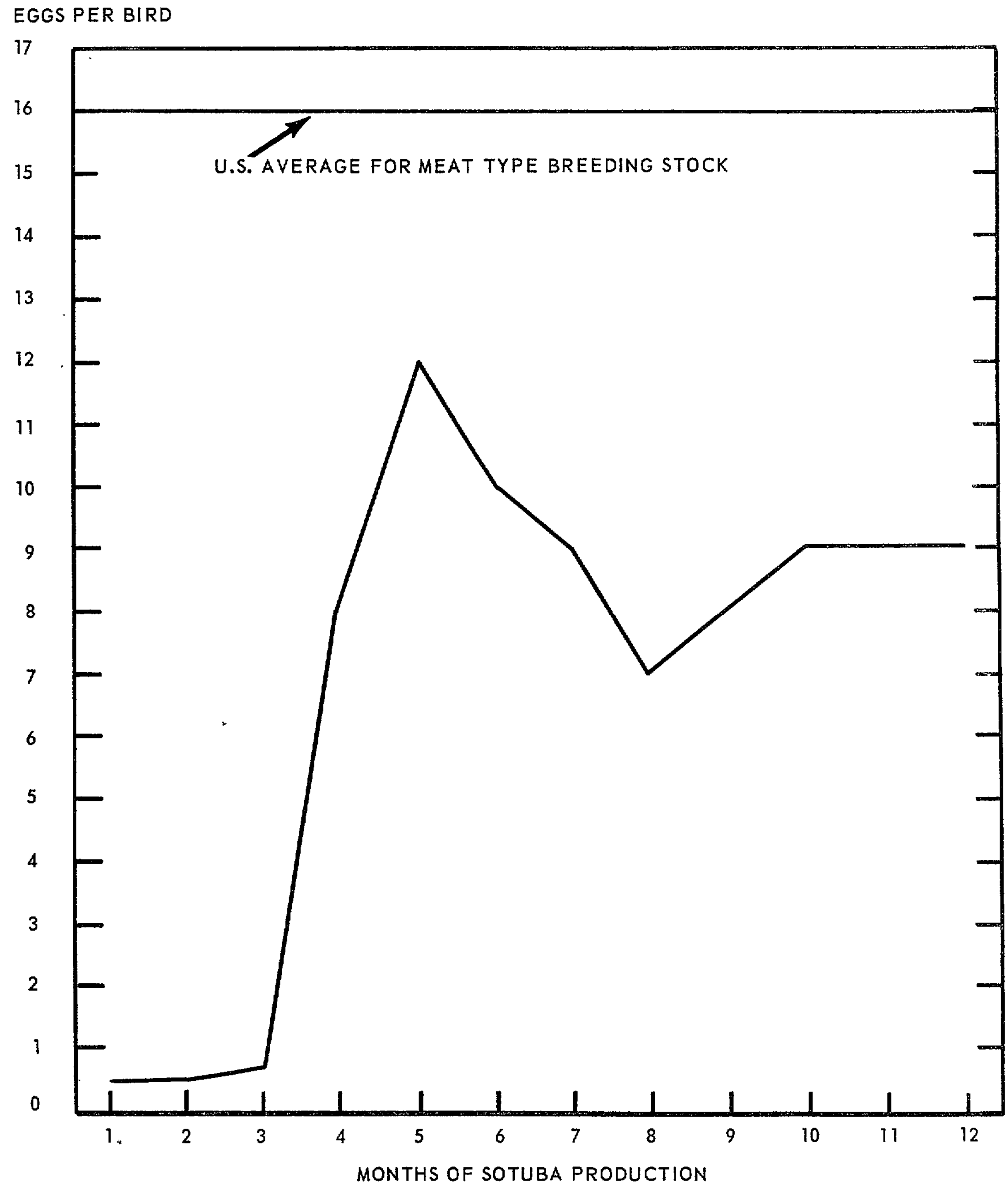
The layer chickens are hybrid birds developed for the specific purpose of egg production, while other hybrid breeder strains are developed to produce high quality poultry meat.

