Assessing decentralisation and local governance in West Africa

Sonia Le Bay and
Christiane Loquai (eds)

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Taking Stock of Strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity of Local Actors

SNV

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AIDE DE L'EGLISE NORVEGIENNE

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care

PACT

gtz

ded
Deutscher
Entwicklungsdienst

helvetas Mali

helvetas Cameroon

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ASSESSING DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN WEST AFRICA
Taking Stock of Strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity of Local Actors

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According to a Bambara adage, *'He who knows all will not die'*. Today, is an evident desire, in many countries of the West African region which have launched decentralisation reforms since the 1990s, to try out new approaches and new methods of cooperation to build local monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity![1] By sharing with the readers some of the experiences and lessons learned from these new M&E approaches, this publication aims to make a modest contribution to the knowledge available on the subject.

This publication is for all actors in development, working in the field of decentralisation and local governance, especially practitioners and policy makers working on issues connected with capacity building in the area of monitoring, evaluation and democratic control of local governance structures.

The case study presented in this document has been prepared in the context of an exercise that aimed to document, analyse and learn from experiences with different approaches/methods and instruments for building the capacities of different actors in decentralisation and local governance, and in particular, the capacities of local government to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of these complex reform processes.

This learning exercise started in Mali. It has been a joint initiative by the *Réseau de Réflexion et d'Échanges sur le Développement Local* (REDL,[2] a Malian network of development organisations and programmes working in the field of decentralisation and local development), the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV-Mali), the Malian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL) and the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), an independent foundation based in Maastricht in the Netherlands, in cooperation with several development organisations working in West Africa.

The purpose of this exercise has been to jointly map and document relevant experiences in the West African region and share 'good practice' and lessons learned. A total of 11 case studies from different countries of the West African region were prepared during this exercise, and a seminar held under the auspices of the MATCL in Bamako on 17 and 18 May 2006 provided a forum for a structured exchange of experiences.

The facilitators of this joint documentation, analysis and learning exercise would like to thank all those who contributed to the process. In particular we thank the authors and members of the teams that prepared the case studies, the members of the Malian REDL network and the organisations working in other West African countries that have supported and co-financed the preparation of the different case studies. Through the generous support of these organisations and

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the democratisation movements of the late 1980s, many African countries launched a new generation of decentralisation policies aimed to build or strengthen more democratic, participatory and accountable forms of governance. In the years since, these reform efforts have attracted substantial development assistance provided by the international community.

Implementation of decentralisation programmes, particularly the creation or strengthening of local government, with elected councils, legal persona and own resources, has changed these countries' institutional landscape and governance at the central and local levels. Discourse on the advantages of decentralisation has also raised hopes that local governance will become more responsible and responsive to citizens' needs and thus contribute to improving their living conditions. However, the commitment and pace of reform has varied considerably from one country to the next.

For their part, donors and development agencies have shown increasing interest in assessing the results, outcomes and impacts of decentralisation, including the related development assistance (Steinich 2000,[3] Hutchinson and La Fond 2004). This tendency, and donors' search for appropriate assessment methods, is in line with the present concern for aid effectiveness and a more general interest in gauging governance in developing countries (Besançon 2003, UNDP/DESA 2007). Donors and development organisations are now also displaying increasing willingness to invest in strengthening monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities of local stakeholders in decentralisation processes and citizen control with a view to building local accountability systems (Massuangahe 2005, Hilhorst and Guijt 2006). At the same time, many donors are seeking ways to render their own M&E systems more participatory.

The African governments involved in 'democratic decentralisation'[4] also acknowledge the need to invest in national and local capacity to monitor and evaluate some of the changes these reform processes have induced.

This document examines a number of initiatives to build the capacity of local stakeholders to monitor and evaluate decentralisation and local governance processes. It builds on the results of case studies done in five West African countries (Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali and Niger. See figure 1), as well as discussions of these studies at a regional seminar in Bamako, 17–18 May 2006.

3- See the bibliography in Annex II.

4- According to the definition given by J.C. Ribot (2002), 'political, or democratic, decentralisation occurs when powers and resources are transferred to authorities representative of and downwardly accountable to local populations…. Democratic decentralisation aims to increase public participation in local decision making … and is in effect an institutionalised form of the participatory approach…. [Political and democratic decentralisation] are 'strong' forms of decentralisation from which theory indicates the greatest benefits can be derived.'

Figure 1: Building capacity experiences for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation and local governance in West Africa
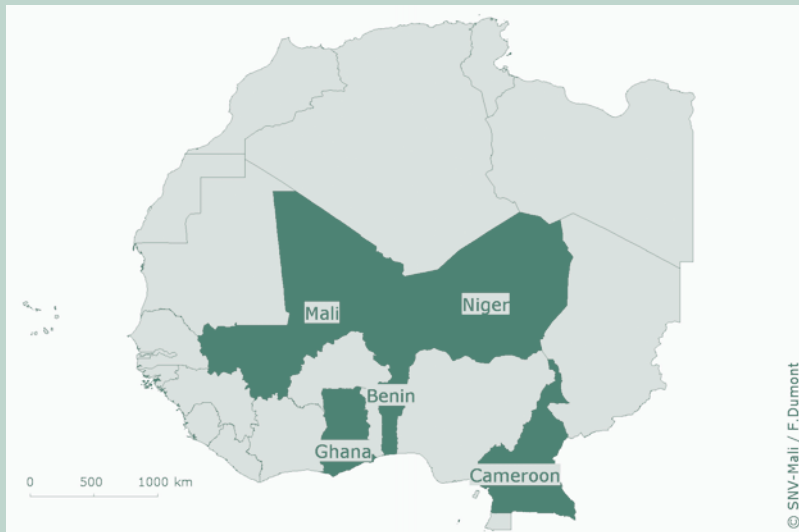
This event attracted over 100 participants with different backgrounds (regional and local governments, civil society, private sector, national institutions, development organisations, and donors), most of whom had been involved in developing, testing and implementing the tools and approaches. It provided a good opportunity for structured exchange and learning from the cases and experiences presented.

This publication is divided into two parts: the first part deals with methodological issues and summarises cross-cutting findings arising of the exchange of experiences on the case studies during the seminar. The second part presents the experiences documented with different tools and approaches to strengthen local monitoring and evaluation capacity in the form of case studies themselves.

PART I:

The *capitalisation* process and its results

The capitalisation process and its results

'Most monitoring and evaluation (M&E), especially of capacity development, has been expensive, inconsequential and futile,' concludes Governance Consultant David Watson in a recent article on innovative M&E practices (Watson 2006). Basing this opinion on his professional experience, he explains these conclusions in the following way: '[M&E] rarely seemed to result in effective management responses in the form of changed practices. It was even more rarely accompanied by collective reflection and learning among stakeholders. M&E seemed to be "something the donor needed to do", since donors understandably have to justify development aid expenditures. Too often, the corollary was that national counterparts had limited or no involvement (or interest) in such monitoring and evaluation activities.'

These critical observations have been dealt with at length in the literature on monitoring and evaluating development assistance and are shared by practitioners in the field (Maina 2004, Sébahara 2004). At the same time, the increasing attention paid to 'capacity building' and transparent, participatory governance has prompted a series of new M&E approaches. Based more on the needs of development stakeholders and the capacities in partner countries, these new approaches emphasise joint or participatory M&E methods (Guijt and Gaventa 1998, Simon 2004).

The initiative described here was aimed at capitalising on M&E capacity-building approaches and corresponds to a determination to renew M&E practices. It has evolved from a very real concern about the need to document and analyse different M&E approaches and tools — as implemented within the framework of decentralisation and local governance processes. The idea was to identify and document experiences and to facilitate an exchange of information about existing approaches and tools

in order to make them known beyond the particular country in which they were designed or the area in which they are used. Moreover, the exercise aimed to facilitate learning among those who design, use and seek these approaches.

At the same time, the initiators of this process of documenting and analysing these experiences and tools, as well as their partners at the local level, felt that it was important to introduce these experiences to political decision makers and development-assistance agencies at both a national and an international level. A better recognition of these experiences and of local actors' capacities could be useful to designing M&E tools for assessing the outcomes and impacts of reforms at the national level.

Establishing a link between M&E capacities at the local and national level seemed all the more important in a context where aid instruments are changing to focus increasingly on budget support. The inception of the Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation (PARAD)[5] was another reason for initiating a *capitalisation* process (European Commission/EuropeAid 2005). This nationwide programme was launched in Mali by the Commission of the European Community to provide budget support to the Malian state for its political and administrative reforms, from 2006 onwards, including the decentralisation process. A pilot programme, it is expected to serve as a model to other countries in the subregion. Because the quality of its M&E depends largely on the information generated at the local level, it seemed worthwhile to capitalise on the approaches and tools that could help generate this information for the national level, as well as on the challenges related to the production, analysis and management of that information by local and national actors.

5- PARAD stands for 'Programme d'Appui à la Réforme Administrative et à la Décentralisation'.

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGY

The case studies and findings presented in this publication are based on a process of joint stocktaking, analysis and learning, carried out with stakeholders in decentralisation and local governance. The French term used for such a process is *capitalisation*. Although this term has a very different meaning in English,[6] for practical reasons, we will use it in this English version of the publication.

For those interested in conducting a similar exercise on the topic in other regions, the following description of the methodology might be useful.

1.1. The process of joint stocktaking, analysis and learning

The French term *capitalisation* refers neither to a standard recipe nor to a similar process employed by the various actors involved, who, in fact, often have different habits and tastes. Rather, it requires a variety of ingredients that should be selected, measured and combined according to the context, stakeholders and objectives.

In a recent briefing document published by the International Centre for Studies in Local Development (CIEDEL),[7] Graugnard and Quiblier (2006) elaborate on various *capitalisation* concepts and their usefulness to development cooperation, distinguishing three categories:

■ **individual *capitalisation***, which corresponds to a personal analysis of experiences that individuals undertake for themselves in order to improve practices and relationships with their social, economic, technical or administrative environment;

■ **collective *capitalisation***, which meets team- or service-related interests and aims to improve collective skills with a view to strengthening a competitive position or to developing shared knowledge or a common identity; and

■ **institutional *capitalisation***, which aims to preserve the memory of activities carried out in a context where expertise migrates or where

knowledge holders transfer that knowledge to other operators within or outside the structure.

They also refer to three areas of logic underlying capitalisation processes:

■ the **logic of experience**, since *capitalised* knowledge results from building on the memory of what has been done;

■ the **logic of method** in which *capitalisation* focuses on pinpointing, selecting and modelling expertise; and

■ the **logic of function** in which the objective of *capitalisation* is, on the one hand, learning from practices to achieve progress, and, on the other hand, applying this acquired expertise internally and, if necessary, ensuring its dissemination.

The facilitators of the *capitalisation* process discussed here took as their starting point a less elaborate definition, which is closer to that of collective *capitalisation* and which encompasses these three areas of logic. The term *capitalisation* has been used – independently of any programme or organisation – to describe a process of stocktaking, documentation, analysis and exchange of experiences (with M&E approaches and tools) with a view to learning.

This simple definition also has the advantage of being easy to translate into English for the anglophone participants of this process.

1.2. The objectives and targets of the *capitalisation* process

On a subregional scale, the *capitalisation* process aims to assist participating organisations, as well as their partners, in

■ documenting and analysing their experiences with local capacity-building approaches for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation and local governance;

■ facilitating an exchange structured around these experiences to identify elements of approaches and M&E practices adapted to a local context;

6- *The English-language concept closest to the French term capitalisation is that of 'knowledge management', which is used to refer more to capitalisation processes within an organisation than to multi-stakeholder initiatives.*
7- *CIEDEL stands for 'Centre International d'Etudes pour le Développement Local', an institute based in Lyon, France.*

■ providing participants with a networking opportunity and a chance to learn from the different M&E approaches about the outcomes and impacts of decentralisation and local governance processes;

■ making the experiences of successful practices and expertise from a variety of decentralisation contexts available to actors and stakeholders in decentralisation and local governance (working at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels); and

■ providing support to these actors in debates on capacity building, as well as support for decentralisation and local governance at the national, subregional and international level.

Experiences have also been documented and published in an effort to help increase the amount of literature available on this subject, which, until now, has been rather limited.[8] The *capitalisation* process has also aimed at helping local government actors learn lessons from the experiences described in order to improve their practices. It was hoped that publishing and disseminating the results of the exchanges could encourage new initiatives for building local M&E capacity to improve the performance of new government systems — thereby avoiding reinventing the wheel.

The stakeholders in the decentralisation process decided that the focus of the exercise should be on West Africa, namely the French-speaking countries in the region, for the following reasons: first, because these countries have close historical and cultural links that are also reflected in their decentralisation processes; second, because they are still marked by an administrative culture influenced by French administrative and constitutional law; and, finally, according to their governments, the countries selected for capitalisation are involved in the process of democratic decentralisation: local governments have been set up following electoral processes, in which local actors are made accountable. These countries are thus in a position to have relevant experience with respect to the M&E of decentralisation.

