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DFID SOCIAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE

RESEARCH REPORT

**COUNTRY LEVEL ENDORSEMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF
THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE KANO MARADI STUDY
(R 7221)**

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Disclaimer

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) supports policies, programmes and projects to promote international development. DFID provided funds for this study as part of that objective but the views and opinions expressed are those of the authors alone.

Background objectives

This Report summarises the outputs of in-country Endorsement and Dissemination activities linked to the research findings of ESCOR R7221 (Kano-Maradi Study of Long-Term Change). These were funded by the SRC to the amount of £11,738 (incl.VAT), of which £3,805 were spent in Niger and £3,972 in Nigeria. The Research Report of R 7221 (submitted on 1 May, 2001) should be referred to for details of those findings.¹

In the Proposal document for the dissemination activities, we conceived our strategy as follows:

Influencing policy and practice, as experience with our earlier study of Machakos District showed, calls for targeted outputs both in-country and internationally. International debates can best be reached through publications and conferences. Country debates can be reached via carefully planned supplementary activities at national level.

DFID declined to support international dissemination, and this Report therefore only covers in-country activities. However, it should be noted that the workshops, which brought together researchers, bureaucrats and farmers and traders, were recognised locally as innovative, and provided new insights which deserve sharing at the international level. The Maradi village reports have already been quoted in a paper by Tiffen and Mortimore published in the *Natural Resources Forum*, Vol 26, No 3, (commissioned to coincide with the Johannesburg summit), and the relationship of language, democracy and policy making was discussed in a paper presenting by Mary Tiffen at a workshop on politics and development at Sheffield in July.

The methods proposed for in-country dissemination were as follows:

The country dissemination work will be co-ordinated by Drylands Research and carried out by members of national teams under the leadership of the Country Co-ordinators who supervised the research. They will develop detailed plans appropriate to country circumstances, but the following elements are expected to be included: team inception meetings, writing of briefs, translation of briefs as appropriate, participatory debate at community, district and national levels, follow-up activities in interaction with policy-makers.

Country Co-ordinators in Niger and Nigeria will involve selected members of their original research teams in activities with leaders and policy makers from community to national level, in workshops and the distribution of briefs. Capacity will be built at village and district level by providing material for discussion and debate in local languages.

The Co-ordinators were:

Niger – Dr Yamba Boubacar, Abdou Moumouni University, Niamey, Niger
Nigeria – Dr J Ayodele Ariyo, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria
Drylands Research: Michael Mortimore

¹ The country findings have been published in *Drylands Research Working Papers*, 24 – 36, 39e,f in French or English as appropriate (see Annex 1 for a list of titles).

Dr Ariyo was asked to keep in touch with DFID in Nigeria, which expressed a strong interest in the project, but owing to communication delays and a necessary change in date, no DFID representative could attend the meeting.

Methods and activities

The plan varied between Niger and Nigeria in recognition of the realities of administrative structure and costs.

In Niger, activities were carried out at three levels:

Local level: Participatory meetings in the four study villages to gain endorsement of the research findings and take forward agreed priorities to middle (Departmental) level; 12-16 March, 2002. These meetings were held in the Hausa language.

Middle level: Workshop held in Maradi on 6 May, 2002, which attracted 40 participants from:

- the study villages (12 farmers' representatives from 3 of the 4 villages)
- Maradi prefecture (represented by the Secretary-general)
- technical government departments
- Chiefs of agricultural services
- NGOs
- Development projects
- Civil society

A summary of the published synthesis (*Drylands Research Working Paper 39f*) was prepared in Hausa and presented.² Summaries of the *Working Papers* on Maradi were distributed (in French) to participants. Plenary discussions were in Hausa and in French. There were three working groups (in Hausa), on: Agricultural inputs; Education and information; and Marketing alternatives. The farmers' representatives were interviewed by the Hausa language media.

National level: a Workshop held in Niamey on 10 October, 2002; to which senior representatives were invited from:

- Institut National de Recherche Agronomique du Niger
- Population and health department
- Livestock department
- University of Niamey
- Land tenure review body
- European Union, and others

For this meeting, the relevant *Working Papers* were distributed, in French.

