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$5.5 MILLION GRANT FOR NIGERIEN RELIEF GOES TO UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

DAYTON, Ohio, July 3, 1978 ---- A $500,000 rural development project in the African country of Niger was assured June 29, 1978 at the University of Dayton when a contract was signed between Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and UD's Strategies for Responsible Development (SRD), a component of the Center for Christian Renewal. The project is being funded for a 37-month period.

The area in which the Center will be working has been reaping the long term effects of cyclic drought and over-grazing, according to Brother Bernard Ploeger, S.M., liaison director for the Center.

"We will attempt to identify new methods of farming and will try new crops in the blighted area," Ploeger said. "At the same time, we will attempt to lay the foundation for the adoption of these techniques by establishing a working relationship for the Nigerien farmers. Ultimately, we hope, after reflecting on our experiences in Niger, to provide a model of integrated agricultural development."

To complement its agricultural efforts, SRD is working collaboratively with nutritionists, community health service personnel, and social scientists of Canada's Institute for the Study and Application of Integrated Development (ISAID). ISAID's concern in Niger is to work with the villagers in those aspects of their lives involving social and economic structures, diet, and community health so that a comprehensive approach is taken to meet the stress caused by cyclic drought and famine.

The project will serve as a model of what can be done in similar semi-arid regions of West Africa. The joint effort between the Canadian and UD groups has been titled Project Tapis Vert, which is a French translation of a term from the Koran, which rendered in English means "Green Carpet."

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The total project cost will be $666,667. Those funds not provided by the grant from Catholic Relief Services will be raised by Strategies for Responsible Development.

The funds will be spent to support three full-time people in the field with expertise in forestry, agriculture, and animal husbandry. Materials needed for the next phase of the project include supplies for tree plantations, wind breaks, fruit orchards, vegetable gardens, draft animals and their equipment, fish ponds, and wells. The funds will also sponsor a support staff at the University of Dayton which includes Brother Ploeger; Brother Ed Zamerowski, S.M., coordinator for field activities; and Joanne Troha and Brother Don Geiger, S.M., consultants on project management and evaluation. Administrators of the $500,000 contract will be the University of Dayton Research Institute.

The University of Dayton was founded in 1850 by the Society of Mary, a Roman Catholic teaching order started by Father William Joseph Chaminade in 1817 in Bordeaux, France. Strategies for Responsible Development is one of three member institutions of the Center for Christian Renewal which is organized to carry out the UD-Marianist tradition of community and church service.