Ghana, the only anglophone country involved, was added for two reasons: (1) it has strong cultural links with neighbouring countries, with whom it formed an Empire in the pre-colonial period, and (2) the Malian government wanted to exchange with and learn from experiences in a country whose decentralisation process and local government are embedded in and shaped by a different administrative tradition (i.e., British colonial rule).

1.3. How have experiences been *capitalised*?

To achieve their goals, the promoters of *capitalisation* agreed on an organisational structure, allocation of responsibilities, a joint approach and the use of common tools for uniformly gathering and structuring the contributions made.

Two people (referred to as facilitators or activity leaders in the following text[9]) were chosen to guide and coordinate the *capitalisation* exercise. One facilitator was closely linked to the promoters of the process and REDL – and thus also more likely to win the stakeholders' trust.[10] The other facilitator was external to the REDL network and could thus bring a more objective, enquiring perspective to the *capitalisation* exercise.[11] This type of alliance was sought throughout the process, as were occasional contributions by resource persons who could bring a fresh outlook to the results and to the form in which they were reproduced.[12]

An MATCL-level steering committee was also established to support the initial phases of the *capitalisation* process (see table 1), resulting in the organisation of a subregional workshop. Chaired by the MATCL's technical adviser in charge of decentralisation,[13] the committee had a remit 'to coordinate and to monitor the process of preparing and organising the

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8- Aside from the publications cited in this section and the works listed in the case-study bibliographies in Part II, documents dealing with monitoring and evaluation in decentralisation are scarce (particularly in French). Reviews of the literature failed to reveal a single publication that focused explicitly on the subject of strengthening the M&E capacity of local governments in West Africa.

9- These designations were used in the terms of reference drawn up to specify their mandate.

10- She was based in Mali, is a founding member of REDL and worked regularly with the MATCL/DNCT.

11- She is based in Europe, regularly undertakes missions to West Africa and has coordinated several capitalisation exercises as well as studies on decentralisation and local governance and the issue of monitoring and evaluation

12- For example, making the texts more accessible to the public by avoiding the use of jargon, which develops within every development organisation, and by ensuring uniformity of style and language.

13- The other members are the MATCL's head of communications; the head of the DNCT's resource and technology centre; representatives from DAF/MATCL, ANICT and AMM; the two activity leaders from SNV and the ECDPM; and two representatives from REDL.

14- Excerpt from resolution no. 06-00044/MATCL-SG creating the organisation committee of the subregional seminar for building capacities to monitor and evaluate decentralisation and local governance in West Africa.

subregional seminar. As such, it was to ensure that all the stakeholders would abide by the timetable set and duly carry out the tasks assigned to them.'[14]

Inasmuch as the experiences to be *capitalised* were developed by a large number of actors, author teams[15] were formed in cooperation with the organisations with which they were affiliated for the purpose of documenting the approaches in a participatory way. Each team was to choose a volunteer to play the role of focal point[16] (who served as the main point of contact for the facilitators). This person was responsible for coordinating the process encompassing each experience, ensuring the quality of the different outputs, presenting them at the subregional seminar and writing the case study.

It was felt that a joint approach and common tools would allow the stakeholders to question each other more effectively on their experience and to document it in a structured and concise way. This would also help them take away lessons learned that could easily be shared with others. To that end, the facilitators of the *capitalisation* exercise drafted a methodological note (Loquai and Le Bay 2005). In addition to listing the main steps and proposing an indicative time frame, this document included the following as part of the annex of tools:

■ a *case-study inventory* list[17] was provided to help authors focus their contribution on issues of common interest in order to facilitate exchanges and help compare experiences during the subregional seminar;
■ a *guide for preparing* case studies (see Annex III), which aimed not at inhibiting the authors' creativity but, rather, proposed a methodological approach to help them focus their case study on issues of common interest, adopt a similar approach and, subsequently, facilitate comparative thematic analyses;
■ *definitions of several concepts* and *references* available for online consultation.[18] The idea was not to impose definitions but to promote a shared understanding to help authors use appropriate terminology while avoiding the use of jargon; and
■ a *style guide in English and French*,[19] intended to help authors present their experiences in an easy-to-read style, thus accessible to a wider audience.

The recommendations and criteria for analysis proposed in the methodological note were based on an analytical review of the literature on capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, and decentralisation and local governance. The experiences and approaches already identified and the initial exchanges with actors who had taken part in designing and testing these approaches were also used. In addition, the final version of the note took into account the comments made after a first reading by the author teams, the steering committee, members of the REDL and several resource persons.

15- *These teams were made up of three people on average.*
16- *For exercises carried out simultaneously in two countries or by two organisations in the same country (such as the monographs on the municipalities in Cameroon and Mali, or those involving the geographical information systems in Mali), two focal points - one for each organisation - guided the capitalisation process.*
17- *Capitalisation in the form of case studies was regarded as the best methodological option: case studies allow knowledge to be documented in way that can easily be shared, particularly with a less-informed audience. As case studies are increasingly used by organisations in cooperation for purposes of knowledge management, all authors were familiar with this instrument. Moreover, case studies were considered as the ideal means of presenting experiences made in a specific national and subnational context, while providing sufficient scope for the different perspectives and views of the stakeholders involved in testing the tools for strengthening M&E capacity.*
18- *This included common definitions for terms such as M&E, accountability, outcomes and impacts.*
19- *The style guide is based largely on the experience of the ECDPM editors, who are accustomed to revising documents written by non-native speakers before they are published. The document also incorporates suggestions and comments submitted from surveys of readers of ECDPM publications, users of the guide, and English- and French-speaking editors with partner organisations.*

Initially, the *capitalisation* process comprised three steps (see details in table 1).

■ The **first step** involved identifying, documenting and analysing worthwhile experiences and approaches in building capacities for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation and local governance. This was done in the form of case studies.

■ The **second step** consisted of a subregional seminar where experiences (structured around the documented cases) could be exchanged.

■ The **third step** was devoted to publishing and distributing the case studies and the results of the seminar with a view to sharing and promoting new debates, reflection and initiatives related to building local capacities.

By the end of the second step, however, the stakeholders' perspectives had shifted; they felt it would be desirable to make further use of the outputs and to enhance the learning that resulted from the *capitalisation* process as a whole. An additional step was thus developed and implemented:

■ the **fourth step** included diversifying the ways in which results were shared (particularly through networking) in order to promote new exchanges and learning opportunities at another level. Additionally, opportunities such as international conferences on capacity building for monitoring and evaluation by local actors were also exploited.

These various steps or phases are summarised in table 1. In terms of implementation, they tended to overlap and were punctuated by intermittent pauses to enable the stakeholders to digest what they had learned.

Table 1 - The steps of the capitalisation process

	Steps	Deadlines
Preparation	Drafting a proposal for the joint initiative	June 2005
Step 1	Inventory of relevant experiences	July-December 2005
	Methodological note ● Formal commitment undertaken by the author teams contributing to the *capitalisation* activity and completion of a questionnaire for classifying the approaches ● Preparation of a preliminary draft of the methodological note by the facilitators ● Distribution of the methodological note to allow stakeholders to submit comments ● Validation by the steering committee of the methodological note and of the inventory list of the case studies to be *capitalised* ● Distribution of the final version of the methodological note to the author teams	December 2005-January 2006
	Preparing the case studies and the seminar ● Documentation and analysis of the experiences by the author teams - in collaboration with the actors involved and the facilitators - in accordance with the methodology described in the guide (see Annex III) ● Translation of certain contributions into French ● Providing a website allowing the stakeholders to follow the development of the *capitalisation* process and to access the documents produced ● Preparation of the subregional seminar	January-May 2006
Step 2	**Subregional seminar 'for exchange and learning'** ● Presentation of the case studies and discussions ● Exchanges at the local-government user level ● Online publishing of the preliminary drafts of the case studies and the seminar documents ● Preparation of the seminar report and distribution to the participants	17 and 18 May 2006 19 May 2006 June-July 2006
Step 3	**Publishing and disseminating the experiences and results** ● Revision of the preliminary drafts of the case studies with the author teams ● Translation of the case studies into English/French ● Preparation of the various publication formats (articles, discussion papers, compilation) ● Publication and distribution of the printed copies ● **Publication of the various formats online**	August 2006-December 2007
Step 4	**Networking and broadening exchanges and learning** ● Presentation of the results of the *capitalisation* exercise at the fourth conference of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) ● Preparation, publication and dissemination of offprints of the case studies in English and French ● Online discussion on the Pelican Initiative platform (www.dgroups.org/groups/pelican) about the results of the *capitalisation* exercise and the various case studies	January 2007 February 2006-February 2008 August-December 2007

Source: Adapted from Loquai and Le Bay (2005).

2.1. Step 1 – Identifying, documenting and analysing experiences

The objective of this step was to draw up an inventory of the tools and approaches used in the subregion to illustrate the theme selected as effectively as possible. Four main criteria were used to guide research and to select the experiences to be *capitalised*:

■ the fact that the approaches and tools were developed jointly with various stakeholders at a local level to encompass several perspectives;

■ the importance not only of developing or strengthening the capacities of M&E at the local-government level, but also of involving other local actors (associations or NGOs, de-concentrated state services, supervisory authorities in the communities, traditional structures, civil society, the private sector, etc.) to follow and evaluate by themselves the outcomes and impacts of decentralisation processes and the performance of the new government systems;

■ the aim of helping to promote forms of governance at a local level, which are responsible, more transparent and more attentive to the needs of citizens; and

■ showing the link between decentralisation, local governance and poverty reduction within the framework of local development.

Jointly, with the members of the REDL and the steering committee, the two facilitators researched the experiences worth *capitalising*. No specific exploratory mission was carried out for this purpose. Members of REDL used their own network of resource persons and *capitalised* on missions already planned in order to refine their proposals.

Obviously, this identification procedure introduced certain biases:

■ the tools and approaches identified were all developed within the framework of development cooperation and thus benefited from external support. For this reason, the facilitators felt it worthwhile to pay particular attention to the aspects of oversight and 'ownership'[20] of local actors' approaches, as well as their sustainability[21];

■ some worthwhile experiences may have been passed over because of the different systems in every country in the area concerned, the inventory process and the sometimes 'confidential' nature of certain approaches developed;

■ in two other cases, the Republic of Guinea[22] and the Cape Verde Islands, the experiences identified could not be included because of ongoing communication difficulties; and

■ finally, some organisations involved in the preselected approaches were unwilling to commit to the *capitalisation* process as a whole,[23] which meant that they could not be included.

In December 2005, eleven experiences relating to M&E of decentralisation and local governance from five countries had been identified. These experiences focused on approaches of an experimental nature that were still under development or already in use and being replicated.[24]

Following their declaration of interest, the author teams were requested to provide additional information by filling in an inventory form (see Annex III) so that the approach could be described and then classified according to specific criteria. It also gave them the opportunity to identify lessons and challenges they wished to discuss at the subregional seminar.

The author teams were encouraged to choose a form of *capitalisation* that was participatory in nature. Local actors involved in designing, testing and using approaches or tools were thus included in the procedure in a variety of ways. The information contained in the case studies, as well as the exchanges during the subregional seminar, showed that the various teams had taken this proposal into account.

All the teams submitted the preliminary draft of their case study prior to the seminar. Often writing in their free time, the author teams put forth considerable effort to meet the deadline.

20- This term can appear ambiguous in so far as only the design procedures for the approaches involving different stakeholders (including users) were selected. Understandably, even though the procedures were participatory, on the one hand they can never involve all the users (there is a test phase, followed by a wider application), and on the other hand, the approaches should ideally be used over the long term, even in the absence of an external incentive. Finally, the results obtained by the users must also be recognised as their own.

21- See Annex III, 'Guide for the preparation of case studies', point h: 'Ownership, sustainability, adaptation and replication of the approach'. Some of these approaches were replicated at a later stage by local decentralisation actors in other regions or countries without the support of the initial sponsor.

22- The experiences identified in the Republic of Guinea appeared interesting, although the decentralisation process at its present state can hardly be classified as 'democratic'.

23- This commitment involved documenting and analysing their experience in the form of a case study and supplying different outputs (preliminary drafts, presentations, a publishable version) by the agreed deadlines (see table 1).

24- Initially, the joint initiative proposal (Loquai and Le Bay 2005) anticipated work on only six to eight case studies.

2.2. Step 2 – Organising a subregional seminar for exchange and learning

Organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL) of Mali, the seminar was held in Bamako on 17 and 18 May 2006. In addition to the teams that had prepared the case studies, the event attracted some 100 participants involved in local government, civil society, the private sector, national institutions, development organisations and aid agencies working on the themes addressed in six West African countries.[25]

The objectives of the seminar were to

■ provide a platform for a structured exchange of experiences and learning focusing on different approaches and tools for capacity building in the M&E of decentralisation and local governance;

■ identify examples of 'good practice', lessons and operational challenges worth sharing with political decision makers and practitioners of decentralisation in the subregion; and

■ share these experiences and conclusions with a wider audience and use them to contribute to the international debate on the issue of the M&E of decentralisation.