The local and middle level meetings went ahead as planned, but the sudden calling of an Inter-Ministerial Meeting in Niamey deprived the national meeting of many of its targeted participants outside the research community. Resources had been committed and as it was not possible to reconvene, the meeting went ahead on the basis of a very restricted participation.

Members of the research team were present at all levels.

² This document is available from Drylands Research on request.

In Nigeria, in consideration of the powers of state level government, and the impossibility of staging a meeting in the Federal capital, Abuja, within the budget provided, only one Workshop was planned, and was held in Kano on 25 July, 2002. There was a strong participation of 49, including representatives of:

Agricultural and Rural Development Authorities (Kano, Katsina, Jigawa States)
Institutes of Agricultural Research and Agricultural Extension, Zaria
International donors (IFDC, Sasakiwa Global 2000)
State ministries of agriculture
Grain and livestock traders
Farmer-traders in villages where related research has been conducted
Press
Women in Nigeria NGO
Producers' associations
Federal Livestock Authority
Cross-Border Trade Research Network
Fadama Programme

The research team was also present. Summaries of all relevant *Working Papers* were provided in English and the findings of the Food Marketing Study were presented in summary. There were three working groups (two in English and one in Hausa) to discuss common issues: what policies to stem declining prices and enable better livelihoods? What policies for stabilising price fluctuations? What policies for income diversification? How to improve market efficiency? And how to facilitate producers' access to capital, technology, and inputs?

Reports written by country co-ordinators on the workshops described above have been submitted earlier with the *Quarterly Reports*.

Findings

A Endorsement and prioritisation of policy findings

It is emphasised that the research carried out in R 7221 was wide-ranging and identified a large number of issues (see *Drylands Research Working Paper 40*), more than could be raised in these in-country activities. We shall highlight only a few.

Long-term trends. There was general endorsement of the trends documented by the studies, in respect of rainfall variability and/or decline, of population growth (with an ensuing scarcity of cultivable land), of a growing problem of soil fertility maintenance, of increasing dependence on income diversification, of urbanization and migration, of market growth and response, and of technical and institutional change, among others.

Incentives. Capabilities to adapt to change and to respond to new opportunities are not in doubt at all levels. Therefore, removing constraints should be a policy priority. Improving access to markets is a widely felt need from the most densely populated (Kano Close-Settled Zone) to the least (Dan Kullu, in northern Maradi), whether the obstacles are infrastructural or institutional (e.g., illegal road blocks). Given declining real price trends in the long term, for farmers to obtain better livelihoods, markets must become more efficient in passing benefits to producers. Other demand side priorities are: stabilising market prices; improving information systems; cutting out inefficiencies in producer to market linkages; making market institutions work efficiently. Removing these demand side barriers is more urgent than increasing productivity.

Investment. Intensification, for increased productivity, has not outrun its possibilities, even in the most densely-populated areas. However, agriculture is seen by many as insufficiently profitable to generate the necessary capital unsupported by off-farm incomes. Producers prioritise investment, including investment in soil fertility. The constraint is seen as financial, not technical. Better profit margins, more accessible credit, measures to improve food security and optimise the timing of market sales (via consumer credit) are examples of the creative policies suggested. There is much interest in investment in inorganic fertiliser. Even more important than its price (in Kano) is the need for it to be available at the right time, and of correct quality. This calls into question the present systems of distribution via state organisations, which may prioritise influential persons, contrasting with the efficiency of private trading networks in collecting food commodities from numerous, dispersed producers for the urban markets.³

Diversification. Uptake of niche products for urban consumers (within agriculture), and income diversification outside agriculture, are established trends in household livelihood strategies. Profits are used to capitalise agriculture, though of course not exclusively. They also support consumption. Improvements in efficiency are, however, necessary to maximise benefits.

Organisation. Social capital, in the form of associations, producer groups, etc. has direct impact on marketing efficiency, access to credit (and repayment), and diversification options.

B Communicating research findings to policy processes.