Technically, the stocking of layers at Sotuba conflicts with the original purpose of the AID-sponsored regional poultry project. The project was originally oriented toward broiler (meat) production in order to increase low-income groups' consumption of poultry meat. In fact, the grant agreement between AID and Mali, Senegal, Mauritania, and the Organization for Development of Senegal River Valley (OMVS) states that the project's objective "* * * is to produce more poultry meat (with egg production being secondary) at prices equal to or below those of traditional protein foods such as beef and fish."

We were provided no formal document which indicated that there will be a change in thrust from meat production to egg production. A Tuskegee representative did comment, however, that perhaps consideration should be given to stocking Sotuba with all-purpose breeder birds rather than hybrid broiler and hybrid egg producers.

CHART II

NUMBER OF EGGS PRODUCED PER BIRD FOR 12–MONTH PERIOD SEPTEMBER 1971 – AUGUST 1972



CHAPTER 3

AID MANAGEMENT

Management actions by AID to execute the project were inadequate.

An adequate economic feasibility study has yet to be performed, and a cost accounting system to control the project has never been established. For long periods only limited attention was given by AID officials to resolving project problems, and required annual evaluations were not made until December 1972.

An AID officer to supervise the project was not at the site until October 1972--3 years after the project was authorized and 1 year after the arrival of the first Tuskegee technician. The area development officer, the food and agricultural officer, and the program officer (all assigned to Dakar, Senegal, in 1971) spent considerable time trying to make the project successful. However, many other projects also demanded their time and their limited presence did not replace the need for a full-time project officer.

Almost no supervision and guidance was given to the AID technician at the Sotuba hatchery from the time he designed the regional plan until his removal from the project in September 1971. During that time he made all the procurement and construction decisions (the Malian Government had not appointed a full-time director of the hatchery). Field trips to the hatchery by AID supervisors in the Dakar office were virtually nonexistent before the spring of 1971, even though project plans were developed and nearly all commodity procurement decisions were made before then.

Much unneeded equipment was purchased, many pieces had the wrong specifications, and the timing of many procurement actions was poor. The lack of information made it difficult to review the procurement actions. However, on the basis of available records and observations made during our visit to the project sites, we were able to identify commodities (valued at about $51,000 and on hand at the poultry centers in Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania) that have not been fully used or are not needed. The following are some examples.

The Bamako, Mali, project site:

--The original breeder flock of more than 15,000 hens was reduced to 2,338 as of January 31, 1973, to achieve more efficient production. More than two-thirds of the $15,000 spent for the original breeders was wasted.

--Only one of the two large feedmills delivered to the hatchery is scheduled to be used and the other one valued at more than $10,000 is unneeded. Neither of these feedmills has as yet been uncrated.

--A deep well was completed in June 1972 at a cost of $12,000. However, a pump has still not been procured, the water tank has not been assembled, and the 12-foot tower costing $3,274 may not be tall enough to feed the water system already installed at the hatchery.

--A 50-ton platform scale has remained in its crate for at least 1-1/2 years and no potential need is known.

--Most essential pharmaceuticals at the hatchery are past their expiration dates, some since July 1971. These pharmaceuticals are being used at the hatchery but their effectiveness is questionable.

The M'Bao, Senegal, project site:

--A mixer costing $2,012 has not yet been used.

--A large trailer valued at $2,000 lies unassembled and unused on the floor of the M'Bao feedmill. The trailer sat at the Dakar port for 10 months before being picked up.

The Nouakchott, Mauritania, project site:

--Band saws, table saws, planers, and lathes were purchased at a cost of more than $3,000. There is no need for them. Furthermore, the equipment could not be operated even if there were a need, since there is no electricity available at the Center.

--A $2,960 feed mixer and hammermill has not yet been used.

--The Nouakchott facility is a distribution center that does not raise chicks. Therefore, feeders and waterers costing $1,529 are not needed.

--Nouakchott received $1,967 worth of 3-foot fence, but 6-foot fence is needed.

--A generator, pump, water cooler, air cooler, voltage tester, and egg grader had the wrong specifications. Also, the unneeded woodworking tools are 60-cycle (although local power, if brought to the center, will be 50-cycle) and therefore unusable in present conditions.