The exchanges were structured largely on the basis of the case studies presented and the discussions they generated. In addition, several resource persons were invited to present and lead discussions on subjects of common interest linked more to national policy and framework, which could influence efforts to strengthen the capacity of actors involved in M&E at the local level.[26]

Prior to the seminar, a website was created for bringing together the methodology documents, information relating to the seminar (such as programme, practical details) and the work produced by the teams (for example, a summary of the approach and tools, preliminary drafts and presentations for the seminar).[27] Over time, the site has continued to develop, providing access to the different outputs of the *capitalisation* process to as wide an audience as possible. In addition to the support provided by the facilitators, the site proved

to be a source of motivation to the teams, who were thus able to take inspiration from the work done by others and to start comparing experiences.

The seminar was conducted on the basis of a participatory approach, alternating between plenary sessions and working groups. All the work was moderated; a constant focus on the outputs proved essential to producing a reliable external record of the exchanges within the different groups. Throughout the workshop, the case studies served as the basis for exchange, which involved the sharing of experiences and learning. In practical terms, three methods were used to facilitate exchange and reflection:

■ **Markets of experiences:** before the seminar got under way, all the author teams were requested to prepare a poster presenting an overview of the experiences they wished to share with the other participants. These were displayed during an informal meeting held before the seminar, and attendance was limited to team members. The teams were encouraged to walk around and view the posters to get a basic idea of the different approaches and tools on display. This approach was also used to present the main points of the exchanges during the workshops, as it was an easy way to provide access to the outputs of the seminar to a very diverse audience.

■ Presentations given during the **plenary sessions** followed by question-and-answer sessions: certain case studies were used in the plenary sessions to introduce a type of approach or set of themes. The presenters were encouraged to use visual aids (such as PowerPoint presentations, drawings and sketches).

■ **Theme-based workshops:** in these working groups, different experiences were categorised and discussed in connection with specific themes, such as approaches using tools aimed at evaluating the effects of local governance on poverty or tools for the participatory monitoring and evaluation of social services.

A report summarising the main points of the discussions and exchanges, as well as participants' proposals and recommendations was prepared and submitted to them for comment and then finalised in July 2006 (FORANIM Consult 2006). Hard copies were given to participants who did not have

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25- Benin, Cameroon, Ghana, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

26- For Mali, this involved representatives of the National Coordination Unit for Technical Support for Local Government (CCN) speaking about the implementation of a national database for M&E of decentralisation support, the Observatory of Sustainable Human Development (ODHD) speaking about the creation of a poverty index at the municipal level, and the Delegation of the European Commission (DEC) speaking about the establishment of PARAD. For Benin, a representative of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Denmark spoke about budget support, and for Burkina Faso, a representative of the Ministry for Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MATD) spoke about the development of a national system for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation. See Part I, chapter 5.

27- http://www.snvmali.org/actus/actualite.html.

Internet access in order to facilitate feedback on the experiences and debates, as well as the sharing of information with actors with a poor grasp of French.[28]

After the seminar, some participants also wished to visit the municipalities using the approaches and tools presented. The discussions were thus prolonged to examine specific reflections at greater length and even to exchange information or make comparisons. The elected officials and citizens of these municipalities thus also got a chance to learn about practices in other countries.

2.3. Step 3 – Publishing and disseminating the experiences and results

This phase started at the close of the seminar and has involved the publication and dissemination of the outputs of the *capitalisation* process in various formats, via different channels and in different languages. It is aimed to promote debate beyond West African countries by reaching an audience who thinks about and works in the field.

At the design phase, the promoters of the joint *capitalisation* process had planned to disseminate the results in three formats prepared by the facilitators, Sonia Le Bay and Christiane Loquai:

■ an article in **Capacity.org** (Le Bay and Loquai 2006): this publication constitutes a tool dedicated to passing on knowledge to, and exchanging information with, researchers, practitioners and political decision makers. Available both on the Internet and in printed form, 'Capacity.org' presents articles and points of view on debates and practices related to development capacities. The journal is published in English, French and Spanish, and distributed to readers throughout the world.

■ an **InBrief** (Loquai and Le Bay 2007): this publication targets decision makers, managers of development organisations and development stakeholders. The format – in both electronic and printed form in English and French – is well suited to disseminating experiences and lessons from case studies.

■ a **synthesis report including the compilation of case studies:** this (the present document) contains the 'final outputs' of the *capitalisation* process in English and French. Intended for a wide audience of practitioners and academics, its aim is to bring together the various contributions made during the seminar (a compilation of the case studies, in particular), as well as a summary of the results of the *capitalisation*, exchange and learning process as a whole.

2.4. Step 4 – Networking and broadening exchanges and learning

Most of the participants in the subregional seminar stressed the importance of networking to broaden the exchange of information to include actors in other countries engaged in processes of democratic decentralisation. In addition to supporting the author teams who were integrating the information resulting from the exchanges, contacts were made with the Pelican Initiative to encourage an online discussion with a wider audience about the *capitalisation* process.

The Pelican Initiative[29] is an online network for evidence-based learning. The network has some 300 active members, ranging from evaluators, knowledge-management specialists, development practitioners in various fields and researchers. Online discussions promote and improve the understanding of joint learning processes in different areas of development.

Given the relevance of the theme addressed, the Pelican Initiative management board agreed to launch a pilot discussion (moderated for the first time in two languages – English and French) on building capacities for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation and local governance. It was based on case studies from the *capitalisation* process and the questions and challenges identified by participants in the subregional seminar. The usual group of network members was extended to include these participants, as well as other interested collaborators from the organisations represented.

This discussion platform obviously favours actors with Internet access who are accustomed to this type of exchange.[30] Many of those involved shared an interest in passing on new knowledge and in receiving multiple contributions as part of this online network. At the same time, some

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28- *This was a concern voiced during the subregional seminar evaluation.*

29- *www.dgroups.org/groups/pelican*

30- *Some of the development organisations represented were already familiar with how online discussion groups work.*

31- *www.afrea.org*

participants were conscious of contributing to 'a tool capable of boosting performance in development' (Keijzer et al. 2006).

The lessons learned from some of the case studies were also presented at the **fourth conference of the African Evaluation Association**[31] (AfrEA) to encourage a debate on issues involving strengthening the M&E capacity of local-government actors (Le Bay et al. 2007). The conference was held from 17 to 21 January 2007 in Niamey, Niger. Entitled 'Evaluate Development, Develop Evaluation: A Pathway to Africa's Future', the conference aimed to

■ broaden public debate on the practice of evaluation and its impact on human development in Africa, especially for poverty reduction and the fostering of good governance;

■ create awareness of the decisive nature of monitoring and evaluation in public development policies and strategies; and

■ take stock of international experiences in the area of monitoring and evaluation and of lessons learned for developing better evaluation practices in Africa.

'Governance, evaluation and development challenges in Africa' presented the work carried out thus far to the 500 participants[32] from five continents. While it was developed around a group of themes, it dealt more specifically with the establishment of permanent, transparent and effective mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation and communicated the relevance for governments to successfully evaluate development projects, programmes and public policies'.[33]

The resulting questions and discussions, as well as the informal exchanges that followed, confirmed that the experiences documented in the case studies met the specific needs of many participants, mainly practitioners. Many requested that the case studies be made available as **offprints** so that they could make the most of them with their partners, which resulted in new publications.

The passage of time has shown that the **publication of offprints** does meet a real need, since, despite online availability, requests for hard copies are received continually. Given the level of interest they continue to generate, reprints are being considered.

Interestingly, beyond those activities planned as part of the *capitalisation* process, exchanges are still taking place within and between some of the author teams, even though some individuals no longer hold the same position or are now employed by other organisations. Readers interested in certain experiences continue to contact the facilitators or the institutions and resource persons listed at the end of the case studies. E-mail is the main means of communication, supplemented by occasional telephone contact.

Structured around the actors' common interests and developed in a flexible, reactive way in accordance with their continued growth, the process has thus enabled the creation of a **communications network for sharing experiences and learning**, which continues to evolve autonomously in different forms. This mobilisation, both collective and individual, represents a very encouraging secondary outcome that underscores (should any doubt exist) the potential power of a voluntary *capitalisation* procedure and some of the spin-off effects it can have – not just in the immediate future, but also in the short and medium term.

32- *It brought together various stakeholders and organisations, including regional and international development organisations; national and regional evaluation networks and associations; specialised monitoring and evaluation institutions; representatives of public and private enterprise; political decision makers, elected personalities and local authorities; African and foreign experts; representatives of civil society; researchers; students; and other individuals with an interest in M&E in Africa.*

33- *The sub-themes addressed in this area were the evaluative approach from the perspective of good governance; the duty to monitor and evaluate development; comparisons between experiences from country evaluations; setting up country evaluations, using the example of the CLE (Country Led Evaluation) project; roles and responsibilities in development evaluation; value clashes in evaluation; evaluation in a multicultural and multilinguistic context; ownership and application of evaluation results by stakeholders/interest groups; democratic versus non-democratic governance, with lessons drawn from parliamentary evaluation in Africa; local participatory evaluation, with an exchange of experiences acquired at the community level; evaluation and new challenges of globalisation: the opening of markets and migration.*

The authors of the case studies do not define what exactly they understand by strengthening the capacities of local actors to monitor and evaluate decentralisation and local governance processes. One reason for this is that the guidelines for the joint stocktaking and analysis of experiences provided them with definitions of terms (see Part I, section 1.3, and box 1).

> **Box 1. A few definitions of a concept that remains difficult to delimit: capacity, capacity development and capacity building[34]**
>
> ▸ 'Capacity … refers to the ability of an organisation to function as a resilient, strategic and autonomous entity' (Kaplan 1999).
> ▸ 'Capacity development is the process by which individuals, organisations, institutions and societies increase their abilities to perform functions, solve problems and achieve objectives; [and] to understand and deal with their development need in a broader context and in a sustainable manner' (UNDP, 1997).
> ▸ 'Capacity development is the process by which individuals, groups, organisations and institutions strengthen their ability to carry out their functions and achieve desired results over time' (Morgan and Taschereau 1996).
> ▸ 'Capacity building is any support that strengthens an institution's ability to effectively and efficiently design, implement and evaluate development activities according to its mission' (United Nations 1999).
> ▸ 'Capacity strengthening is an ongoing process by which people and systems, operating within dynamic contexts, learn to develop and implement strategies in pursuit of their objectives for increased performance in a sustainable way' (Lusthaus et al. 1995).
>
> Source: Adapted from Loquai and Le Bay (2005), excerpted from Annex 3 of the methodological note.

In addition, the use and significance of the term 'capacity development' or 'capacity building', as it was earlier called,[35] has evolved tremendously. In the region under review, it has come to encompass new aspects of capacity development, as well as new needs arising in the context of decentralisation and new modes of local governance.

In development cooperation and related literature, the term 'capacity development' is alternately used to refer to an objective, approach, process, input or result (Lopes and Theisohn 2003). It remains a complex and elusive concept, but is relatively unanimously considered to be a 'key issue' for development (Morgan et al. 2005, Baser and Morgan 2008). As these definitions illustrate, 'capacity development' is seen as an important ingredient to improving the processes of decision making and institutional development, recognising the various actors who contribute to that improvement.

Seminar participants mentioned that these concepts (as they are used by donors and development agencies and adopted by national authorities) tend to be too abstract, vague and theoretical for local actors at the municipal level. They are also difficult to translate into local languages. At the same time, local actors have rather concrete ideas on what kind of capacity building they require and how the different tools respond to these needs.

3.1. What kinds of capacities need to be developed?

In the case studies, capacity building for M&E of decentralisation refers mainly to the following elements:

■ **stimulating interest in M&E tools**, as instruments for adaptive management of municipal development, more informed decision making and learning;

■ **enhancing statistical literacy**, i.e., the capacity to analyse and interpret statistical data that can help municipalities and their local-level partners to plan, monitor and assess development and poverty reduction at their level;

34- For more information about capacity building, see the DAC's list of reference documents: http://www.oecd.org/document/47/0,2340,en_2649_34565_20633455_1_1_1_1,00.html. For an insight into recent discussions on this concept, see the following websites: http://www.capacity.org (in particular Capacity.org no. 26, September 2005) and http://www.intrac.org.

35- Today, the term 'capacity development' is preferred by many authors, because it is perceived to have a more positive connotation: the capacity of partners is developed, thus already there, and not built from scratch as the term 'capacity building' might imply.

■ **enabling municipal actors to access, collect, stock and update relevant information** in collaboration with other local actors (e.g., de-concentrated services, civil society, private sector);

■ **helping local actors to jointly design and test methods and tools for M&E** of decentralisation and local governance processes that are adapted to their specific needs and the local context (including commonly agreed performance criteria and indicators);

■ **developing procedures and systems for exchange of information and statistical data** on the implications, outcomes and impacts of different aspects of decentralisation and local governance;

■ **strengthening citizens' capacities** to monitor local government's actions, to voice criticism and to **demand accountability** from their elected representatives.