Three levels. It is helpful to distinguish three levels at which communication was attempted: *local*, *middle* and *national*. The first *local* level corresponds to the village or community, where delegated authority rests with leaders or elders who are in constant touch with the people, whether decisions are arrived at ‘democratically’ or handed down. The second *middle* level corresponds to *arrondissement*, departmental, district or state administrative units where some form of representation is normally instituted and decisions rest partly in the hands of professional cadres. At this level there may be less effective interaction not only between government authorities and farmers or traders, but even with the village authorities who have a direct knowledge of local agendas. The third *national* level is highly centralised, remote from local interests, and may be driven by externalities such as international agency or donor pressures. The activities reported here made an impact at local and middle levels. At the national level, nothing has so far been attempted in Nigeria, while in Niger, the workshop that was targeted at this level was ineffective for reasons beyond our control.⁴

Participation/interaction. Interaction with policy agents occurs in different formats at the three levels. At *local* and *middle* levels, the village meetings and workshops followed periods of interaction with leaders and farmers in participating villages during the conduct of the research. This interaction was not intensive, because the long-term change being analysed was data-dependent and therefore comparatively little interviewing was done, mostly carried out within a short time (four weeks). It was an intrinsic feature of this research that debate on the nature and significance of the long-term trends had to wait until they had first been delineated. The village

³ Some farmers also appeared to think that both inputs and credit might be handled more efficiently and fairly by traditional village authorities than by the agricultural services.

⁴ It may be noted that a national workshop held in Kenya at the conclusion of the Machakos study was relatively successful, owing to prolonged preparations and the presence of two elected members of parliament in addition to numerous donor and other representatives. A workshop on this scale was precluded in Niger or Nigeria on grounds of cost.

level meetings conducted in Hausa in Niger were particularly effective, and enabled the communities to confirm and elaborate on the research findings.

At the District level, in both countries, problems of language intervened, as the main debates were partially in English or French, the preferred language of the researchers and officials. While the three working groups in Maradi were conducted in Hausa, there were only four villagers at each (representatives of one of the four villages invited had failed to come), with eight departmental level representatives. In Kano most farmer-traders joined the Hausa speaking working group, but one or two traders felt able to join the English-speaking groups. (Traders were not directly represented at the Maradi workshop.) At both local and middle levels, the *limiting factor* was not access or interest but the resources available for sustaining interaction, achieving a wide-ranging participation, and following-up. At Maradi, the village representatives, in giving interviews to national and local commercial radio, expressed clearly their hope that there would be a support programme, and that Drylands Research would follow up with a deeper study focusing on the thorny questions relating to agricultural inputs.

At the *national* level, the workshop must be held at the beginning of interaction between the research team, and their findings, on the one hand and the policy makers on the other. In retrospect, more could have been done to evolve the research questions themselves from interaction with policy makers, but as the findings were expected to be (and were) counter-intuitive, this would have been difficult. The *limiting factor* here is access to the state's decision-making process.

This means either participating – through channels that have not been defined - in state-sponsored processes such as sector-wide approaches or PRSPs (*bureaucratic mode*), or obtaining leverage on decisions by representative bodies (*political mode*). The latter loops back to local and middle levels, where elected representatives have their power base. A bureaucratic rather than a political mode seems more familiar to researchers. But it is intrinsically non-participatory. Either of these options also calls for resources for continuity and for facilities to use the languages familiar to the bureaucrats, village level authorities, farmers, women, traders, and others. Also there must be convergence in the perceptual languages used and equality in mutual learning, for example between indigenous and 'scientific' knowledge, especially if the research (as in this project) suggests a need for a revision of orthodox understanding.

Lessons at local level. We have learnt the following lessons about linking research to policy debate at local level:

- Participatory policy discussions at local level have a strongly positive reception among people accustomed in the past to authoritarian, one-way government. Empowering such discussions on an 'evidence-led' basis is both a worthy and worthwhile activity for researchers. Much still needs to be done to incorporate evidence into empowerment.
- Village people and researchers can converge on research findings, that go farther than 'shopping lists' or 'problem trees' to interpretations of change over time, and to the public action that is desirable to take forward agreed priorities. This is because village people naturally accept a long-term view; they do not 'discount the future' as has often been suggested.
- Effective participation of village people in policy debate at the middle level can be achieved provided that their own languages are used for preparatory materials and debate. This is more urgent in a country where the rural majority are illiterate in any language, and less so where a language in wide use locally such as Hausa (or Swahili) has an agreed orthography and an active press and literature.

