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Report on POETRI Workshop  
June 7 - June 9, 1982

Ouagadougou  
Upper Volta

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Executive Summary of POETRI Workshop for West and Central Africa  
in Ouagadougou Upper Volta

IRC and the POETRI Programme have already sufficient reason to be optimistic as to the tangible success of the first POETRI workshop for West and Central Africa. The proof: Senegal, Niger and Upper Volta have already designated their NFP. CIEH and IRC have received a project proposal/budget and request for funding from Niger to organize the national POETRI workshop and create the NFP documentation centre. The CIEH has submitted a request for funding to POETRI/IRC so that it can undertake its role as Regional Focal Point and begin funding NFPs and carry out short-term missions to these countries to provide technical back up support. The Cameroon has volunteered to act as host country for the second POETRI workshop for West and Central Africa, to be held at a future date.

Recommended Action as Follow-up to POETRI Workshop

In addition to visits to those countries which have already taken concrete steps in participating in the POETRI programme, back-up support visits to several other CIEH member and observer countries could be beneficial in assisting them in their designation of the NFP and in their organization of their national POETRI documentation centre. In keeping with the proposed plan of action/time schedule, such visits would be timely during the end of 1982, beginning of 1983. Special attention should be given to such countries lacking in documentation resources, as Benin and the Gambia.

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Overview of Discussions during POETRI Seminar

Because of the abstract nature of the concept of the POETRI Programme, the participants had some difficulty, initially in understanding what it actually meant in concrete terms when it was applied in the region.

Therefore, it was decided to alter the planned seminar programme.

Mr. C. Bartone presented a historical case study of the creation of the CEPIS REPIDISCA/POETRI network for Latin America, a regional system, and the steps needed to develop the national focal points. The main points of interest of the CEPIS case study, which provided fruit for discussion were:

- The POETRI programme does not mean the automatic creation of new services in West and Central Africa, neither at the regional nor national level. The essential is that in the programme the means will be made available to develop this project within the framework of existing structures i.e. CIEH at the regional level and a national service or institution would be the NFP at the national level. The point was made that although this may have been the case in South America, this may not be true in Africa and we should realize that new structures may have to be created requiring new investments.
  
- The exposée of CEPIS permitted the participants to understand the potential capacities of the POETRI system, the relationship between the RFP and the NFPs, and the tariff system used to finance the services provided. For example: each NFP feeds information into the regional centre's data base and in turn receives a product from the RFP - that is, information to serve its national users. The services for which the NFP can charge its users are i.e. bibliographic searches, specialised bibliographies and photocopies. It was pointed out that one of the NFP's principal roles is the collection of data for the RFP who in turn analyzes this data and returns it to the NFP.

- The CEPIS regional data bank consists of 50% NFP documentation, and 50% information on appropriate technology. Sixty percent of documents are in Spanish, 40% in English. Fifty percent of the financing of CEPIS Information Services comes from WHO, and the other 50% from the RFP itself.

One point of confusion was the form in which the data the NFP supplied to the RFP should be in. The NFP do not provide the document itself, but rather the index, abstract, and key word descriptions of the document and for this reason, it is important the NFP have available upon demand a copy of the original document. In the future, CEPIS plans to have copies (and microfilm) of all the NFP's documents. Therefore, the user who requests a document will have to pay the photocopying and mailing costs.

#### Practicality of using Microfilm

The documentalist from CEAO questioned whether microfilm is the most appropriate form for their information as the users may not enjoy using the machine. Microfilm is not yet accepted in the African context, there are more demands for a paper form of information. In the future documentation centres should provide training for its users in the correct usage of documentation. Moreover, this equipment will have to be externally financed for the NFP.

#### Potential Problem of NFP's lacking funds to send their documents to RFP and RFP lacking funds to send NFPs documents

Although the exchange of information is necessary, mailing costs are a prohibitive factor to the present exchange and transfer of such information. The regional organism - CEBV (Communauté Economique du Betail et de la Viande) is not able to provide its member states with the obligatory documents due to a lack of funds for postage.

#### The value of an Index System

At present the OMVS (Organisation pour la Mise and Valuer de la Fleuve Senegalaise) and the CEBV compile indexes of their documents, but these indexes are not used to their full potential. The indexes are sent to a

list of institutions, without any attempt made to inventory potential new users. What is needed, then, is a major publicity campaign to sensitize and make those concerned by the POETRI programme aware of their use and need of the documents and services available. Only then will they be used to their maximum capacity, thereby justifying the costs involving in producing the documents. University students should be amongst the target groups of this sensitizing campaign.

Types of Information needed on water and sanitation:

Meeting User's Information Needs.

The IPD (Institut Pan-Africain du Developpement) raised the question as to what type of information is needed to answer the users needs. What norms have been elaborated to improve water and sanitation? The NFP's should convey their information needs to CIEH. The major users are not the directors but those working in the field. The representative of Liptako-Gourma raised the point that the geohydrological and hydraulic data that is available concerning every water point in Niger (the profile file of the water point including i.e. the depth of a given well) is the type of information that is essential to certain users. Therefore when creating a NFP documentation centre, the documentalist should take part in the preparation of these profile files, even if he is not a technical engineer. Then the documentalist is in a position to communicate how this profile file can best be prepared so that the information will be in a form most useful for the users.