3.2. Why invest in building local capacities for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation?

Why are donors thinking about M&E of decentralisation? Why should they invest in exercises aiming to build capacities in partner countries to monitor and evaluate decentralisation? Should national and local actors in decentralising states be interested in developing systems and tools for assessing the results, outcomes and impacts of reform processes?

In answer to these questions, with reference to the case studies, literature and discussion on the subject, the following can be said:

■**Donor agencies and development organisations** supporting decentralisation processes want to know to what extent and under what conditions their support to these reforms can contribute to development goals, such as poverty reduction, economic development and good governance (Reyes and Valencia 2004).

However, as the recently published reference document of the European Commission rightly states, assessments of outcomes and impacts of assistance to decentralisation are still 'works in progress' (European Commission/Europe Aid 2007a).

Moreover, until recently, M&E practices tended to emphasise the information needs of donor agencies and central governments more than enhancement of local stakeholders' capacity to make their own evaluations. This approach has had limited success as far as ownership and utilisation of evaluation results are concerned. It relies more on external experts than on local knowledge and has failed to contribute enough to strengthening local systems of accountability (Watson 2005, Simon 2004). These latter, however, are highly desirable in the context of projects and programmes to promote democratic decentralisation and local governance.

■ *National authorities* dealing with decentralisation are sometimes portrayed as reluctant to invest in M&E. However, this image has been countered by the readiness of Mali's Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL) to promote a process of stocktaking and exchange of experiences with M&E tools for local government actors, as well as by the interest expressed by other African countries in the results of this exercise. It is important to note that national authorities often have different expectations of M&E systems than donor representatives and local-level actors. The former tend to be interested in instruments that can help them to coordinate and centralise information on local government performance, as managing data from a variety of locations and providing feedback requires specific capacities.

■ *Mayors* committed to democratic local governance increasingly realise their need for tools with which to show citizens how they are performing and why the municipality has difficulty dealing with certain issues that citizens might view as high priority. In this regard, M&E tools could help them to make progress and constraints visible to citizens and donors alike.

■ To *citizens*, decentralisation reforms and local government will be credible only if they have sustained positive impacts on people's lives and provide them with more opportunities to participate in decision making or to exert influence in local affairs. Elections provide opportunities for political participation, but only every few years. Nonetheless, other channels of participation and citizen control of local government have tended to be neglected.

Chapter 4: The findings of the case studies: A synthesis

Table 2 gives an overview of the case studies and the contributions made during the subregional seminar. It classifies them by theme and according to the types of capacity-building tools and approaches involved in each.

Table 2. Classification of tools and approaches in case studies

Type of tool or approach	Experiences	Supporting agency or organisation
Developing the capacity to analyse and monitor local development at the municipal level	● Cameroon and Mali: Strategic planning and monitoring of municipal development	Helvetas
	● Niger: Planning and M&E in municipalities, focusing on poverty reduction	SNV, UNDP, GTZ
	● Ghana: District-based poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor planning as an M&E tool	GTZ, NDCP, GPRP/SIF, MLGRDE
	● Mali: Geographical information systems (GIS) for the development of rural municipalities	SNV, GTZ
	● Mali: Municipalities in figures: needs and realities	SNV, GTZ
Self-evaluation tools for assessing local government performance	● Mali: Assessment of local government performance, experiences with a self-evaluation tool.	SNV, GTZ, Helvetas, MATCL/DNCT
	● Niger: Planning and M&E in municipalities, focusing on poverty reduction	SNV, UNDP, GTZ
	● Benin: Assessment of local government performance: Experiences with a self-evaluation tool	SNV, UNDP, GTZ, Helvetas, ANCB
	● Burkina Faso: The role of self-evaluation in a new national system for evaluation of decentralisation	GTZ, MATD
Strengthening citizens' control and local stakeholders' capacity to monitor the delivery of decentralised services	● Mali: Towards a basic health-sector information system for municipal actors (SIEC-S)	SNV, KIT
	● Benin: Public control in the education sector, pilot phase of the participatory local impact monitoring methodology (SILP)	GTZ, FIDESPRA
Opening external M&E systems to local perceptions	● Mali: Participatory monitoring and evaluation as a means of empowering local government in the region of Mopti	CARE
	● Mali: Public perceptions as a barometer of local governance	NCA
	● Mali: Evaluating the impact of decentralisation	UNCDF

Abbreviations: ANCB = National Association of Benin Municipalities, DNCT = National Directorate for Local Government (Mali), FIDESPRA = International Forum for Development and Exchange of Knowledge and Expertise Promoting Self-Sustained Rural Development, GPRD/SIF= Ghana Poverty Reduction Programme of the Social Investment Fund, GTZ = German Technical Cooperation Agency, Helvetas = Swiss Association for International Cooperation, KIT = Royal Tropical Institute (Netherlands), MATCL = Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (Mali), MLGRDE= Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and the Environment (Ghana), MATD= Ministry for Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (Burkina Faso), NCA = Norwegian Church Aid, NDPC= National Development Planning Commission of Ghana, SNV = Netherlands Development Organisation, UNCDF = United Nations Capital Development Fund.

Source: Classification based on presentations and written cases discussed at the regional seminar in Bamako, 17-18 May 2006

Details of the experiences that were documented and analysed in the case studies are provided in Part II. The section below summarises several of the main points that were addressed within the framework of the different approaches or types of tools. It also includes findings that emerged from experiences that were not *capitalised* in case studies.[36]

4.1. Developing the capacity to analyse and monitor local development at the municipal level

In many francophone West African countries, newly established local governments are learning to formulate and implement municipal or regional development plans. A common problem they experience is the lack of baseline data and statistical information to draw upon to analyse the social, economic and cultural situation in the territory. Often, national statistical systems have not been adapted to decentralisation. They might not produce sufficiently disaggregated data for local planning, or municipal level planners might lack easy access to the information that is available. Moreover, municipalities and districts often lack specialised staff to collect background data and diagnose development issues before engaging in the planning process.

The case studies from **Mali**, **Cameroon** and **Niger**[37] all deal with participatory approaches to establishing municipal baseline information with a view to improving planning, monitoring and evaluation of local development. With the assistance of external facilitators, the municipalities employed participatory approaches to assemble and analyse data jointly with other local development stakeholders (e.g., de-concentrated technical services, community based organisations, village chiefs and the private sector) and to construct a baseline that could be used for strategic planning and eventually adapted for M&E purposes.

In **Mali**, this baseline exercise was complemented by the design and testing of geographic information systems (GIS) for rural municipalities. As feeding and manipulating a GIS requires computer literacy and basic cartography skills, primary responsibility for system updating and maintenance lies with

municipal advisory centres. These are based at the district level and provide various capacity-building services to the municipalities of a given district.[38]

In **Ghana**, where districts have their own statistical services, the challenge was slightly different: development of a new methodology for poverty profiling and mapping. Enhanced information was needed on the level, causes and geographical distribution of poverty at the district level in order to facilitate pro poor planning, M&E of district plans and pro-poor targeting of national development programmes. Here too, an important element of the approach was participation of a spectrum of local development stakeholders, such as community-based organisations, village associations, traditional leaders and NGOs, in constituting databases and district poverty maps.[39]

Experiences with these different tools provide a number of lessons:

■ The process of constructing baselines and conducting monographic studies enhances knowledge of the local governments' economic, geographic and sociocultural potential and thus allows it to be used more fully.

■ The tools give decision makers more clarity about the constraints that local governments face and about populations' needs, thus providing a more realistic basis for planning.

■ Such tools can help bring municipal planning better in line with national-level poverty reduction policies and with sector policies.

■ In the course of the exercise, the municipal council usually assumes increasing responsibility for steering and owning the process.

■ The participatory approach often contributes to development of team spirit within the municipal council, which enhances initiative.

These exercises all showed positive effects on the capacities of local governments and municipal advisory centres to collect and select relevant statistics. They also resulted in stepped-up collaboration between technical services, supervisory authorities, local governments, civil society and private sector agents at the local level.

So far, most of the baselines have been used for planning and less as tool for M&E of local

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36- *Some of the experiences listed in table 2 were in too early a stage for capitalisation, but stakeholders participated in and made contributions to the seminar (in the form of posters for the 'market of experiences' and in the workshops).*
37- *For more information, see case studies 2.1, 2.2 and 2.5 in Part II.*
38- *For more information, see case study 2.4 in Part II.*
39- *For more information, see case study 2.3 in Part II.*

development and governance. For that latter purpose, they need to be adapted, made more selective, indicator-focused and converted into a database that can be regularly updated. A step in this direction is the effort in Mali to feed data into a GIS. Plans to establish similar electronic databases were under way in Cameroon and Ghana at the time of the stocktaking exercise.

4.2. Self-evaluation tools for assessing local government performance

In 2004, the National Directorate for Local Government of the MATCL of Mali issued a publication explaining a tool for performance self-evaluation of local governments. These guidelines were later included in a toolkit for mayors distributed to all 703 municipalities of the country (MATCL/DNCT et al. 2004).

The tool was the result of a long process of design, testing and fine-tuning a participatory approach to performance self-evaluation, an exercise assisted by a number of development organisations, in particular, SNV, Helvetas and GTZ. These organisations all took active part in helping their partners at the local level (municipalities) to develop, test and use the approach and provided feedback to stimulate the tool's gradual improvement and adaptation for use in different contexts.

The proposed methodology puts the municipality in the driver's seat of an evaluation of its own performance, which is repeated at regular intervals (figure 2). Members of the local council compare their self-evaluation with evaluation results provided by various groups of other local actors, such as community based associations, local interest groups, private sector representatives, staff of de-concentrated technical services and supervisory authorities.[40]

Figure 2. Steps of performance self-evaluation of municipalities

2. Conduct the self-evaluation (3 to 4 days)

3. Feedback from the self-evaluation (1/2 day)

Optimum rate = 1/yr

1. Preparation for the self-evaluation (1 to 2 days)

4. Use of the results of the self-evaluation (ongoing)
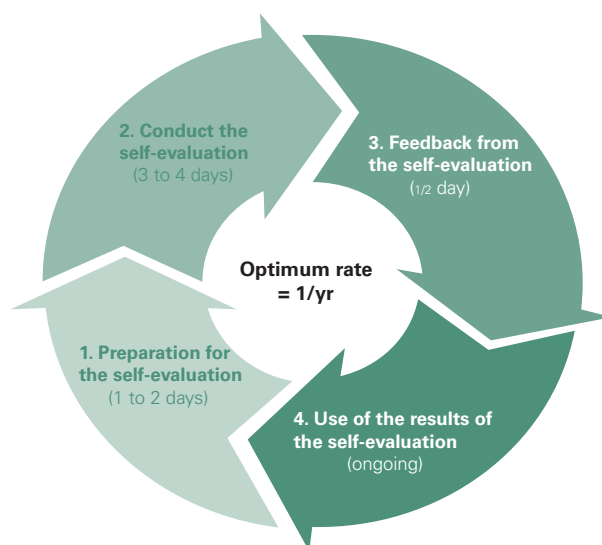
Source: Le Bay et al. (2007).

The tool proposes that the self-evaluation revolve around five key areas of municipal performance: (i) internal organisation, (ii) financial and administrative management, (iii) mobilisation of financial and human resources, (iv) planning and programming of local development and (v) services, products and infrastructure. For each area a number of indicators was jointly defined against which performance could be assessed (using scores).

Experience with the tool has illustrated the important role of external facilitation and mentoring the first time the self-evaluation

40- For more information, see case study 3.1 in Part II.

exercise is conducted. It has also revealed some potential pitfalls that users of the tool might encounter, such as cultural barriers to articulating and dealing with constructive criticism and being self-critical in public. Experience has also highlighted problems that the various stakeholders may come up against if they focus solely on performance based results and disregard the wealth of communication that takes place before and after the exercises. In fact, these exchanges may well pave the way for shared responsibility and consensual decisions.

Testing and utilisation of the tool has had many positive results on the evaluation capacity of the municipalities and others:

■ Municipalities are now able to measure their performance (achievements and weaknesses) and to analyse it themselves; they have learned how to develop argumentation and mediate between different viewpoints.

■ Understanding has improved of the roles of the different actors and of the legislation on decentralisation and local government.

■ Municipal councillors, mayors and contract staff of municipalities now realise that they must be more accountable to citizens and supervisory authorities.

■ Municipal staff have learned to use evaluation results, adapting decision making and management in line with findings.

■ Evaluation results have helped local officials to formulate better targeted and more complete requests for capacity building assistance to municipal advisory centres.

Inspired by publication of the guidelines for the self-evaluation tool in Mali, neighbouring countries have begun to devise similar tools:

■ In **Niger**, a number of development agencies, together with the de-concentrated state services and municipalities, started testing and adapting the self-evaluation tool in 2005. An innovative feature of the adapted tool is its emphasis on encouraging municipalities and their partners to think at the local level about integrating goals of the Millennium Declaration. The adapted tool also allows the national poverty reduction strategy to be taken into account in municipal planning, monitoring and evaluation. The present challenge

is to get the tool validated by the Ministry of the Interior and Decentralisation and used on a much wider scale throughout the country.