- Demand for information, new knowledge, and opportunities is buoyant at local level. A major opportunity for development policy is simply to meet this demand, on its own (not imposed) terms. For example, technical education can provide new opportunities in non-farm jobs, and commercial information on prices can improve and extend market opportunities. Whereas, in parts of northern Nigeria, rural peoples' lukewarm attitude to formal education can be partly attributed to its not being seen to provide their children with essential skills and knowledge. Research has a mediating role to play, on the same terms.
- The village is far from being a homogeneous community, and to take account of differentiation in asset holdings, age, gender, networks and human capital, 'menus' of diverse options are required. Applied research becomes a search, not for a miracle technology, but for the critical changes that can enable people to develop their own options.

Lessons at middle level.

- Outsiders' stereotypes of government professionals as having inaccurate or patronising perceptions, or low expectations, of rural people may be themselves inaccurate, but underline a need for evidence-led debates within departments and agencies as a corrective to the temptation to despise rural peoples' views.
- Bringing together village people and departmental or agency professionals at the middle level, in structured debate, is effective in yielding a shared understanding, 'ownership' and prioritisation of development policy, but this activity should be given more time and resources, with careful consideration of language issues.
- Powers to effect change at middle level, of course, depend on constitutional provisions; thus Maradi is a department in a centralised State, whereas Kano is a strong state within a Federation. As it enjoys an elected assembly, in theory it should be possible for rural people to influence policy through political representation. Kano is also far bigger than Maradi (with 8.6 million inhabitants in 1991 compared with Maradi's 1.4 million in 1988). Such specifics must be taken into account.
- In development discussions, it is important not to omit traders, many of whose scale of operations is at middle level. This is particularly relevant, now that development policy has become more market-oriented.
- The middle level is the appropriate scale at which to identify regional interests defined in terms of agro-ecology or major environmental variables. Because of these variables, links between local and middle levels are stronger than those with national. There is a need to disaggregate national policy debate and specifically to recognise the needs of the drylands, which may (but not necessarily will) differ from those of more humid rural areas.

Lessons at national level.

- The income diversification process, as well as the market issues, bind together rural and urban sectors, and so policies aiming to balancing sectoral priorities must recognise that many of the same citizens are involved in both, in different capacities and at different times.
- New research has no automatic claim to be taken seriously by national level policy makers. The analogy is not with consuming a plate of food presented by someone else but with collaborating in its preparation and cooking over a period of time, not with sequential actions (research followed by policy) but with flexible interaction. Such interaction needs resources, as dialogue throws up new questions (calling for new

research or ‘action research’) as well as taking time (calling for the commitment of researchers to the policy process). Deciding what research justifies such investment, and what does not, has to be done – by whom?

- Major policy processes in train at national level, such as ‘sector-wide’ planning and Poverty Reduction Strategies, present a complex challenge for a bottom-up approach such as the one developed in this work. It was not possible to carry forward our activities to a point where any direct engagement with these processes was practicable.

Evaluation.

The following evaluation was written by the in-country co-ordinator:

‘The [Kano] Workshop brought policy makers (at the state level) and actors in food production and marketing (farmers and traders) in the Kano region into a face-to-face contact to discuss the findings of our study. During this encounter and among the many issues discussed the farmers and traders voiced ‘new’ concerns that were unrecognised or generally ignored by policy makers. These were (1) concern about the deteriorating quality of fertilisers and agrochemicals coming into the market, (2) an admission that access to profitable farming is rapidly disappearing in the region due to the rapid growth in population and the need to upgrade local crafts into cottage industries as well as training/retraining of the people for such industries as a means of diversifying livelihoods, (3) the need for government to recognise and remove the high hidden cost of marketing, especially unofficial levies that are being collected daily by government officials on the roads (the police, immigration officers, vehicle inspection officers, custom officers, traffic wardens, officers of the National Drug Law Enforcement Authority, officers of the Federal Road Safety Corps, officers of local councils, etc.) as a way of reducing the large differential between farm-gate and retail/consumer prices of food commodities. (4) Farmers also bemoaned their lack of access to institutional credits and debunked the popular notion that they view such credits as easy money that they are prone to handle irresponsibly. They called for a thorough study of integrating traditional institutions into institutional lending mechanisms as a way of improving the loan recovery process.