Items applicable to several project sites:

--The capacities of the incubators and hatchers purchased under the regional project for Sotuba and M'Bao are not properly matched. The contractor at Sotuba stated in February 1973 that before filling the order for incubators and hatchers the supplier advised AID in Mali that the components ordered were mismatched. In other words, the capacity of the incubators ordered far exceeds the capacity of the hatchers ordered. So if the full capacity of the incubators were utilized, the hatchers could not accept all of the incubated eggs.

In addition, their motors would not operate efficiently on the local electrical current and were delivered long before they were actually needed. Most of the motors at Sotuba had been rewired before our visit to the center. The incubators and hatchers at M'Bao have remained in their shipping crates since August 1971.

--AID estimates that it will need $4,000 to pay demurrage and freight costs for missent commodities.

--Welders and accessories costing more than $2,000 remain unused because there is nothing at the centers that needs to be welded.

Although 20 months have elapsed, as of February 28, 1973, since the contract was awarded to Tuskegee Institute for technical services, no audit has been made of the contractor's expenditures. AID requested the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to perform this audit in January 1972, but such audit has not even been scheduled. We believe that this is too long for a contractor's expenditures to remain unaudited. Expenditures under this contract, as of December 31, 1972, amount to $134,000.

Two Public Law 480 grant transfer agreements for 2,650 metric tons of corn, value not to exceed $191,000 including shipping costs, were granted to the Governments of Mali and Senegal. About 1,500 metric tons have been shipped. These transfer agreements required the host government to:

--Establish a project council to develop policies for operating the program effectively.

--Forward to AID a copy of the council proceedings.

--Select participants and sell feedgrains only to approved participants.

--Deposit sales proceeds to a special account in the name of the project council.

--Maintain detailed records of all receipts and expenditures of funds.

--Itemize projected expenditures in quarterly budgets for AID approval.

--Make monthly financial statements to AID, including copies of the bank statements and itemized accounting for receipts and expenditures.

--Report monthly the inventories of grain, mixed feed, and other feed components on hand.

As far as we could determine none of the stipulations have been met by the host governments, and we found no indication of AID efforts to gain compliance with these provisions.

OMVS was not notified about one of the shipments under the transfer agreements until after the ship arrived. Storage costs at the docks in Dakar were incurred while clearances were being obtained and transportation to, and storage at, the point of final destination were being arranged. A portion of the corn was sold commercially to finance the 2-month storage costs in Dakar.

Although we conclude that expenditures for this project have, in part, been wasteful, it may not be considered representative of AID's worldwide technical assistance program. The success or failure of AID's projects depends largely on the host countries' efforts, because they control and manage the projects.

AID attempted to set guidelines to restrict its involvement in the project if the project failed, but, to date, AID has not disassociated itself from the project. Here, we believe, lies AID's primary management weakness in this project. AID, in our opinion, should not have incurred substantial expenditures over a considerable period of time without assurance that the project was both economically viable and adequately managed.

CHAPTER 4

CONTRACT FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

On June 22, 1971, AID awarded a contract to Tuskegee Institute to provide technical assistance in support of the West African regional poultry project. Matters relating to AID's negotiation of the contract and performance by Tuskegee Institute follow.

Negotiation of contract with Tuskegee Institute

The contract file did not contain documentation to support a sole-source selection or to show solicitation and consideration of other proposals.

An AID official said he recalled that Tuskegee Institute was selected under AID procurement regulations applicable to noncompetitive negotiations. Recently, another AID official prepared, after the fact, a memorandum to the file rationalizing the selection of Tuskegee Institute, as follows:

1. Tuskegee Institute in June 1970 conducted a preliminary survey to redesign the regional poultry project in order to make it more compatible with the rapidly changing political and economic conditions in the region. As a result of this combined survey by AID and Tuskegee personnel, AID officials were convinced that Tuskegee Institute had the resources and background required to implement such a project.

2. Host-country officials had reacted favorably to Tuskegee's effort in the survey, and AID believed that selection of Tuskegee as the project contractor enhanced cooperation between the host country and the cooperating institution and therefore increased the possibility for project success.

