

Guiding Principles for Sustainable Settlement and Development in the Onchocerciasis Control Programme Area

Preamble

A Ministerial Meeting on Sustainable Settlement and Development of the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP) Area was held at the World Bank office in Paris on April 12-14, 1994, under the chairmanship of Mr. Lambert Konan, Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

The opening of the meeting was attended by President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, and Mr. P.V. Obeng, representing President J. Rawlings of Ghana.

The meeting forcefully underscored the opportunities and risks that rapid resettlement of the areas freed from onchocerciasis provides. It also confirmed the concern and the commitment of the participating countries. High-level delegations of the eleven participating countries discussed individual country experience and research on major aspects of settlement. The very substantive discussion benefited from the diversity of country situations and traditions. But most importantly, the discussion highlighted the large body of common, shared experience.

Thus, the meeting more than accomplished the task it had set for itself—to agree on a set of guiding principles for sustainable settlement. These guiding principles, set forth below, should help ensure that the long-term social and economic gains of settlement can be fully realized and sustained.

Guiding principles

Recommendation 1: Promote the social and economic integration of hosts, settlers, and pastoralists.

Recommendation 2: The governments of the OCP area should put in place a process of consultation and coordination to resolve regional issues, particularly problems associated with the movement of transhumant populations.

Recommendation 3: Encourage "assisted spontaneous settlement" as the most appropriate for the OCP area, given the volume of migration and the financial and managerial capabilities of the governments.

Recommendation 4: Institute, at the national level, a process of coordination regarding all development activities in settlement areas.

Recommendation 5: The responsibility for implementing projects in settlement areas should rest with the line ministries.

Recommendation 6: Support settlement in areas close to already settled areas.

Recommendation 7: Provide social services to settlement

areas as part of overall national planning.

Recommendation 8: Take into consideration the environmental and health needs of settlers in planning for sustainable settlement and development.

Recommendation 9: For the most effective management of natural resources, governments should support the formation of community land management associations that involve hosts, settlers, and pastoralists in land use zoning.

Recommendation 10: Develop agricultural policies that support more intensive and diversified production systems and take into account the upstream and downstream linkages.

Recommendation 11: Design and implement agricultural research and extension systems that respond to the changing needs of settlers over time.

Recommendation 12: Promote efficient markets in settlement areas.

Recommendation 13: Put in place land tenure regulations that take into account customary tenure systems, but also ensure secure land tenure and the access of women and youth to land and natural resources.

Recommendation 14: Ensure that women's rights of access to and control over land are not lost in the settlement process.

Recommendation 15: In addition to sustained support for the control of onchocerciasis and other important diseases, the donor community should support the efforts of the governments regarding the sustainable settlement and development of the onchocerciasis-freed areas.

Introduction

1. The Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP) has removed a major constraint to the settlement of 25 million hectares of arable land in eleven countries of West Africa¹ thereby providing a unique opportunity for promoting sustainable settlement and increasing agricultural production. At the same time, it has become clear that to maximize benefits from these new lands and to avoid environmental degradation, governments need to establish an appropriate set of policies in support of sustainable settlement.

2. Prior to the start of the OCP in 1974, onchocerciasis was one important reason that large stretches of river valleys in West Africa were sparsely populated or completely deserted. After the program began operations, migration to the sparsely settled areas was slower than anticipated due to other constraints and the attraction of rapid economic growth along the coast. However, as the fear of onchocerciasis diminished and opportunities in the coastal countries decreased, settlement in some OCP areas became rapid.

¹Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo

3. One of the statutory bodies of the OCP, the Committee of Sponsoring Agencies (FAO, UNDP, WHO, the World Bank), has actively promoted socioeconomic development of the OCP area in a number of ways, including the execution of two major regional studies. The first of these studies, executed by Hunting Technical Services Ltd. (United Kingdom) and Organisation et environnement (France), examined the natural resource endowments and development potential of the OCP areas. The second study, carried out by the Institute for Development Anthropology (United States), examined land settlement activities and developed policy recommendations to facilitate effective settlement practices.