Participation in the workshop was very lively, although it was restricted to the state level and lasted for only one day due to the limited fund available. The major impact of the workshop in our view is that it has generated awareness, among state officials who attended, of the foregoing concerns of both the farmers and traders in the region. The policy implications of these issues require the collaborative efforts of all tiers of government in the land to work out. It is necessary, therefore, to expose higher-level policy makers to these and other findings of the study in order to carry the awareness forward and influence future policies’ (J.A.Ariyo)

In Maradi, the interaction between researchers and villagers was strongly positive, especially as the villages are located 1200 km from Niamey, where all but one of the research team are based, and it was felt that the project went further than many earlier research studies in the Department had done in setting up a three-way communication between local and middle levels and researchers. Village people are not at all cowed in open discussions with ‘experts’ provided that the language of debate is understood. Attendance at the village meetings was 50, 100, 90 and 30 including women. At the middle level, the Maradi workshop was the second participatory workshop held there (and for the officials and agencies, the third) since the beginning of the research. We could hope that a habit of consultation has been initiated. At the same time, much

ground needs still to be covered, including strengthening relations between researchers and development projects and programmes. At the national level, Niger is a small country (in demographic terms), where the influence of such an effort can be expected to be potentially strong.

The following evaluation was written by the in-country Co-ordinator:

‘This research has launched a social dialogue in Maradi in which the peasants have been able to express themselves without constraint. They were very pleased that the research findings were taken back to the villages and verified with them. They did not hesitate to state their positions in the presence of administrative authorities. Specific interests and constraints of rural people are only rarely taken into account, which has blocked agricultural policies from taking effect in the past. The peasants denounced the gaps and deficiencies in education, training [human capital development], and information. This freedom of speech offers hope for agricultural policy, and underlines the importance of finding ways and means of improving their access to information and to an education adapted to their interests. The success of the current national poverty programme will depend to a large extent on the State’s capacity to integrate these interests. In the village meetings, the peasants did not hesitate to ask about the problems encountered by rural people in the other countries studied by Drylands Research [Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria], and about the solutions they had proposed – an interest that illustrates their thirst for information. To give the peasants an optimal chance to improve their situation, it is essential to reinforce their capacities with reliable information and education that is socially integrated’ (Y Boubacar).

Dissemination

The activities described were themselves dissemination of research findings. No further work was provided for. We (Mortimore and Tiffen) have made limited use of them in unfunded publications, but we believe that the work justifies publication in a funded article and/or briefing paper. There is also, in our judgement, a need to carry forward the engagement between this research and the policy processes in both countries, if the work is not to be wasted. We have suggested to DFID in Nigeria that it may consider supporting a small-scale national level meeting. In Niger, follow-up work with the Ministry of Agriculture, the EU Commission, and others has been initiated in the aftermath of the unsuccessful workshop, but is not resourced.

Annex 1

Drylands Research Working Papers

ISSN 1470-9384

Kenya series:

1. Makueni District profile: Farm development, 1946-1999, *Francis Gichuki*, 2000.
2. Makueni District profile: Rainfall variability, 1950-1997, *Francis Gichuki*, 2000.
3. Makueni District profile: Water management, 1989-1998, *Francis Gichuki*, 2000.
4. Makueni District profile: Soil management and conservation, 1989-1998, *Francis Gichuki*, 2000.
5. Makueni District profile: Tree management, 1989-1998, *Francis Gichuki*, 2000.
6. Makueni District profile: Soil fertility management, *J.P. Mbuvi*, 2000.
7. Makueni District profile: Crop production and marketing, 1988-1999, *Stephen Mbogoh*, 2000.
8. Makueni District profile: Livestock management, 1990-1998, *Abdou Fall*, 2000.
9. Makueni District profile: Human resource management, 1989-1998, *Charles Nzioka*, 2000.
10. Makueni District profile: Income diversification and farm investment, 1989-1999, *John Nelson*, 2000.
11. Makueni District profile: Synthesis, *Francis Gichuki, Stephen Mbogoh, Mary Tiffen, Michael Mortimore*, 2000.