3. AID officials also wanted to involve a minority institution in development work in West Africa in line with Federal policies.

AID's regulations governing noncompetitive procurement provide that consideration of as many sources as is practicable, including informal solicitation to the greatest reasonable extent, is required even though formal solicitation of proposals from more than one offeror is not called for. We found nothing in the contract file to show such efforts were made. AID officials suggest that perhaps solicitation of other proposals were made, but they were unable to locate the documentation to support their contention.

We find nothing in the applicable law or regulations that in this case would permit using an initial study to justify a sole-source procurement or would permit the selection of a minority institution to the exclusion of all other institutions including other minority institutions.

We conclude that AID has not justified its failure to obtain competition in negotiating the contract with Tuskegee Institute.

Contractor's performance

Although the contract was not specific in defining the performance of Tuskegee Institute, it was required to furnish two full-time specialists--increased to three by contract revision in October 1972--and one part-time agricultural economist. The contract did not specify when the personnel were to be at the site.

The contractor has not provided all the personnel stipulated in the contract. The first specialist arrived in the field September 1971, 3 months after the contract was signed. The second specialist arrived 2 months later but his tour was terminated the following month after his attempted suicide. A replacement for the second specialist arrived in the field 1 year later (December 1972). The third specialist has not been recruited.

The specialist furnished by Tuskegee in September 1971 was formerly an AID direct-hire technician and was transferred from an AID assignment in Tunisia. This specialist has been very helpful in resolving some of the problems impeding progress. He persuaded the Malians to clean the breeder houses which were reported to be in deplorable condition at the time of his arrival. During our visit to the hatchery we found the facilities to be very clean. The specialist also standardized the procedures for maintaining the hatchery production records so that they accurately report production. The application of the vaccination program was improved, although there continues to be a problem with using medicines beyond their expiration dates. Malian technicians have been trained in techniques including the culling of eggs--determining which eggs are ill shaped, are of improper size or shell thickness, are too cracked, and are unfertilized. Such practical ideas as sprinkling the breeder houses in high temperature periods were also initiated.

American officials believe, and we concur, that this specialist has contributed some worthwhile efforts to the project, although the basic problems described in other chapters of this report remain unresolved.

AID Mission and host-country officials agreed that the majority of short trips taken by contractor officials during the period September 1971 to September 1972 served no constructive purpose. Our review of the project files tends to support this conclusion. Apparently no further trips have been made from September 1972 through February 1973. A summary of this transatlantic travel follows.

Duration of visit	Number of trips
0 to 1 week	1
1 to 2 weeks	4
1 month or less	4
More than 1 month	1
Total	10

The summary includes four short visits by an economist to Africa between September 1971 and June 1972. However, AID considered his reports inadequate, so the contract was amended to include funds for additional fieldwork. A new economist has not yet been recruited.

CHAPTER 5

REGIONAL ORGANIZATION AND

HOST-GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

In 1968 Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, and Guinea formed the Organization of Senegal River States to promote better trade relations among themselves. Guinea has since dropped out. The organization is now referred to as the Organization for Development of Senegal River Valley (OMVS).

When OMVS undertook the AID-sponsored regional poultry project in 1970, each member country was to make annual contributions to the program. Revenue earned from sales of chicks, chicken feed, and culled eggs was to be deposited in the same principal OMVS account as the national contributions. Subaccounts were to be established in national banks in Bamako, Nouakchott, and Dakar from which the withdrawals could be made to meet operating expenses of OMVS poultry centers located nearby.