As in the case of the Ivory Coast, the problem may arise in designating a NFP when there are a prolific number of organisations in one country dealing with hydraulic affairs. Although a Central Direction of Hydraulic Affairs was set up, in reality there are many 'Central Directions' functioning at the provincial and local level. The thorny political problem of choosing only one to be the NFP then becomes an impediment.

Creation of NFP - Documentation Centre - Potential Problems

The ABN (Autorité du Bassin du Niger) is a regional information network. The experience of the information network, set up in 1975 has not been

very successful until now. Although the financing of such a network was discussed at the founding workshop in 1975 in Niamey, the promised funding did not materialize. Moreover none of the ABN correspondents were specialists in the treatment of information, yet these very correspondents were assigned the task of creating the documentation centres! This very problem exists at the POETRI seminar in Ouagadougou - the majority of the participants representing the to-be-created NFP are not documentalists, yet they attend a POETRI workshop whose subject content is oriented towards documentalists. The ABN participant concluded that the correspondents of any information network must be permanently in contact with the problems of documentation treatment. Moreover the creation and success of any regional information network depends on the correct functioning of its NFPs. Thus a RFP and information network is only as strong as its weakest NFP. At present in West Africa it is often easier to obtain a document from Paris than to find it in an African country.

#### National Support and Policy fundamental for the Creation of a NFP-Documentation Centre

The summaries of the various countries' efforts in water supply put into relief the lack of national importance placed upon information support. The discussions centered on the investments for the creation of new water points, but no mention was made of amounts invested in the preparation of information or in documentation centres. The RFP can only intervene in states that have already identified a physical site for the documentation centre, allocated funds for its creation and selected a documentalist to receive further training.

#### Development of NFP's - Preparation of National Workshops and Training Programmes.

CEPIS holds one regional course for documentalists from NFPs. In addition workshops are held at the national level. Finally all documentalists can undergo an in-service training at the CEPIS regional centre.

Designation of Regional Organization to receive Mandate to function as RFP

All member countries of CIEH present at seminar during the vote designated CIEH as the RFP.

Political Question of Selection of Data to be circulated in POETRI network

Prior to the mandate vote the question was raised as to where the information that interests POETRI will be stored - in the data base of RESADOC or the CIEH? What will be the liaison between CIEH and the existing regional centres? An additional question concerned the selection of data and information to be circulated in the POETRI network. If the ABN and OMVS, for example, were to give copies of the documents they produced, the volume of data circulated in the POETRI network would be enormous. This is in fact a political question with a historical background as the CEAO had previously given the ABN the mandate to be the West and Central African regional organization responsible for documentation on water. (This decision was made prior to the POETRI programme entrance, into Africa). Therefore the point was raised that a POETRI NFP in the future will be a rival for receiving funds. A general question raised by the regional organizations present was whether they could make a request for funding to the POETRI programme.

Proposed Plan of Action Necessary to obtain External Financing of NFP/ Documentation Centre

Phase I - Designate NFP (3-6 months after seminar)

Phase II - Organize national workshop to elaborate a policy, objectives, programme of action, methodology including a well-defined work calendar. As a National Committee for Planning Water Supply exists in all the countries, this committee could organize the National POETRI workshop 9-12 months.

Phase III - Formulate a project proposal document and budget. The input of the NFP is presented as well as the amounts of external financing needed.

Phase IV - NFP forward a project proposal/budget to CIEH who will review it, make any necessary revisions and forward it to IRC. IRC in turn will submit project proposals to appropriate funding agencies (within 18 months after POETRI seminar).

The NFP at a national level can also submit request for funding national workshops, their documentation centres, training or other related POETRI activities to FAC, UNESCO, and the World Bank. As already mentioned, once a NFP has been designated and a decision is taken to create a documentation centre and a documentalist is appointed, CIEH as the RFP can assist the NFP and national coordinator with Phases II-IV.

#### Existing Regional Information Mechanisms in Africa

- AGRYMET - NIGER (Centre de Formation et d'Application Agrometeorologie et d'Hydrologie Operationelle)

The information network is organized in such a way that each participating country collects data concerning i.e. the annual amounts of rainwater and surface water and forwards this data to AGRYMET. Each country has a terminal and the data is transmitted to the central computer in Niamey. There the statistics are analyzed and relayed back to the sender country's terminal for their use. AGRYMET has plans to preserve all of their documents by putting them on microfilm.

- OMVS - Dakar, Senegal (Organisation pour la Mise en Valeur de la Fleuve Senegalaise).

From its inception the organization has carried out documented studies on the Senegal River. To date, fourteen indexes have been compiled on various subjects, i.e. water and sanitation. OMVS's documentation is an existant source of information to be circulated in the POETRI network. OMVS's staff are trained to search for relevant documentation in the participating countries. This information is processed at AMVS headquarters and then placed in an index. At their national archive there are more than 5.000 microfilms on available documents.