Senegal series:

12. Région de Diourbel: Politiques nationales affectant l'investissement chez les petits exploitants, *Matar Gaye*, 2000.
13. Région de Diourbel: Les aspects démographiques, *Abdourahmane Barry, Salif Ndiaye, Fallou Ndiaye, Mary Tiffen*, 2000.
14. Région de Diourbel : Gestion des eaux, *Aminata Niane Badiane, Mamadou Khouma, Modou Sène*, 2000.
15. Région de Diourbel : Gestion des sols, *Aminata Niane Badiane, Mamadou Khouma, Modou Sène*, 2000.
16. Région de Diourbel: Evolution de la production agricole, *Adama Faye, Abdou Fall, Djibril Coulibaly*, 2000.
17. Région de Diourbel : Gestion des ressources forestières et de l'arbre, *Syaka Sadio, Mamadou Dione, Soukeyna Ngom*, 2000.
18. Région de Diourbel: Evolution de la commercialisation des produits, *Cheikh Ly*, 2000.
19. Région de Diourbel: Evolution des régimes fonciers, *Henri Lo, Mamadou Dione*, 2000.
20. Région de Diourbel: The family, local institutions and education, *Wendy Wilson-Fall*, 2000.
21. Région de Diourbel: Cartographie des changements d'occupation-utilisation du sol dans la zone agricole du Sénégal Occidental, *Magatte Ba, Massaer Mbaye, Samba Ndao, Almamy Wade, Lamine Ndiaye*, 2000.
22. Région de Diourbel: Diversification des revenus et son incidence sur l'investissement agricole, *Adama Faye, Abdou Fall*, 2001.
- 23e. Région de Diourbel : Synthesis, *Adama Faye, Abdou Fall, Michael Mortimore, Mary Tiffen, John Nelson*, 2001.
- 23f. Région de Diourbel: Synthèse, *Adama Faye, Abdou Fall, Michael Mortimore, Mary Tiffen, John Nelson*, 2001.

Niger-Nigeria series:

24. Profile of demographic change in the Kano-Maradi Region, 1960-2000, *Mary Tiffen*, 2001.
25. Profile of rainfall change and variability in the Kano-Maradi Region, 1960-2000, *Michael Mortimore*, 2000.
26. Évolutions à long terme de l'organisation sociale et économique dans la région de Maradi, *Marthe Diarra Doka*, 2001.

27. Usages des terres et évolutions végétales dans le département de Maradi, *Ali Mahamane*, 2001.
28. Gestion des ressources naturelles et évolution des systèmes agraires dans la région de Maradi, *Ibrahim Bouzou Moussa*, 2000.
29. Évolution des régimes de propriété et d'utilisation des ressources naturelles dans la région de Maradi, *Yamba Boubacar*, 2000.
30. Évolution à long terme de la fertilité de sol dans la région de Maradi, *Mahaman Issaka*, 2001.
31. Gestion des forêts et des arbres au niveau des terroirs dans la région de Maradi, *Aboubacar Awaïss*, 2000.
32. Évolution à long terme des productions agricoles, du système de commercialisation et des prix des produits dans la zone de Maradi, *Seyni Hamadou*, 2000.
33. Politiques nationales et investissement dans les petites exploitations à Maradi, *Seyni Hamadou*, 2000.
34. Long-term change in food provisioning and marketing in the Kano Region, 1960-2000, *J. Ayodele Ariyo, J.P. Voh, B. Ahmed*, 2001.
35. Agrarian production, public policy and the State in Kano Region, 1900-2000, *Abdul Raufu Mustapha, Kate Meagher*, 2000.
36. Changes in soil fertility under indigenous agricultural intensification in the Kano Region, *Frances Harris*, 2000.
- 39e. Synthesis of long-term change in Maradi Department, Niger, 1960-2000, *Michael Mortimore, Mary Tiffen, Yamba Boubacar, John Nelson*, 2001.
- 39f. Synthèse sur les évolutions à long terme dans le Département de Maradi, Niger, 1960-2000, *Michael Mortimore, Mary Tiffen, Yamba Boubacar, John Nelson*, 2001.