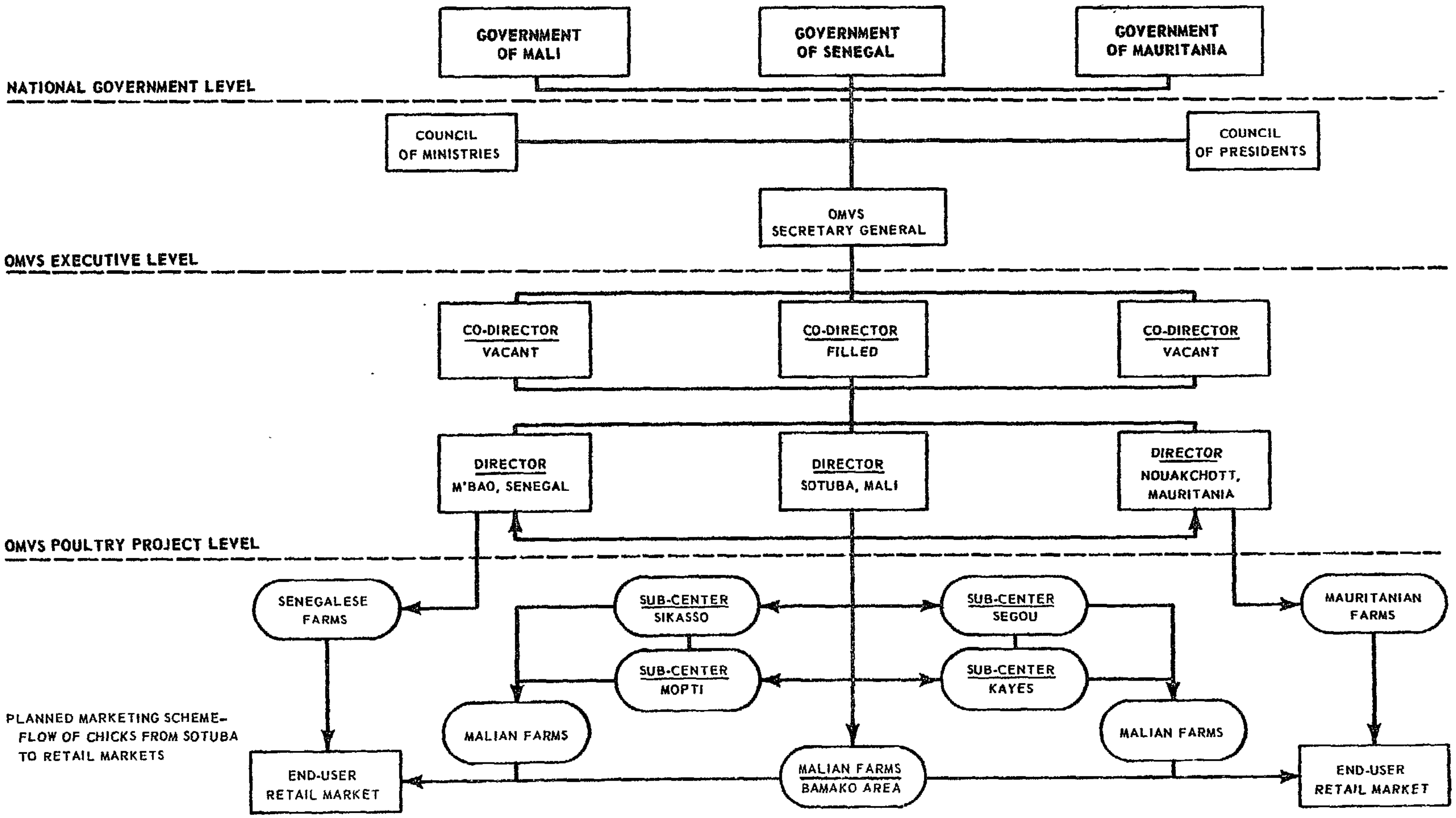
To control the use of money in the OMVS account the directors at each of the poultry centers in Mali, Senegal, and Mauritania must obtain approval of the secretary general before they can make withdrawals from the subaccounts. The subaccounts are to be replenished from the principal OMVS account.

This financing method was not implemented until December 1972, when the Government of Mali agreed to honor the OMVS accounts. As of February 23, 1973, AID and OMVS did not know the onhand account balances.

Before December 1972, the Sotuba part of the OMVS regional poultry program remained a national project--as opposed to a regional project. Previously, all revenues earned at Sotuba had gone to the general funds of the Mali Government, and its funding of the Sotuba poultry center had gone directly to Sotuba rather than through a principal OMVS bank account.