■ In **Benin**, mayors have strongly contested an external evaluation of the performance of the municipalities. Instead, they have mandated the National Association of Municipalities (ANCB) to design an alternative approach. In collaboration with a number of donors and ANCB branches at the departmental level, the ANCB is presently developing a municipal performance self-evaluation tool inspired by the one from Mali. The Benin tool is also to serve as a means of better targeting external support for capacity building for the country's young municipalities.

■ In **Burkina Faso**, the Ministry for Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MATD) plans to make systematic use of self-evaluation at various levels of its future systems for M&E of decentralisation. The approach proposed for the municipal level builds on the Malian tool. However, in view of the very recent establishment of the rural municipalities, the self-evaluation process will initially emphasise helping these entities to reflect on the kinds of capacities they need to acquire to become functional and achieve their goals.

More recently, a development programme in **Senegal** produced a two-step evaluation methodology for measuring municipal performance. The first step is an obligatory external performance assessment of local governments. The second step is a voluntary performance self-evaluation conducted with a view to identifying the different needs of local governments. With the programme, the central state has shown its interest in the performance of public action at the local level. It would like to see local governments and development programmes further develop this tool so that it can be used to identify local government capacity-building needs. On the whole, the tool serves to promote good governance and performance based allocation of resources to local governments.

These initiatives show that performance self-evaluation approaches have considerable potential for replication. This is especially so because they help to pinpoint the effects of capacity building in terms of improved performance of local government.

4.3. Strengthening citizens' control and local stakeholders' capacity to monitor the delivery of decentralised services

The two experiences presented under this heading differ in terms of their entry points, rationale and approach. Nevertheless, both have as their end goal to improve the quality, effectiveness and transparency of delivery of public services at the local government level. To achieve this objective, the case from Benin promotes citizen control in the primary education sector, while the Malian experience uses joint monitoring of basic health indicators.

In **Benin**, the pilot phase of a participatory local impact monitoring methodology (SILP) has involved 15 schools in three municipalities of the department of Atakora. School attendance in these in northern territories has lagged behind the national average. The trial forms part of Benin's poverty reduction strategy, which gives priority to education and decentralisation policy.

Use of SILP is aimed at providing supplementary information for quantitative evaluations of the barriers blocking the proper operation of decentralised public services. It is also intended to facilitate identification and implementation of appropriate corrective measures by citizens themselves.[41]

For this purpose, SILP follows an iterative process of consultation and exchange, involving sector actors at a number of levels (municipal, departmental, national) and various groups of actors (e.g., pupils, teachers, parents' associations, citizens, local government, women selling food to pupils, de-concentrated educational departments of the central state, central institutions and development partners). The stress lies on two aspects of the public spending cycle: tracing the resources allocated and evaluating service quality. Figure 3 gives an overview of important steps in this participatory monitoring process.

41- For more information, see case study 4.2 in Part II.

Figure 3: Budgetary cycle, public monitoring approaches and the approaches developed for the SILP

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                      ┌──────────────────────┐
                      │ Independent policy   │
                      │ analysis             │
                      └──────────────────────┘
                      ┌──────────────────────┐
                      │ Analysis and review  │
┌───────────────────┐ │  - of policies       │
│ Independent audit │ │  - and public spending│
│ by civil society  │ └──────────────────────┘
└───────────────────┘
        ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │ Evaluation          │      │ Planning/Formulation │
        │  - of performance   │      │  - of a strategy     │   ┌──────────────┐
        │  - of service quality│     │  - of a budget framework│ │ Participatory│
        │ Audit               │      │ Establishing objectives│  │ budget       │
┌───────────────────┐         │      └──────────────────────┘   └──────────────┘
│ Evaluation of     │
│ public-service    │           Budgetary cycle
│ performance by    │
│ users             │
└───────────────────┘
        ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────┐
        │ Monitoring of execution│   │ Resource mobilisation and│ ┌──────────────┐
        │  - monitoring of activities│ │ allocation           │  │ Independent  │
        │  - monitoring of accounts│  │ Preparation and vote on│  │ budget analysis│
        └─────────────────────┘      │ budget               │   └──────────────┘
┌───────────────────┐               └──────────────────────┘
│ Joint management  │
│ of public services│
└───────────────────┘
                ┌──────────────────────┐
                │ Budget execution     │
                │  - transfer of funds │
                │  - allocation of staff│
                └──────────────────────┘
                        ┌──────────────────────┐
                        │ Tracing of public    │
                        │ spending             │
                        └──────────────────────┘
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Key : Budgetary cycle stages

┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Budgetary cycle stages   │
└──────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Stages of public monitoring   │
│ of public spending   │
└──────────────────────────────┘

Source: Floquet A. and R. Mongbo (2006).

Both aspects are jointly reviewed by public and community service users and suppliers, applying national norms and standards and their own criteria. An external moderator facilitates discussion and evaluation according to these jointly defined criteria.

The evaluation is followed by a debate on corrective measures, which are then summarised in a collective action plan. Implementation of the plan is steered by parent associations and school administration, but jointly monitored and reviewed on regular basis with municipal councillors. Initial results of the pilot phase of the SILP approach show that the methodology can improve knowledge on strengths and weak-nesses in using financial resources devolved from the central state to the decentralised level (to the departments, municipalities and schools). Even after only a few months of testing, the method appeared to have helped various local actors to better assume their respective roles in enhancing public scrutiny of the use of public funds. The act of mobilising their thoughts and energy for a common cause also improved the efficiency of public spending. Moreover, there is evidence that the SILP approach disseminates itself, as it is now being used in municipalities that were not included in the test sample.

However, the strategy also has pitfalls. In the absence of capable moderation, latent conflicts

can surface that hamper constructive discussions. Also, if not properly prepared and supervised, SILP can lead to covert tactics and exclusion of actors, instead of self-corrective strategies. External support is thus essential in the test phase and probably well beyond.

Mali's testing of a basic health-sector information system similarly rendered service delivery more effective and transparent. However, for this exercise the initial objective was a different one. Because the transfer of resources and capacities for municipal-level health service provision is advancing only slowly in Mali, the idea was to test a tool that could contribute to the process of devolution.[42]

A basic package of information was developed for key public health actors at the local government level, including elected officers, community health associations and technical departments. The information kit, called 'SIEC-S',[43] had been produced jointly by the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), SNV, the Malian Ministry of Health and the community-based health associations that run many of the local health centres. Action research was then conducted on how to use this package for monitoring and managing basic information on public health at the municipal level, involving municipal councillors, the deconcentrated health services of the central state and representatives of local community health associations (ASACOs).

The strength of the SIEC-S approach is its enabling non-specialists on health, including the illiterate, to take part in discussions on health system results, progress in public health and reasons for failures and success. As participants' comments illustrate (see box 2), use of SIEC-S improved local stakeholders' understanding of key health statistics and of indicators directly relevant to their daily work. This, in turn, strengthened municipal councillors' ability to discern top priorities for action, to take informed decisions on health matters and to negotiate with the Ministry of Health. The joint collection, sharing and analysis of health-related indicators and information enhanced cooperation between the actors concerned. For this reason, the project has constituted a very practical experience that paves the way for the transfer of health sector powers to local governments.

4.4. Opening external M&E systems to local perceptions

In 2004, CARE **Mali** made the design and implementation of participatory M&E systems for its programmes a priority of its new long-term strategic plan. As the test case for a new integrated participatory M&E system it chose the Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations, co-financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The focus of the programme, which was based in the region of Mopti, was natural resource management and local governance. At that time, it was still in its initial stages of implementation.[44]

Design and testing of the new participatory M&E system brought together a range of actors involved in resource management and new governance structures. Participants spanned the village, municipal, district ('cercle') and regional levels and were drawn from both civil society and the de-concentrated technical departments of the central state. All had been intensely involved in designing the programme.

42- For more information, see case study 4.1 in Part II.

43- SIEC-S stands for 'Système d'information essentielle pour la commune dans le secteur de la santé' (System of Basic Health-Sector Information for Municipalities).

44- For more information, see case 5.1 in Part II.

These actors were later to take on roles in the newly emerging M&E system, intended to meet both CARE's internal needs for monitoring data and Mali's need for better information and accountability systems for its new local governance structures.

Although the M&E system had been running for barely a year at the time of the stocktaking exercise, the authors of the case study could already point to several lessons learned:

■ Participatory M&E is an effective way of transferring skills to local actors, but time and patience are required to put such an approach into practice. Especially in a poor region like Mopti, where educational standards tend to be low, participants need to be given plenty of time to absorb the information they receive.

■ It is vital to choose able participants with a basic level of capacity from among the 'beneficiaries' if the process is to be successful. Illiteracy, for instance, has proven to be an obstacle to participants taking ownership of some of the M&E tools.

■ The commitment of the steering team is a key success factor of participatory M&E. It is important that the team clearly distinguish this method from earlier, less participatory methods of managing projects.

Problems encountered during the test phase were, among others, related to the diversity of languages and dialects spoken in the region and differences in educational levels of the participants. As a solution, all important documents were translated into the three main languages (Dogon, Peulh and Bambara) spoken in the region. Moreover, at meetings the participants were divided into groups according to language spoken and educational background. This made the process time-intensive, but ensured that the people involved could communicate and make their points.

In a similar vein, to open strategic planning and M&E to the perspectives of local governance stakeholders, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) conducted an assessment of the state of decentralisation and local governance in three regions of northern Mali (Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal) in 2005. The assessment was less anchored in a participatory M&E approach, but more focused on capturing and analysing citizens' perceptions by means of a traditional survey approach. To get a differentiated picture of citizens' perceptions on the state of decentralisation and local governance in the three regions and to ensure that the views of marginalised and vulnerable groups were taken on board, the researchers interviewed officers of civil society organisations working with these groups and representatives of citizens directly.[45]

The evaluation concluded that integrating an analysis of citizens' perceptions can improve tools and current systems for monitoring and evaluating local governance. A greater emphasis on citizens' perceptions, opinions and assessments would also better equip elected councillors and supervisory authorities to ensure that approaches adopted for governance and development are relevant, viable and sustainable.

Bearing in mind the lack of opinion polls and the very few surveys on local governance themes among electors that have been conducted in West Africa, the survey of perceptions commissioned by the NCA makes an interesting contribution to current thinking about barometers of governance (Bratton et al. 2000).[46]

The last experience, in **Mali**, is from the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), which has been active in promoting local governance in northern **Mali** since the latter 1990s.[47] In the context of a broader UNCDF initiative, UNCDF-Mali started an evaluation of the poverty reduction impacts of its Support Programme for Rural Municipalities in Timbuktu (PACR-T).

Data collection proved a real challenge. The main constraint was the mediocre quality of the information available on the reference situation. Baseline figures were meagre and a lot of statistical information was unusable because it was not broken down to the municipal level. To remedy the situation, the project team and external evaluators decided to try a new qualitative surveying approach drawing largely on the perceptions of local communities and a participatory assessment method.

45- For more information, see case study 5.2 in Part II.
46- See, in particular, the current work of Afrobarometer and the Impact Alliance's Local Governance Barometer project, which is intended to be used as a tool for measuring the performance of local government throughout Africa (www.impactalliance.org).
47- For more information, see case study 5.3 in Part II.

Hence, a conceptual framework for analysing the impact of decentralisation on various dimensions of poverty was jointly designed with partners, and local perceptions were used to rank the villages and wards of each municipality in three categories, from poorest to least poor. Community participation in the planning process and use of municipal investment funds in each community were then analysed in order to identify which of the three categories had received the most investment.

A clear advantage of this method is its allowing 'poverty' to be defined and assessed from the viewpoint of the beneficiaries of the programme's activities. In this case, this led to a focus on the impact of socio-economic investment, because the dimension of poverty most widely experienced in the Timbuktu region is that of gaining access to basic socio-economic services.

As this case study concludes, it is regrettable that monitoring and evaluating the impact of decentralisation on poverty reduction is often regarded as only a concern of researchers and donors. The authors argue that decision makers in developing countries should make M&E a more systematic management practice. This would allow a counterchecking of the underlying hypotheses of development approaches. It would also contribute to improving the living conditions of poor populations and enable populations to better analyse and understand their rights and options as citizens.

This review revealed that the capacity of local actors to monitor and evaluate the processes of decentralisation and local governance is strongly influenced by national-level frameworks and policy development — as is their interest in and willingness to try out new practices.

The case studies highlighted the importance of actors at the national level (such as national authorities and associations of municipalities) because the chances of the M&E tools developed with local actors being used and replicated depend largely on their collaboration. Mayors at the regional seminar also underscored the importance of supervisory authorities' cooperation — even just their 'endorsement' of M&E tools was crucial for their wider usage. The mayors said that they find it worthwhile to test planning and M&E approaches for municipal development, to conduct self-evaluation sessions on municipal performance and to identify changes to improve operations. Nevertheless, in the implementation phase, they depend on the collaboration of supervisory authorities, de-concentrated state services with municipal oversight functions, as well as support from the national level (for example, in the form of ministerial directives or lobbying by municipal associations). This type of support from national-level institutions is often essential for ensuring that the results of M&E processes are taken on board by the de-concentrated state administration.