London Workshop:

40. Livelihood transformations in semi-arid Africa 1960-2000: Proceedings of a workshop arranged by the ODI with Drylands Research and the ESRC, in the series 'Transformations in African agriculture', *Drylands Research*, 2001.

Annex 2

Highlights Summary

This Report summarises the outputs of in-country Endorsement and Dissemination activities linked to the research findings of ESCOR R7221 (Kano-Maradi Study of Long-Term Change).

Influencing policy and practice calls for targeted outputs both in-country and internationally. International debates can best be reached through publications and conferences. Country debates can be reached via carefully planned supplementary activities at national level. The workshops, which brought together researchers, bureaucrats and farmers and traders, were recognised locally as innovative, and involved research teams, leaders and policy makers from community to national level, working with village representatives.

Three levels. It is helpful to distinguish three levels at which communication was attempted: *local*, *middle* and *national*. The first *local* level corresponds to the village or community, the second *middle* level corresponds to *arrondissement*, departmental, district or state administrative units, and the third is the *national* level. The activities reported here made an impact at local and middle levels. Interaction between research, community and policy occurs in different formats at the three levels. At local and middle levels, the languages used have an important bearing on the outcome. Resources are necessary to maintain the interactive process. At the national level, the limiting factor is access to the state's decision-making process. This means either participating in state-sponsored processes such as sector-wide approaches or PRSPs (*bureaucratic mode*), or obtaining leverage on decisions by representative bodies (*political mode*). There must be an equality in mutual learning, especially if the research (as in this project) suggests a need for a revision of orthodox understanding.

Endorsement of the findings of R7221.

- There was general endorsement of the long-term trends documented by the studies (see *Research Report, R7221*).
- Capabilities to adapt to change and to respond to new opportunities are not in doubt. Therefore, removing constraints should be a policy priority.
- Producers prioritise investment, including investment in soil fertility. The constraint is seen as financial, not technical.
- Uptake of niche products for urban consumers (within agriculture), and income diversification outside agriculture, are established trends and profits may be used to capitalise agriculture.
- Social capital has a direct impact on marketing efficiency, access to credit (and repayment), and diversification options.

Linking research to policy debate at local level:

- Participatory policy discussions at local level are popular and empowering such discussions on an 'evidence-led' basis is both a worthy and worthwhile activity for researchers.
- Village people and researchers can agree on trends and on the public action that is desirable to take forward agreed priorities, as village people naturally accept a long-term view.
- Effective participation of village people in policy debate at the middle level can be achieved provided that their own languages are used for preparatory materials and debate.

- Demand for information, new knowledge, and opportunities is buoyant at local level. A major opportunity for development policy is simply to meet this demand, on its own (not imposed) terms.
- The village is far from being a homogeneous community, and to take account of diversity, ‘menus’ of diverse options are required. Applied research becomes a search, not for a miracle technology, but for the critical changes that can enable people to develop their own options.

Lessons at middle level:

- There is a need for evidence-led debates within departments and agencies as a corrective to the temptation to despise rural peoples’ views.
- Bringing together village people and departmental or agency professionals at the middle level, in structured debate, yields a shared ‘ownership’ of development policy, but needs more time and resources.
- Powers to effect change at middle level, of course, depend on constitutional provisions; thus Maradi is a department in a centralised State, whereas Kano is a strong state within a Federation.
- In development discussions, it is important not to omit traders, now that development policy has become more market-oriented.
- The middle level is the appropriate scale at which to identify regional interests defined in terms of agro-ecology or major environmental variables. There is a need to disaggregate national policy debate and specifically to recognise the needs of the drylands.

Lessons at national level.

- The income diversification process, as well as the market issues, bind together rural and urban sectors, and so policies aiming to balancing sectoral priorities must recognise that many of the same citizens are involved in both, in different capacities and at different times.
- New research has no automatic claim to be taken seriously by national level policy makers. The necessary interaction needs resources, as dialogue throws up new questions (calling for new research or ‘action research’) as well as taking time (calling for the commitment of researchers to the policy process). Deciding what research justifies such investment, and what does not, has to be done – by whom?
- Major policy processes in train at national level, such as ‘sector-wide’ planning and Poverty Reduction Strategies, present a complex challenge for a bottom-up approach.