4. Governments have responded to the increased migration with a variety of measures, and the accumulated experience of settlement, both spontaneous and government-organized, now allows us to draw conclusions about the settlement process and to outline a set of policies likely to promote long-term benefits from settlement. These policies, taken as a group, provide a set of guiding principles for supporting the successful settlement and development of the OCP area.

5. Conditions vary greatly from country to country and even within one country. However, in general, settlement affects two types of populations, hosts and migrants, and two occupations, farmers and pastoralists. These groups are not mutually exclusive, but in this document people are identified as hosts, settlers, or pastoralists. These distinctions, although somewhat artificial, highlight the constraints to sustainable settlement and development.

Successful settlement

6. Successful sustainable settlement will occur only when settlers are able to reestablish social networks and create viable production systems. This depends on the integration of settlers with the host and pastoral populations.

7. Settlers are keenly aware that their long-term success in a region is linked to their ability to be incorporated into a wider economic and social system, including relationships with the hosts who lend or give them land, with herders who have traditional pasture rights, and with migrants who arrive after them. The strong value placed by settlers on peaceful, mutually beneficial integration with the host community is reflected in their continuation of traditional land tenure practices despite national land tenure changes. Settlers are aware that whether or not they have official land title, they will have no satisfactory social or economic life in an area if they have antagonistic relationships with the host populations.

8. One important factor influencing integration is the composition of the settler group. Host populations may feel threatened by the in-migration of large numbers of a different ethnic group. While there are many cases of successful

settlement involving host and settler populations from different ethnic groups, ethnic differences increase the potential for tension and need careful attention. Other demographic characteristics of the settler population, such as age and gender also are important and should be monitored.

Recommendation 1: Promote the social and economic integration of hosts, settlers, and pastoralists.

9. Problems between pastoralists and farmers are the cause of serious conflicts in many countries in the region and, at times, the cause of conflicts between countries. Because of drought and increasing population pressure, transhumant populations are having difficulty finding adequate grazing land and cross national boundaries to ensure the survival of their herds. Pastoralists must be guaranteed access to grazing land through agreements at the local level with farmers and agreements at the international level between governments.

Recommendation 2: The governments of the OCP area should put in place a process of consultation and coordination to resolve regional issues, particularly problems associated with the movement of transhumant populations.

The role of the government

10. Broadly speaking, there are three types of settlement in West Africa:

Sponsored settlement. The government or a private agency controls all aspects of the program, from land surveying to selecting and installing settlers to mandating production regimes

Assisted spontaneous settlement. The government provides some services and infrastructure to settlers who have moved on their own.

Spontaneous settlement. Settlers choose the area for settlement, move themselves, and receive little or no government assistance in the settlement process.

11. With a policy of assisted spontaneous settlement, governments, donor agencies, and NGOs play a supporting role in a process that is already occurring, taking advantage of the well-documented initiative of spontaneous settlers and the social networks they build with the host populations. Governments should be aware of the ongoing settlement process and provide the necessary services. By providing services to the settlers, governments may gain leverage in settler decisionmaking, promote increased productivity, and prevent some of the environmental degradation often associated with spontaneous settlement.

12. Assisted spontaneous settlement may avoid some of the problems with land speculation found in government-sponsored settlements, since it relies much more on settler initiative and less on government largess and so is less attractive to land speculators.

Recommendation 3: Encourage "assisted spontaneous

settlement" as the most appropriate for the OCP area, given the volume of migration and the financial and managerial capabilities of the governments.

National Planning

13. Government action at the national level is critical for successful settlement. The process of settlement, including natural resource management, the provision of infrastructure and services, and local economic development, touches on the responsibilities of many different ministries, and the government must be able to coordinate its own activities to be effective. The complexity of the settlement process which involves the creation of new social and economic communities, requires a coordinated set of national policies and administrative structures. Governments should incorporate human health considerations into settlement planning through the selective use of environmental impact assessment in natural resource policies, plans, and projects.

