

A network is an appealing concept. But it is by no means clear that everyone understands it in the same way. The relations between the official and informal spheres can vary greatly from one organization to another, depending on the particular institutional culture. Creating networks between organizations from the North and South can produce countless problems and misunderstandings. The Club du Sahel, however, could serve as a model for the creation of a new kind of institution.

The Club du Sahel's success is attributable to a combination of specific factors:

- First, as it is organized on an informal basis, it has been able to break out of the strait-jacket of things unspoken at the highest levels of Sahel and donor country organizations.
- Secondly, it has been determined to avoid any form of bureaucratization and to avoid politicizing or publicizing its initiatives. This has enabled it to modify its work plan on an ongoing basis. Both the Club and, to a great extent, the CILSS have thus been able to monitor and address the real problems of development in the region, without falling prey to the inertia and internal power struggles to which bureaucracies are prone. Moreover, since 1986, their work has been supported by prospective studies and a network of individuals and institutions, so as to stimulate reflection and provide guidance for action.
- Thirdly, the existence of a group of Africans determined to engage in dialogue with the donors has also been an essential ingredient for success. In this undertaking they have relied on one of their own institutions, the CILSS, which has provided advice and support.

The figures on pages 97–98 provide a broad outline of the project.

5.3.2 The current evolution of IGADD offers an opportunity for innovation

Is it better to start by creating a continental crisis management module or to start at the grass roots? Opinions are divided. It is clear, however, that it is desirable to undertake simultaneous and complementary actions at the base and at the top. Hopes for a lasting solution must rest on a subtle interplay of coherent actions working from the top down and the bottom up. In some cases, it would be appropriate to get more involved in a regional entity and make it an instrument of conflict reduction.

IGADD (for Inter-governmental Authority on Drought and Development, including Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya and Uganda) has adopted a new mandate, and is considering ways and means to associate more closely a donor group to its work. Food security is the basis for peacebuilding in the region. Following the model of the Food Crisis Prevention Network for the Sahel, this network of voluntary bodies could meet informally. Its objectives would be to improve understanding of the origin and nature of crises, improve crisis forecasting and take immediate action on