5.1. Consistency, coordination and complementarity of M&E approaches and tools

The subregional seminar showed that a good many development organisations are trying out new approaches and tools aimed in one way or another at strengthening the M&E capacities of local actors.[48] The approaches and tools documented in this publication are probably only a few among many others being tested and used in the region. They show what can be achieved through coordination as well as the need for coordination and complementarity in order to avoid a proliferation of different procedures and tools at the expense of a systemic approach.

Most of the experiences selected for *capitalisation* reflect the desire of several development organisations to jointly design, test and implement a specific approach or tool by involving their respective partners. The experiences described in the case studies are encouraging examples that show what is possible when the various actors consult with each other or develop strategic alliances based on common objectives. This requires an openness to a systemic approach on the part of stakeholders and the existence of individuals prepared to act as 'champions' and guide and promote the joint process. The definition of a relevant mandate and the will of organisations to devote human and financial resources to consultation and common processes appear to be equally important.

Despite the desire to coordinate and harmonise policies and aid instruments, as set out in the Paris Declaration (OECD 2005), collaboration around joint initiatives is not yet standard practice. Often, development organisations and project or programme leaders prefer to invest in 'their own approaches', in 'their own areas of involvement' and with 'their own partners'. Results are often said to be 'innovative' and 'replicable' (in principle). However, because of a lack of collaboration on, and sharing of, experiences with other organisations that could promote them in 'their areas of involvement' with 'their target groups' during the design and testing phases, the use of these tools remains very limited. Another obstacle to the development and replication of the available approaches and tools is a lack of willingness to coordinate efforts and exchange experiences between different ministries, directorates and departments at the national level.

Although there are fewer tools for strengthening the M&E capacity of local government actors than there are for municipal planning, the seminar participants felt strongly that there was a risk of 'mushrooming'. Citing adverse effects on

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48- *Several examples were discussed during the subregional seminar. The UNCDF has experience with tools that monitor and evaluate the performance of local government registry offices, as well as their capacity to mobilise resources. And, in light of Mali's decrees implementing intercommunality, the Canadian organisation SUCO has put a great deal of effort into an original approach designed to strengthen M&E capacity at the village, municipal and inter-municipal levels.*

systemic coherence, some voiced the desire to inform national authorities (particularly those ministries in charge of local governments) of the need for coordinating efforts to design and test new M&E tools and approaches. Other participants, however, stressed the importance of being able to choose from several options.

On the whole, it was deemed highly desirable for national authorities (particularly those ministries in charge of implementing decentralisation and those departments responsible for overseeing local governments) to promote access to the tools and approaches available. In this connection, various inputs were mentioned, including information sessions, written communications, radio broadcasts and online availability via ministry or local-government association websites.

The manuals for the self-evaluation tool for local government performance in **Mali** and for poverty profiling, planning and M&E in the municipalities of **Ghana** are very educational and are excellent examples of good practice in 'popularising' a specific approach. But even these documents could be improved further through the addition of a simplified version and translations into local languages, thus promoting the replication of the practices they propose at the local level. Furthermore, the case studies show the importance of facilitating and externally supporting local actors in mastering the procedures and building capacity.

5.2. Budget support and related M&E challenges

For several years, some donors have shown a strong tendency to shift their focus to **sector-wide approaches** and, more recently, to **budget support** as a new instrument for assisting the processes of decentralisation and state reform in developing countries. This recent preference for budget support as a new aid instrument is true of the European Union, which is one of the largest donors in West Africa, but it also applies to an increasing number of important bilateral donors, who prefer this instrument of development cooperation to more traditional forms of aid (such as projects or programmes). 'Budget support'

means that development assistance is fed directly into the beneficiary state's budget and channelled through a developing country's own administrative system, using its own procedures.

Its proponents consider this tool to be both conducive to improving the transparency and efficiency of the management of public finance and more suited to promoting ownership and capacity building among partner countries' national institutions. It is argued that it involves fewer transaction costs than project aid or basket funding and is more effective in promoting policy dialogue between donors and the relevant government. Budget support is also promoted with a view to generating synergies between interdependent actors in achieving planned results (European Commission/EuropeAid 2007b, OECD, DAC 2006, Hauck et al. 2005). There was broad recognition that the effectiveness of budget support is strongly linked to the terms of implementation, its capacity to fuel political dialogue, and the quality of the monitoring system.

This shift towards budget support has various consequences for M&E practices, particularly in the context of democratic decentralisation, where relationships between the central and local levels are changing dramatically (Land and Hauck 2003). It places increased demands on the evaluation capacities of both donor agencies and actors in decentralisation in developing countries. Disbursement of budget support usually takes place in *tranches*,[49] with the funding level depending on specific conditions being put in place and progress achieved in relation to jointly agreed-upon performance indicators.

The government of the partner country usually proposes and negotiates the performance indicators with the donor. It also has to design an adequate M&E system and report on progress. Progress is then jointly analysed and reviewed with the donor. Implementing and monitoring budget support thus requires a capacity to identify and systematically track key indicators of decentralisation and local governance. Ideally, this process should involve actors from the national to the local level, including local councillors, representatives of users of decentralised public services and countervailing forces from civil society.

49- A tranche (or tranch) is a slice or portion of a whole. Budget support is disbursed in fixed annual tranches, where disbursement is subject to certain conditions, and variable tranches, which are linked to progress made towards specific objectives (defined in terms of results to be achieved).

In 2006, the European Commission launched a pilot programme providing Euro 72 million in sectoral budget support[50] for a period of operational implementation from 2006 to 2010.[51] This programme (Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation, PARAD) was presented during the subregional workshop by a representative of the Delegation of the European Commission (DEC) in Bamako.[52] Because of its innovative, ambitious character, and since it had just begun to be implemented, the participants had many questions about the programme. These underscored the many challenges arising from a programme aimed at strengthening the link between decentralisation and government reform. This is also seen in the financial proposal, which requires horizontal involvement of the sector ministries and, in various capacities, all the actors concerned. In his presentation, the DEC representative stressed very strongly the principle of making Malian actors accountable.

Box 3 gives an overview of PARAD's different areas of involvement and their complexity.

PARAD's performance indicators were identified and negotiated in a participatory process that involved representatives of all the stakeholders in the administrative reforms and decentralisation policy[53] (such as ministries and national directorates, the donor community and local government representatives). The indicators are all from different strategic documents and legal texts relating to the decentralisation process and state reform. Information is obtained from a monitoring system that relies partly on data collected by the ministries and partly on data from the monitoring tools of the strategic plans for poverty reduction and a computerised monitoring

and evaluation tool (referred to as the 'OISE database'[54]), which is linked to the National Support Programme for Local Government (PNACT).[55]

A list of the twelve performance indicators is provided in table 3. The levels achieved annually for these performance indicators are measured by a national scale that corresponds to the sum of the efforts made by the actors involved throughout the territory (European Commission/EuropeAid 2005).

50- On the specific features of sectoral budget support, as used by the European Commission, see European Commission/EuropeAid (2007a) and Schmidt, P. (2006).
Although decentralisation and administrative reforms are not a sector, but rather a cross-cutting process, the modalities of aid PARAD follows are those of sectoral budget support, as the assistance is earmarked for a specific 'area of reform'.

51- A total of 75% of programme funds are earmarked for supporting the decentralisation process (budget-support component) and 25% are for supporting state reform (institutional-support component). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali is the contracting authority for the programme and is the national commitments officer for all support provided by the European development fund. The MATCL and the Ministry of Public Service, State Reform and Institutional Relations (Ministère de la fonction publique, de la réforme de l'État et des relations avec les institutions, MFPRERI) serve jointly as the contracting authority for PARAD.

52- See M&E of budget support for state reform, example of PARAD in Mali by Casas C. in FORANIM Consult (2006).

53- Negotiations began in January 2005 and resulted in the outputs from an ad hoc workshop held on 19 May 2005 with the agencies involved in preparing the programme: the National Directorate for Local Government (DNCT), National Coordination Unit (CCN), Commissariat for Institutional Development (CDI), Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), Higher Local Government Council (HCC), Association of Malian Municipalities (AMM), sector ministries (education, health, water), DEC, unit of the Strategic Plans for Poverty Reduction, National Statistics and Informatics Directorate (CSLP), and ratified by the Council of Ministers (see European Commission/EuropeAid [2005: Annex 2]).

54- 'OISE' stands for outil informatisé de suivi et evaluation (computerised monitoring and evaluation tool).

55- See Mali in the country overview in Annex V.

Group 1	Indicators measuring the population's access to public services at the local government level
(1)	Villages having at least one water point producing drinking water
(2)	Percentage of women having at least one prenatal consultation during pregnancy and the average number of prenatal consultations per woman
(3)	School enrolment of girls
Group 2	Indicators on the link between decentralisation and de-concentration
(4)	Quality of local governance (three indicators)
(5)	Own resources of local government per inhabitant
(6)	Transfers of human and financial resources from the central to local government (in different sectors)
Group 3	Indicators relating to de-concentration and the role of supervisory authorities
(7)	Assistance provided to empower local governments
(8)	Level of fiscal de-concentration of ministries
(9)	Level of de-concentration of human resources from ministries
Group 4	Indicators concerning the reform of state
(10)	Establishment and operationality of 31 additional tax offices at the decentralised level
(11)	Computerisation of the administration
(12)	Time required for tendering

Source: European Commission/EuropeAid (2005: Annex 2).

The first meetings of the programme's steering committee[56] and, more recently, a joint evaluation (Comité de pilotage du PARAD 2007)[57] have revealed the need to strengthen the capacities of the actors involved and to jointly fine-tune certain indicators or targets in a timely manner. This was also indicated by the review mechanisms. Indeed, although 'overall, most of the information was provided' to show that indicator targets had been reached for 2006, 'some was not complete and even contained gaps. It thus follows that a satisfactory verification of the relevant target reached is impossible. […] The examination of the indicators and the review of the targets reached by the evaluation mission provided an opportunity to highlight certain difficulties involving the interpretation of indicators or a lack of precision in defining them.[…] Certain indicators should be re-examined, either for taking into account situations or difficulties which could not be sufficiently understood when the targets were approved, or, inversely, for eliminating objectives which seem to have been met already at the outset and are thus poorly defined or not really relevant' (Comité de pilotage du PARAD 2007).

The donors and development agencies participating in the coordination group on 'decentralisation and institutional development' took part in discussions on feedback from the evaluation, which revealed problems of data interpretation and statistical significance. Performance-based disbursement of budget support can introduce new biases,[58] so the question of building the capacity to verify information at the local level must also be addressed. Hence, it makes sense to develop

56- According to decree no. 278/PM-RM, dated 11 July 2006, the steering committee includes the Commissariat for Institutional Development (CDI), the National Directorate for Local Government (DNCT), the National Agency for Local Government Investment (ANICT), the Association of Malian Municipalities (AMM), the Association of Malian 'Cercle' and Regional Authorities (ACCRM), the Higher Local Government Council (HCC), the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Strategic Plans for Poverty Reduction (CSLP), the sector ministries concerned and the DEC.

57- This was carried out in accordance with a resolution passed by the PARAD Steering Committee on 27 March 2007.

58- It is important to remember that the disbursement of budget support takes place in tranches (four fixed tranches and three variable tranches). While the disbursement of fixed tranches is contingent on a series of trigger indicators (achieving a series of policy decisions and measures jointly agreed upon and considered to be determining factors for implementing decentralisation policy and state reform), the disbursement of variable tranches is contingent upon the annual review of the twelve performance indicators. The amount of the variable tranches is calculated jointly by the European Commission/European Community and the Mali government, with the final decision lying with the former. The decision to disburse each variable tranche, as well as the amount paid out, is contingent on the degree to which the targets defined for the twelve performance indicators have been met.

techniques of triangulation and cross-checking of data generated by an M&E system created to review budget support.

Several means exist for achieving this. One is to draw on information produced by other M&E systems, such as those of bilateral donors operating at the local level. Another is to enable the responsible central and supervisory authorities, or other relevant actors, to conduct surveys of public perception.[59] In this regard, agreements on how to verify the reliability of data and to provide capacity-building support for central and supervisory authorities appear particularly important; the focus on a few performance indicators can introduce biases, negative effects and incentives for manipulation of data, thus casting a shadow on the reliability of the data.

During the subregional seminar, there was a great deal of interest in the definition (as well as the methods of monitoring and evaluating) the performance indicators for the variable tranches. There were comments on the degree of aggregation and complexity of the indicators. Some participants felt that the extent of budget support and conditions related to the twelve indicators and the variable tranches created the risk of a simplistic view of decentralisation, the danger being that the various actors would focus too heavily on meeting the twelve targets.