Recommendation 4: Institute, at the national level, a process of coordination regarding all development activities in settlement areas.

Administrative Structures

14. In the OCP region, governments have used a variety of management structures for planning and implementing settlement projects, ranging from special units in line ministries to semi-independent parastatal agencies. Each management structure has strengths and weaknesses, but in the long term placing responsibility in the line ministries appears to be the most effective approach.

15. Parastatal agencies created to supervise all settlement activities in a given area may be more effective initially in mobilizing resources, constructing physical and social infrastructure, and encouraging agricultural production. However, these agencies are expensive, and they have a great deal of difficulty handing over their functions to the line ministries or to local authorities after the settlers are established. They may also be paternalistic and quash settler initiative. Services provided by the parastatal, upon which settlers come to depend, are often beyond the capacity of the line ministries to deliver once they are given responsibility for the settled area.

Recommendation 5: The responsibility for implementing projects in settlement areas should rest with the line ministries.

Infrastructure

16. Government can guide spontaneous settlers through decisions on where to build infrastructure. Roads attract people, so road construction can be used to direct spontaneous settlers to areas that the government wants to develop and away from protected forest and wildlife areas.

17. In general, settlers tend to move to areas close to those already settled. This is often at odds with government policies that stress opening more distant areas. The history of settlement in the OCP area indicates that settlement moves in flows rather than leaps, so governments should plan to support new settlements in areas adjacent to currently settled areas. Such a strategy takes advantage of settler initiative and is less expensive than developing support infrastructure in more distant areas. One exception to this may be when a large infrastructure project is planned for a more remote area, in which case governments may capitalize on infrastructure investment for the project and provide additional services to spontaneous settlers at marginal incremental cost.

Recommendation 6: Support settlement in areas close to already settled areas.

Provision of services

18. In most of the OCP countries, governments are explicitly committed to providing education and health services to the entire population. Provision of services in settlement areas therefore should be seen as part of a national plan to provide necessary services and governments should not regard the provision of services to settlement areas entirely as additional costs due to settlement. Prompt provision of services, particularly health services, can be used as an inducement to host populations to accept new settlers, as encouragement for villages to adopt land management programs, and as a tool to guide settlers to specific areas.

Recommendation 7: Provide social services to settlement areas as part of overall national planning.

19. The success of the Onchocerciasis Control Programme in opening new lands to cultivation should not mask the risks of recrudescence of onchocerciasis and the risks of other new and returning diseases. These risks are due to changes in environmental and demographic conditions.

Recommendation 8: Take into consideration the environmental and health needs of settlers in planning for sustainable settlement and development.

Sustainable natural resource management

20. One critical component of successful settlement in the long term is the sustainable management of natural resources. Traditional systems of resource management were effective in situations of low population density and easy access to new land, but increases in population and the growing scarcity of land mean that continuing use of extensive farming practices will lead to rapid resource degradation and permanent loss of productivity. In addition, increased population is putting pressure on forests, water resources, and wildlife populations. Management

strategies are needed at many levels, from the international to the local.

21. At the community level, locally agreed zoning arrangements may be the most effective method for protecting natural resources. Resources are best protected by local populations allocating land to farming, grazing and forests. Local agreement on zoning is much more likely than national policies to decrease deforestation, because local communities benefit from the remaining woodlands and have a stake in protecting them. Similarly, reserving certain areas for herding through local agreements may prevent encroachment on soils unsuitable for sustained production and maintain space for livestock, which are an important part of overall production systems.

22. One promising tool for addressing local land management issues in settlement areas is the village land management model currently being tested in several OCP countries. The exact organization varies from country to country, but in general this model provides for local decision-making on natural resource use, assisted by technical advice from government ministries. In return for a community's adopting activities such as soil conservation, preservation of forests, and improvement of pastureland, the government provides basic social infrastructure to the community and formalizes traditional land tenure arrangements. If implemented early in the settlement process, the village land management model offers an opportunity to protect the interests of indigenous inhabitants by allowing them some measure of control over migration to their land while giving settlers legal recognition of their claims and giving pastoralists clearly defined grazing areas.