Following is a chart showing the complicated organizational structure of OMVS, the relationship of OMVS to the national governments, and the proposed flow of day-old

ORGANIZATION POUR LA MISE EN VALEUR DU FLEUCE SENEGAL (OMVS)



chicks from Sotuba to the retail markets in the three member countries. The poultry program has never been implemented along the lines shown in the chart.

According to the grant agreement between AID and the regional organization signed May 30, 1970, the organization was required to promptly establish an executive committee to (1) develop project implementation plans, (2) carry out periodic reviews and evaluations, and (3) make the necessary arrangements with the participating governments for trade in chicks and feed components. The executive committee first met on October 30, 1972--5 months after the original 2-year grant agreement had expired. The grant agreement also required that the poultry center at Sotuba be designated as an interstate center. Reportedly, Mali turned over the Sotuba center to the regional organization in December 1972. AID accomplished this turnover only by bringing the project to a near standstill--AID did not order flock replacements and medicines and it threatened to withdraw the Tuskegee contract personnel.

One of the major program objectives was to produce 500,000 chicks at the hatchery in Bamako, Mali, during the second year of operations. The nearest that production has been to that goal was in 1970 when 215,375 chicks were hatched. In 1971, 196,062 chicks were hatched and in 1972, 179,500 chicks were hatched. The production for 1973 will probably be even less, particularly because the majority of the breeding flock at Sotuba has passed its peak in egg laying capacity and the new replacement breeders, acquired in late 1972, will not begin producing eggs until mid-April 1973.

Because the production at the hatchery has been very low and Malian demand has exceeded chick production, the chicks have been distributed mostly to Malian farmers. The manager of the hatchery is paid by the Mali Government and distribution of chicks tends to follow that loyalty. According to AID officials, a new distribution policy was agreed on when the hatchery was turned over to the regional organization in December 1972; AID expects that a more equitable distribution will be made. However, at the time of our review, the hatchery was only exporting a token number of its production.

The cooperating countries were to provide, from governmental and private resources, contributions in cash or in kind, totaling $193,500. An accounting for participating government contributions has not been made. Neither AID nor OMVS officials have made strong efforts to ascertain how much the Mali Government has contributed to the hatchery at Sotuba.

Based on the best information made available to us, the following amounts and narrative descriptions represent host-country contributions to the project.

Government of Senegal:	
30 million CFAs (converted at 250 CFAs to $1) through December 1972	$120,000
Government of Mauritania:	
10 million CFAs (converted at 250 CFAs to $1) through December 1972	40,000
Government of Mali:	
7 million Malian francs (converted at 500 francs to $1) was deposited since December 1972	14,000
Mali paid salaries of local nationals employed at Sotuba since project originated	(not determined)
Mali paid operating costs, such as utilities, at Sotuba since project originated	(not determined)
Mali budget information indicates 20 million Malian francs are to be programed for Sotuba during 1973 (at 500 to 1 ratio, this equals $40,000). But as of mid-February 1973, the Mali budget was not officially approved	(not determined)

Before December 1972, revenues from the Malian hatchery were retained by the Mali Government. No record of revenues earned from sales of eggs and chicks were maintained at Sotuba. Therefore, no data was available for determining the total amount of earnings absorbed by the general funds of the Malian Government.

The fiscal year 1972 grant agreement required the regional organization to promptly account for all advances made by AID under the preceding agreement. An accounting, satisfactory to AID, has not been made.

We conclude that one of the basic problems has been a lack of specific lines of direction and necessary cooperation between these parties and AID. The regional organization has not operated effectively, and an adequate accounting for participating government and AID contributions has not been made.

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December 22, 1972.

The Honorable Elmer B. Staats
The Comptroller General
General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Staats:

This letter is in further reference to my letter of November 24, 1972, requesting an investigation of an Agency For International Development poultry project in Mali. The project number is 625-11-130-508.

On the basis of preliminary information provided to me by your staff, it appears that the operation in Mali is part of a regional project that covers several countries.

I will appreciate it, therefore, if you will conduct an investigation of the entire project and provide me with a report on it.

Thank you for your attention to this request.

Sincerely,

H. R. Gross

HRG/dj