Mayors, as well as representatives of development organisations, expressed fears about the transparency involved in calculating and assessing the indicators. They felt that the definitions and methods of calculation were not easily understood at the local level, particularly by local-government actors. They made the European Commission and the Malian authorities aware of the fact that making local actors truly accountable and encouraging good performance also requires more sustained efforts for communication, explanation and dialogue (in addition to the multimedia information campaign previously conducted). This is particularly true in

regard to procedures, evaluation results and the roles of all those involved in monitoring the indicators.[60]

In the same context, several participants stressed that PARAD's effectiveness in Mali was basically due to the development of an 'M&E culture' by the government ministries. They also highlighted the efforts still to be made in coordinating the production of statistics because of ongoing problems at the national level involving the supply of data for, and the harmonisation of, different databases.[61]

5.3. National policy changes and new M&E challenges: An example from Mali

It is evident that the development of new methods of support requires the parallel development of new M&E systems that are more participatory and which increasingly link qualitative and quantitative considerations. It was therefore considered useful at the seminar to discuss Mali's experiences with the **OISE database** as an innovative nation-wide tool for monitoring and evaluating support to decentralisation (and as an invaluable database in monitoring the PARAD indicators).[62] The presentation and ensuing discussions, based on statements by stakeholders and on lessons learned, served as a point of departure for looking at ways to improve the operation and use of OISE — now needed more than ever, following the closing of the Malian Municipal Advisory Centres (CCCs),[63] which, until 2007, had been managing the OISE database at the local level.

Launched in 2002, the OISE database was designed to meet the needs of the National Support Programme for Local Government (PNACT) (the predecessor of PARAD) and to provide stakeholders with access to basic information on local governments, as well as on the range of local services delivered (both public

59- See the three case studies from Mali in Part II on the opening of external M&E systems to local perceptions.

60- The wide dissemination of directive no. 2337/MATCL-SG, dated 16 August 2006, concerning the implementation and monitoring of the indicators of the Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation (PARAD) is particularly important.

61- PARAD's financial proposal broadly describes the M&E system to be implemented (monitoring commissions and committees, annual and midterm reviews, audits, merging databases), but the concrete procedures, and particularly, coordination with the other technical and financial decentralisation partners, were still to be established after the start of the programme.

62- See 'Design and use of an M&E tool for decentralisation support at the national level: Experience of the OISE database in Mali' by Ba (National Coordination Unit - CCN) in FORANIM Consult (2006).

63- The CCCs, operating from 2000 to 2007, were seen as the heart of the support mechanism for local governance. Run by development organisations (called 'operators'), they were tasked with providing support to local governments, particularly in the areas of overseeing local development, managing support programmes and operating the technical-support mechanism at the local level.

and private). The OISE database was thus conceived as a data storage and processing tool of PNACT's M&E system, with the aim of institutionalising feedback loops between the local and the national level.[64] Various types of data were collected: general information on local governments (voter turnout and human resources, such as elected officials and the staff employed by the municipalities), technical support provided (e.g., training courses offered and planned support), investments planned and realised (in the context of the implementation of the Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan[65] [PDESC]), local government performance (through reports submitted to supervisory authorities or the holding of ordinary sessions, for example), local government funding (budgeting, and setting up and running administrative accounts), technical services (number provided) and technical and financial partners (number).

One of the objectives of the OISE database was to make data related to decentralisation available to all the actors. Although, theoretically, the OISE database functions as an up- and down-flow data collection, storage, processing and transfer system, the seminar participants felt that it was unfortunate that local actors — who contribute most to maintaining the tool and who need these data to carry out their activities (planning, programming and decision making, in particular) — did not have easy access to the tool. They also stressed that the quality and nature of the data had to be improved because of inconsistencies between the local and national level and because of a tendency to be overly quantitative. Additionally, it appears that the database does not compile data that already exist (such as reference situations),[66] although it is technically capable of importing data from other databases, hence a lack of simple cross-checking of data and lingering doubts as to the reliability of the information compiled over the years.

Efforts have been made to make the data accessible on the Internet,[67] and there are various ways of presenting the data (in table, graph and chart form) adapted to various user profiles,

although the result does not constitute a real information system that can serve as a tool to aid decision making. Despite these efforts, access remains difficult, mainly at the local and regional level. The sustainability of the system has even been called into question: the CCCs, which played a key role liaising between the various decentralisation actors and which had invested a great deal (in training, purchasing equipment and setting up a maintenance system) to develop their capacity for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation and local governance, will no longer operate the system after 2008.

In 2007, the National Coordination Unit for Technical Support for Local Government (CCN) conducted 'ownership tests' to develop a strategy for transferring the tool to sustainable structures capable of administering it effectively and efficiently. Different options were analysed in relation to sustainability, and although its relevance was not called into question, it was determined that expectations related to its use needed to be recalibrated (MATCL, DNCT, CCN, 2007). Transfer of responsibility to other structures is not expected to be easy, as all the related skills and inputs must be transferred along with it. At the beginning of 2008, the MATCL decided that the database would be managed by state officials (MATCL/SG, 2008).[68]

At the 'cercle' level, the database will be managed by the prefect, who will delegate responsibility to his deputy. Local governments will gather the information pertaining to them and upload it via the sub-prefects. The data to be collected is the same as before. Once processed, the data are forwarded to the regional governor, who manages the database with the help of the Adviser for Administrative and Legal Affairs and the Regional Director of Statistics, Information Science, Planning and Population.[69] Once regional data have been added, they are forwarded to the National Directorate for Local Government (DNCT), which compiles the information and publishes a quarterly report. At the local level, the local policy committees continue to function as points for sharing information.

64- The CCC teams updated the computer data and transmitted them to the regional level, where they were compiled before being centralised at the National Coordination Unit (CCN). The teams also took part in quarterly meetings for data interpretation and repeated these in their area of operation with local actors (mainly the members of the Local Policy Committee [CLO] and the providers).

65- The Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan is the official name of the municipal development plan in Mali.

66- See case studies 2.4 and 2.5, as well as 4.1 and 4.2., in Part II.

67- At www.matcl.gov.ml/DonneesDNCT/OISE.html, although the site is not always accessible.

68- Directive no. 000313/MATCL-SG, dated 23 January 2008, on assuming the management duties of the OISE database: a technical committee consisting of the deputy prefect, a number of sub-prefects and a representative of the health, education and water information service at the 'cercle' level is assuming the tasks that had previously been carried out by the CCCs.

69- At the beginning of 2008, the resources necessary for transmitting data successfully between the various levels were not available (MATCL/SG, 2008).

During this transitional period, it does not seem that the role of local governments has evolved, nor has their means of accessing the data. Moreover, the question of how operating costs will be met over the long term remains open, particularly as the importance of the OISE database to the implementation of an observatory of decentralisation at the national level has grown.

Held up on several occasions as a panacea for M&E and management by the PNACT, and taking into account only some of the indicators, in its current state it does not constitute a true national steering mechanism — but it does contribute to the dialogue on decentralisation and local development. Its new role of monitoring and evaluating reform objectives raises several questions, including those of reconciling the interests of actors at the different levels,[70] of allocating responsibilities within the new system and of communicating the data generated. Several other West African countries with the same aspirations of creating an observatory for decentralisation or governance are also facing these issues. An observatory for decentralisation in Africa has even been established by the Municipal Development Partnership (PDM),[71] an African organisation with a regional focus encompassing the national associations of local governments in West and Central Africa.

5.4. Decentralisation, local governance and poverty reduction

In the West African countries in which the case studies were conducted, the decentralisation processes all seek, either explicitly or implicitly, to contribute to poverty reduction. Improving living conditions, creating local wealth and providing citizens with new opportunities to participate in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of development policies at the local level are three objectives stated in many decentralisation policies (UNDP, 2006). In the development of national strategies for poverty reduction, supported by donor agencies, the link that exists between decentralisation, local governance and poverty reduction has often been emphasised in the policy design. But how does one know whether decentralisation and new forms of local governance really contribute to poverty reduction? More concretely, how does one measure, monitor and evaluate the outcomes and impacts of the processes of decentralisation and local governance on poverty?

This is one of the questions decentralisation actors at various levels are asking themselves, and the discussions held during the subregional seminar showed that there are still no clear answers. Few development organisations have invested in impact assessments on the subject. Ministries, local government associations in some countries and development partners in the region are currently considering the issue (as is the case in Mali, Ghana and Benin, for example). Nevertheless, these ideas are still in the embryonic stage, and implementation is still largely dependent on external support.

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF0 was among the first donor agencies to adopt an analytical concept and to launch a series of surveys to explore the impacts of decentralisation on poverty in countries where decentralisation is active (UNDP 2003). The case study by Sylla and Ongoïba[72] describes the challenges of analysing the impacts of decentralisation as part of its support efforts in northern Mali. It also reveals the limits of an external analysis in a situation characterised by a scarcity of baseline data, as do the case studies dealing with tools for establishing reference situations and for planning at the municipal level.[73]

The creation of a **Municipal Poverty Index** (IPC) in Mali is one of the national-level initiatives aimed at compensating for this scarcity of data. By providing benchmarks for an assessment of poverty at the municipal level, it can help target local development interventions and strategies for poverty reduction more effectively.

70- These include local governments and actors, de-concentrated technical services, departments of supervisory authorities, projects and programmes, technical and financial partners, researchers and research institutes, etc.

71 The PDM has six main objectives: '(1) gathering reliable information and analyses on the dynamics of decentralisation in Africa and making them available in real time to decentralisation actors and the public; (2) providing decision makers with analytical tools for developing their policies; (3) serving as a framework for reflection, analysis and collective evaluation in respect of decentralisation policies and processes; (4) promoting basic research and action research in the areas of decentralisation and local development; (5) constituting an exhaustive "memory" of decentralisation in Africa, allowing its development to be monitored; and (6) building and spearheading a network of African experts devoted to the issues of decentralisation, local democracy and local development for states, local governments, civil society and international development partners.'
www.pdm-net.org/fichier_pdm/poles_appui_sui.php

72- For more information, see case study 5.2 in Part II.

73- For more information, see case studies 2.1, 2.4, 2.5 and 4.1 in Part II.

The IPC was designed and is maintained by the Observatory of Sustainable Human Development (ODHD) of Mali, an institution financed by the government and by donor agencies. The ODHD also participates in monitoring strategic plans for poverty reduction. As one ODHD official explained,[74] a major methodological challenge posed by the creation of the index was locating high-quality, statistically significant data broken down at the municipal level, as well as being able to update the data.[75] Like the HDI (Human Development Index[76]), the IPC is a composite index based on a multidimensional concept of poverty. Without going too deeply into the technicalities of the methodology behind the IPC's development, it is interesting to examine certain aspects.

Designed to measure poverty of living conditions in municipalities, the tool is based on a comparison of the relative levels of poverty in urban and rural municipalities (which are divided into poverty quintiles and which are then analysed), thus resulting in a regional and national classification of all municipalities. Unlike the other poverty indices and analysis methods in Mali, the IPC uses collective (i.e., municipal-level), not individual (i.e., household-level), data.

The methodology is based on the assumption 'that, in Mali, basic material needs are needs involving access to electricity and other basic community facilities […] and that, at the municipal level in terms of basic decentralised local governance, the main challenges of decentral-isation remain the provision of adequate community facilities to counterbalance population development issues, electrification with a view to promoting the development of economic activities, and resource mobilisation and the wise use of available potential' (MDSSPA, ODHD, UNDP 2006).

IPC variables and values are determined and produced using automated methods of statistical analysis. The results are presented as maps illustrating the level of poverty of the Malian municipalities in IPC terms. Once divided into poverty groups, the different municipalities can be defined in terms of occupancy, population density, availability and access to basic infrastructures and facilities, and in terms of their respective economic development potential.

The ODHD has organised several workshops for feedback on the results of this method at the national and regional level and invited different groups of decentralisation and local-government actors to take part in the presentation and discussion of the results.

At the subregional seminar, participants' interest in having access to tools and data allowing them to better assess and fight poverty at the municipal level was evident from their questions. Although it was necessary to take the time to explain to all the actors how to read the map and understand the keys, the usefulness of the map-based approach for poverty monitoring and action planning was underlined several times.[77] The map has proven to be a powerful tool for participatory analysis, as it more effectively facilitates the involvement of different types of local-government actors and representatives of disadvantaged groups.

This visual method, which must be updated periodically, remains relatively costly. Nevertheless, it promotes a spirit of healthy competition between municipalities at the national level and serves decision makers as a tool for resource allocation – in spite of the fact that local-government actors have difficulty accessing and interpreting the IPC's methods of calculation and results. Mayors criticised the fact that the assumptions and indicators are defined by researchers and do not sufficiently reflect the priorities, perceptions and constraints of the local populations.

Based on the discussions during the subregional workshop, the Malian experience shows that it can take years to develop and operationalise a nationwide M&E tool that involves the local government in collecting and analysing basic indicators. This slow development is a process of fine-tuning that is part of a desire to assess governance more effectively, to implement evaluation tools that respect the principles of governance and to find more-qualitative methods that are more firmly rooted in reality and better suited to the population as a whole. Moreover, the effectiveness of such an effort will depend on existing capacities (primarily statistical), the involvement of technical-support structures for municipalities and the capacities of the central state to gradually improve its own systems of

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74- See 'Experience of creating a poverty index at the municipal level in Mali' by Traoré A. (ODHD) in FORANIM Consult (2006).