Recommendation 9: For the most effective management of natural resources, governments should support the formation of community land management associations that involve hosts, settlers and pastoralists in land-use zoning.

Rural development

23. Settlement in the OCP river valleys will not be sustainable unless settlers become successful farmers. This requires, among other things, secure land tenure, effective extension and research systems, efficient market networks, functioning rural financial systems, and realistic exchange rate policies.

24. The goal of most settlers is to establish subsistence-level production and, when this is assured, to generate a surplus that can be reinvested in agriculture or in other activities. Often, the fastest way to generate a surplus is through extensive agricultural production techniques that rapidly deplete the soil and make further agricultural production uneconomic for a number of years. National interests, on the other hand, are to see that the migrants establish sustainable production systems. In order to do this, governments must put in place policies that encour-

age long-term investments in intensive and diversified agricultural production.

25. Diversified production systems are central to the success of settlement in the OCP area. Much of the area experiences wide fluctuations in rainfall, and rigidly predetermined cropping patterns will not allow settlers to adapt. When settlers are convinced that subsistence production is assured, they diversify rapidly into other crops, and, just as important, into other income generating activities. In many settlement areas, the most successful agricultural producers invest in off-farm income generating activities and eventually leave farming altogether. Agricultural extension systems need to understand the role that diversification plays in household income generating strategies and provide advice on a range of crops and cropping systems, rather than promoting one system for every household.

Recommendation 10: Develop agricultural policies that support more intensive and diversified production systems and take into account the upstream and downstream linkages.

26. National agricultural research systems should respond to the needs of newly settled farmers. This requires an understanding of the specific constraints faced by these farmers and of the household production strategies they pursue. This, in turn, requires increased contacts between farmers and researchers. Agricultural extension systems are a key part of improving contact between researchers and farmers, and extension agents must be able to convey information in two equally important directions: from researcher to farmer and from farmer to researcher. Extension agents need to understand that new settlers will attempt to ensure food self-sufficiency before they begin to experiment with new crop varieties, so initially settlers may appear unwilling to accept advice. However, once food self-sufficiency has been assured, settlers often have proved more willing to experiment than host populations.

27. To meet the information demands of settlers, the research and extension systems will have to provide information on a range of crops and crop varieties, allowing settlers to choose those that best fit their needs. Farmer (male and female) participation is critical for identifying crops and constraints and for testing and disseminating research results. Having available a range of information will help the extension systems meet the needs of women farmers, who are important agricultural producers and who often grow a different set of crops than male farmers. Extension systems should be structured so that messages reach both men and women.

Recommendation 11: Design and implement agricultural research and extension systems that respond to the changing needs of settlers over time.

28. Markets and service centers are vital for successful

settlement. Markets are focal points for transactions involving agricultural commodities from the immediate area and from surrounding areas and imported manufactured goods essential for day-to-day life. Market activities allow settlers to diversify income sources, which is particularly important for those with less access to land. The sale of agricultural surplus generates local demand and stimulates the diversification of local and household economies.

29. Governments can promote successful markets in several ways. Most important, in newly settled areas governments can provide the necessary infrastructure to ensure that goods move in and out of markets in a timely manner. This is particularly important for the sale of perishable agricultural commodities and the timely delivery of inputs such as fertilizers. The dissemination of market information is an additional means through which governments can improve marketing systems.

30. Governments can also remove constraints to free marketing of agricultural products by reducing or removing licensing requirements for trading, eliminating restrictions on the circulation of goods within the country, and reducing the role of agricultural parastatals.

Recommendation 12: Promote efficient markets in settlement areas.