RESADOC of CILSS, Bamako, Mali

RESADOC was conceived following the 1976 meeting of CILSS (Comité Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Secheresse dans le Sahel). It's information network strategy was designed to be adaptable to the African context. During the first phase, 1979-1982, the information network was put in place. The methodology used (which is discussed in the Manuel de Documentation du Reseau RESADOC) is compatible with other existant international networks of the ILLS, FAO, CEAO/PADIS. During this preliminary phase, an inventory was conducted to determine the sources and services of existant documentation in the Sahel region, as well as of those outside the region. The second phase consisted of a Publicity and Sensitizing Campaign to create an awareness amongst the potential users of the services offered. During this period, information specialists and necessary RESADOC personnel were trained. RESADOC adopted the MINIDIS/CFDI computer system. The system is essentially a centralization of the computer hardware with a decentralization of the givens of the databank. A current project of RESADOC is to search out and preserve non-documented literature.

ABN, Niger (Autorité du Bassin de Niger)

As discussed earlier, the lack of financing proved to be an obstacle to the realization of this regional information network. Moreover, because the ABN correspondents were not documentalists themselves, nor specialists in information treatment, they had great difficulties in carrying out the task of creating documentation centres. This failure underlines the fact that in creating an information network one must take into account the capacities of the national documentation centres to cooperate with the central organization. ABN is considering the creation of specialized bibliographies on, for example, agronomy, taking into account the needs of its users.

Recommended Activities for POETRI Programme Manager to carry out as  
Follow-up Action to Seminar

It would be instructive to visit the existant regional organizations. Moreover, the first hand knowledge acquired and contacts established would be of use in facilitating future cooperation between the existant regional information networks as well as their integration into the POETRI network. A familiarity with the type of documentation and information existing for example in RESADOC, ABN, OMVS and IPD, would be useful in selecting the type of information to be circulated in the POETRI-Africa network. Priority should be given to visits to:

CIEH

CEAO

CILLS/RESADOC

OMVS

ABN

As follow-up to the seminar, in the near future (before mid 1983) it would be useful for the POETRI manager to visit those countries which have already designated a NFP. It might be practical to carry out such brief missions together with Mr. A. Krissiamba, Chief Documentalist of the RFP, - CIEH. The following countries have already designated a NFP and/or submitted a request to IRC/POETRI for funding. Assistance is needed in organizing their national POETRI workshop.

Niger

Senegal

Upper Volta

Cameroon \*

Feasibility of other CIEH member states becoming active in POETRI network:

- Ivory Coast - it is highly recommended that a study visit be carried out to Ivory Coast to provide support to the national

\* Although Cameroon has not as yet designated a NFP, the decision is forthcoming. Cameroon has volunteered, however, to host the forthcoming POETRI seminar.

coordinator in designating a NFP. It is somewhat of a political problem, as there are several organizations in the Ivory Coast who claim to represent hydraulic affairs.

- Mali - did not send a participant to POETRI seminar
- Togo - to designate NFP in near future. The National Steering Committee for water supply is very active and this committee could organize a National POETRI workshop. A study visit to Togo is recommended.
- Tchad - Recommended that a study visit be made here, although the unstable political situation in Tchad may hinder active participation in POETRI programme.
- Gabon - did not send a participant to POETRI seminar.
- Mauritania - The unstable political situation there may be an obstacle to their participation in POETRI programme. Moreover the existant level of documentation on water supply and sanitation is very low.
- The Gambia - interested in obtaining relevant literature and documentation to set up their national documentation centre. Mr. Johnson, the participant from the Gambia, ordered and was supplied with all IRC publications, relevant to water and sanitation. A study visit is recommended.

Possibility for POETRI programme to be linked to other on-going IRC projects in member countries

At present, IRC is in the process of obtaining funding for a community education and participation project in water supply and sanitation programmes in Upper Volta, Togo and Cameroon. If these projects are carried out in 1983-1985, CIEH may be the collaborating regional organization. A component of this programme is the development of training manuals. Moreover, national and regional seminars are planned at which member countries of CIEH will be invited to discuss their national experience concerning community participation in water supply and sanitation. Therefore the presence of a POETRI information network can provide a tool to facilitate the exchange of information vital to the success of the community participation programme. In turn, the results of the project will provide an invaluable source of documented experience to be circulated within the POETRI network.

Suggested Additions to the Standard POETRI Library

- A water supply monograph: Johnson Handbook on Ground Water. It exists in Spanish and can be obtained at a reduced price of US \$ 5 plus shipping (If ordered in lots of more than 500 copies).

Reaction to POETRI Reference Manual and Thesaurus

The reaction of Mr. Krissiamba of CIEH and CEFIGRE were very positive. Mr. Krissiamba felt that the Reference Manuals provide a useful tool to documentalists in French-speaking countries as such manuals were very much lacking.