Land tenure

31. Land tenure is a dynamic situation influenced by the macroeconomic situation and by the local agricultural production systems and other land use patterns. While much of the area becoming available due to onchocerciasis control is sparsely populated, almost none of it is unclaimed. Attempts by national governments to override existing land tenure systems will almost certainly lead to conflict between host and settler populations. This conflict may be violent or may be manifested in host population boycotts of settler-run markets or exclusion of settlers from established social networks and markets. Inability to tap into these systems may trap settlers in subsistence-level production. Equally important, the insecurity of tenure resulting from conflicting national and local land tenure systems will inhibit long-term investments in productivity, something that is crucial if new settlements are to be sustainable.

32. The land tenure system needs a national code within which land tenure rights are assured. Emphasis should be placed on security of access rather than on a particular type of control (for example, individual versus collective tenure). To achieve this, the land tenure code must take into account customary tenure rights, and local administrative and judicial systems must offer mechanisms for conflict resolution. Secure access to water and other natural resources can be as important as secure access to land. Local systems of tenure provide the necessary starting point for devising a secure system of tenure, but they

are not sufficient in themselves. Customary tenure systems often allow access to land when settlers begin to arrive, but they do not give secure tenure in the long term, making it unlikely that settlers will make permanent investments in the land. In addition, conflicts may arise as the volume of settlement increases and land becomes scarce. Governments can play a role in mediating conflicts and establishing clear rules.

Recommendation 13: Put in place land tenure regulations that take into account customary tenure systems, but also ensure secure land tenure and the access of women and youth to land and natural resources.

33. The access of pastoral groups to land must also be protected in the settlement process. There is increasing friction between pastoral and sedentary groups in West Africa, much of it due to the expansion of settled areas. Sedentary host populations may be willing to give settlers access to land that has traditionally been used by transhumant groups, leading to friction between settlers and herders. Pastoral populations with traditional grazing rights must be included as part of any decisionmaking on giving land to settlers.

34. In some areas, the settlement process can be used to improve security of tenure for all groups in the settlement area by formally recognizing traditional land claims. This can be used as an incentive for host populations to accept new settlers.

35. Women's traditional access to land, water, and other natural resources is often lost as tenure systems based on individual ownership are introduced. If individual tenure is being established, women should be given explicit title to land and should not have to count on access to land through other members of their household. If the government establishes eligibility requirements for receiving land, women should be equally eligible.


Recommendation 14: Ensure that women's rights of access to and control over land are not lost in the settlement process.

36. If local land tenure traditions are used as the basis for land tenure decisions, it is less likely, although not impossible, that large-scale speculation will occur. This needs to be monitored because there are anecdotal reports of substantial appropriation of land in the OCP river valleys by wealthy urban elites, and it will undoubtedly become more of a problem as land becomes scarce.

International cooperation

37. The substantial financial needs associated with the development of the onchocerciasis-controlled areas require the strong support of the international community to complement and reinforce the efforts of the participating countries.

Recommendation 15: In addition to sustained support



for the control of onchocerciasis and other important diseases, the donor community should support the efforts of the governments regarding the sustainable settlement and development of the onchocerciasis-freed areas.

Conclusion

38. The 25 million hectares of arable land being made available through the control of onchocerciasis represent a tremendous opportunity to promote sustainable development. Expansion of cultivated land has been the engine of agricultural growth in many of these countries, and the onchocerciasis-freed river valleys have been the location of much of the expansion. Many of these areas have been sparsely populated and have not yet suffered the environ-

mental degradation of the more densely settled areas. However, with the control of onchocerciasis and rapid population growth, these areas will quickly become settled and just as quickly begin to experience the environmental consequences. Successful settlement, the cornerstone of successful development in the OCP areas, requires a comprehensive set of policies fostering agricultural growth, rural development, and the social and economic integration of settler, host, and pastoral populations. African governments and donor agencies must act immediately and decisively to adopt policies that will safeguard the unique opportunity provided by the control of onchocerciasis and ensure the sustainable settlement and development of the newly available lands.