75- The first index published (MDSSPA, ODHD, UNDP 2003) relied heavily on data from the 1998 Recensement général de la population de l'habitat (general housing population census), which enabled the collection of data disaggregated down to the municipal level. An updated version was produced in 2006 (MDSSPA, ODHD, UNDP 2006).

76- Using the HDI, all countries for which there are data can be classified according to their level of poverty.

77- For more information, see case study 2.3 in Part II.

data collection and analysis. In this regard, the joint annual reviews of performance indicators by government and donors (primarily for the attribution of budget support) should be seen as an opportunity for mutual learning and for fine-tuning the monitoring system.

The experiences described leave no doubt that it is worthwhile to invest in the capacities of different local actors to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of democratic decentralisation processes, local governance and municipal development.

Multi-stakeholder approaches involving a spectrum of local actors – such as local government, civil society, the private sector and de-concentrated departments of the central state – in designing and testing innovative M&E tools, can have a number of positive effects beyond strengthening M&E capacity. These include among others:

■ building trust among local stakeholders with different interests, thus reducing resistance to devolution;

■ making local governance and service provision more efficient by improving procedures and mobilising citizen initiative and local resources;

■ improving information flows between different actors and levels of local government;

■ sensitising citizens to their rights and their duty to hold local representatives accountable.

The attentive reader will find a wealth of advice in the case studies. For their part, the authors would like to indicate four recommendations:

■ There is a lot of scope for donors and their partners to learn from existing tools for building M&E capacity at the local level. Moreover, those tools often lend themselves to scaling-up and replication in other country contexts. More efforts should be made to document and disseminate these tools, including challenges encountered in the process of testing and utilisation.

■ Too often, design of systems to monitor and evaluate decentralisation is led largely by the national level, with insufficient account taken of the information needs of local government and other local-level stakeholders. Donors and national authorities committed to democratic decentralisation should invest more in the capacities of stakeholders of the new local government systems. This would enable them to assess the effectiveness of the new local governance systems, to learn about their respective roles and to analyse the impacts of decentralisation and political reform processes on their lives.

■ Efforts to develop M&E capacity in a participatory way with local-level stakeholders of decentralisation processes are necessary and laudable. Nevertheless, it is wise to involve national authorities too in such initiatives, as they can help to institutionalise approaches. Moreover, they can follow up on the many problems emerging from local-level M&E exercises that must be addressed by national-level decisions.

■ Development partners can achieve a lot through strategic alliances. Such alliances and coordination of M&E approaches is important to prevent a proliferation of different tools. Too many tools and disparate initiatives could result in confusion among stakeholders who have as yet limited experience in local governance and put the homogeneity of the political system at risk.

PART II:

The case studies

CHAPTER 1. THE CONTEXT OF DECENTRALISATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN WEST AFRICA

Decentralisation and local government in West Africa are anchored in different traditions, spanning pre-colonial authorities, colonial administrations (mainly French and British) and post-independence decentralisation and local government reform efforts. Since the early 1990s most countries in this region have formulated new decentralisation policies aimed explicitly to promote democratic and more participatory forms of local governance.

Yet for many of these countries, the road of reform has been bumpy. Decentralisation processes have been stop-and-go rather than following a linear path. This was perhaps to be expected, in view of the complexity and multidimensional character of decentralisation reforms. The francophone countries of West Africa had particularly major reforms to undergo. Upon independence, local government in these countries was confined to a small number of urban municipalities, while most of the predominantly rural population was administered by state delegates.

These rural residents had no right to vote and little access to basic public services.

Since the early 1990s the situation has changed. Democratic decentralisation has been anchored in constitutional laws and creation of hundreds of new local governments. For example, Mali alone established more than 680 new rural municipalities. Free and pluralist local elections have been held and local governments have been made responsible for planning, implementing, monitoring and assessing progress in development at the sub-national level. The hope is that elected local governments will be more accountable to citizens and more easily controlled than central state administrators.

Table 4 presents some basic information about decentralisation and the nature of local government in the five West African countries in which case studies were conducted.

Country	Main legal foundations of democratic decentralisation	Entities of local government	Local elections
Benin	- Constitution of 1990 - Decentralisation laws (1993, enacted in 1999 and 2000)	- One tier of local government with 77 rural and urban municipalities - Special status for three large cities: Parakou, Porto Novo, Cotonou	- First municipal elections held in 2002/03
Cameroon	- Law on municipal organisation (1974) - Law on conditions for the election of municipal councillors (1992) - Constitutional law of 1996 - Laws defining guidelines for future decentralisation policy and rules governing the municipalities and regions (2004)	- Two tiers of local government: 10 regions and 362 municipalities - Special status for the urban communities of Douala and Yaoundé	- First pluralist local elections held in 1996 - Second pluralist municipal elections held in 2002 - Third pluralist municipal elections held in 2007 - All mayors are elected, but some big towns are managed by a nominated 'government delegate' working under the authority of the elected council (i.e., the council's president)
Ghana	- Law on local government (1998) - Fourth Constitution of the Republic (1992) - Local Government Act (1993)	- One tier of local government with 138 rural and urban districts, including 124 district assemblies, 10 municipal assemblies and 4 metropolitan areas (Accra, Koumasi, Tamale and Shama Ashanta East)	- First local elections held in 1993, followed by further elections in 1997, 2002 and 2006 - Members of the district, municipal or metropolitan assembly directly elected. They elect an executive committee from their ranks. A district chief executive appointed for a term of two years coordinates the executive
Mali	- Constitution of the Third Republic (1991) - Law on local government (1993) - Local government Act (1996)	- Three tiers of local government: 703 rural and urban municipalities, 49 districts ('cercles') and 8 regions - Special status for the capital Bamako (similar to a region)	- First local elections held in 1998/99 - Second local elections conducted in 2004 - Direct election of municipal councillors, who elect the mayors. Indirect election of councillors of higher tiers
Niger	- Constitution of 1999 - Decentralisation law (2001) establishing local government and administrative territorial entities - Law on local government (2002) defining fundamental principles of local government	- Three tiers of local government (foreseen): 8 regions (including the capital Niamey considered a region with a special status), 36 departments, and 265 rural and urban municipalities	- First local elections held in 2004, municipal level only

Note: only those countries are featured in which case studies were conducted

CHAPTER 2. DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY TO ANALYSE AND MONITOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL

2.1. Cameroon and Mali: Strategic planning and monitoring of municipal development

This study **'Strategic planning and monitoring of municipal development'** has been prepared by a team of four authors (Jacques Tamini, Ibrahima Sylla, Markus Ischer et Christian Asanga) all working for the Swiss Association for International Cooperation (Helvetas) in the field of municipal development in Cameroon or Mali (see Annex IV).

The study looks at an experiment conducted in two different contexts (Cameroon and Mali) using more or less the same strategies for the participatory drafting of municipal monographs and strategic plans. These are planning tools which municipalities could subsequently use for evaluations of their own performance, monitoring and evaluation systems and the democratic control of municipal activities by citizens.

The authors show that applying the monographic study and strategic plan drafting process, as tested by Helvetas in the two countries, continues to be a technically complex initiative and is costly for fledgling rural municipalities. They conclude that this is a powerful capacity building tool which offers opportunities for 'learning by action', for forging cooperation links with civil society and for making a municipality more credible.

Moreover, thinking about the adjustments needed to allow municipalities to use the approach presented without having to call on major external support and to play their roles as leaders in mobilising all the actors continues nevertheless to be a major challenge. Institutionalisation of the approach may well be possible if this condition is met

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, the citizens of a number of West African countries, like Cameroon and Mali, have been striving to ensure that decentralisation is actually implemented. Many of them are now trying it out. In these countries, decentralisation is a prime mover of development, democracy and good governance at the local level. Decentralised bodies are better able to meet the needs of the people and can defend local interests, enable people to participate in decision making and deliver more efficient basic services.

Decentralisation, which is now up and running in Mali and Cameroon, has to be consolidated by the transfer of certain powers and appropriate resources from the central government to local and regional authorities. The municipality, which is the basic level of decentralisation, has administrative and financial autonomy in managing local affairs. It is responsible in particular for promoting development in the economic, social, health, educational, cultural and sports fields by drawing up, in a participatory way, its economic, social and cultural development plan (PDESC).

In order to put decentralisation into practice, local governments and their development partners are looking for high-quality tools and approaches through which local actors can play their roles to the full. Planning is an important activity for local governments as it creates a reference framework that provides a starting point for the promotion of local development and helps to ensure that municipal actors are working in a consistent and harmonious way. It was against this backdrop that the Swiss Association for International Cooperation (Helvetas) developed a planning approach within its Council Support Programme (CSP) in Cameroon and its Support Programme for the Actors of Decentralisation (PAAD) in Mali.

This case study looks at the ways in which Helvetas put its municipal planning approach into practice in Cameroon and Mali, the lessons learned from the tool's design, testing, use and replication and its relevance as a tool for local capacity building in the monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance.

2.1.1. METHODS OF DRAWING UP THE MONOGRAPHIC STUDY AND THE STRATEGIC PLAN

2.1.1.1. The context in which the approach was used

Mali opted for a decentralised political system when its constitution was amended in 1992, but decentralisation actually came into force when the first municipal elections were held in 1999. Following these elections, decision-making and executive organs were set up for a term of five years. Under the law, there are three levels of local government: municipalities (703), 'cercles' (49), regions (8) and the District of Bamako, i.e., a total of 761 local authorities.

Cameroon started down the path of decentralisation in 1996 when its 1972 constitution was amended. The first municipal elections were held in 1996, and since then, the administrative organisation of the country has been as follows: 339 municipalities, 56 departments and 10 provinces.

In the decentralised systems of Mali and Cameroon, municipalities have legal personality and management autonomy, possess decision-making (municipal councils) and executive (mayor and municipal administration) organs and can be independently administered. The work of the municipality takes place in the municipal council under the supervision of a state representative, which is the basic level for development planning.

Deconcentrated state services provide advice and support for municipalities in their respective administrative areas; however, devolution is a slow process: most state technical services have yet to be organised at the municipal level, with the result that there is still something of a time lag.

In Mali and Cameroon, municipal councils are legally responsible for promoting development. Municipalities are therefore required to draw up a development plan in consultation with all the actors of civil society. The first municipal plans were little more than wish lists, which took no account of municipalities' actual potential and possibilities. In particular, municipalities could not always call upon the human resources that they needed to carry out their tasks of independent administration, delivery of local public services and promotion of local development.

After 30 years of central government, local civic participation, ownership and control do not as yet come naturally. However, this is slowly changing with support from the national governments and their partners.

2.1.1.2. What is a monographic study and a strategic plan?

A monographic study is a detailed study of a particular subject. In our case, it is the defined geographical area of the municipality. The study describes the features of the municipality at the time at which it was drawn up: history, demographics, economy, natural resources, infrastructure, etc. A monographic study therefore offers a snapshot of the municipality and is a reference point from which future action can be planned.

The municipal strategic plan is the outcome of the strategic planning process. It is a management tool that can be used to decide on the action to be taken over the following five years. The aim of this plan is to help municipalities to carry out their work in a better way, to channel their energies, to ensure that they have the same goals as their populace, to assess the wishes of the municipality and bring them into line with various changes (institutional, political, environmental, etc.). The strategic plan helps to define the remit, vision, values, goals, roles and responsibilities of the municipality and sets out the instruments through which they can be achieved.

2.1.1.3. Why does a municipality need a monographic study and a strategic plan?

The purpose of a municipality's monographic study and strategic plan is to improve people's living conditions.

The drafting process ultimately leads to greater municipal responsibility for managing projects geared towards reducing poverty. It increases community participation in decision making. It promotes cooperation between elected officers, communities and private and public institutions so that everyone becomes involved in productive initiatives. All the actors (councils and communities) are involved in supplying reliable socio-economic data, and problems can be analysed in a participatory way.

The monographic study and the strategic plan are tools for monitoring municipal development. They may also document the basis from which provincial/regional master plans can be drafted. For municipal representatives (mayors and municipal councillors), possessing these two documents offers tangible proof that progress is being made with decentralisation.

General meeting in a rural municipality in Cameroon

To summarise, these tools aim to achieve the following:
■ make the municipal council more responsible for steering and owning the process;
■ draw up a full municipal diagnosis that enhances knowledge of the municipality's potential;
■ establish a municipal statistical database;
■ make the most of local potential because more is known about it;
■ ensure participation by all the municipal actors, thereby strengthening citizenship;

■ produce sectorial planning, i.e., planning by municipal working groups in order to bring the plan into line with state sectorial policies;

■ step up cooperation between technical services, the supervisory authority and the municipality;

■ develop a team spirit within the municipal council.

2.1.1.4. Key actors: their roles and responsibilities

The actors and their roles and responsibilities in the two countries in which this approach was tested were as follows:

■ The supervisory authority plays a supervisory role, helps with data collection, makes secondary data available to municipalities and validates final documents.

■ The municipality is responsible for the whole of the drafting process (organisation, planning and performance) and acts as principal (contracting in consultancy services). It also contributes financially to logistics (internal costs), provides data on the municipality and validates information and reports.
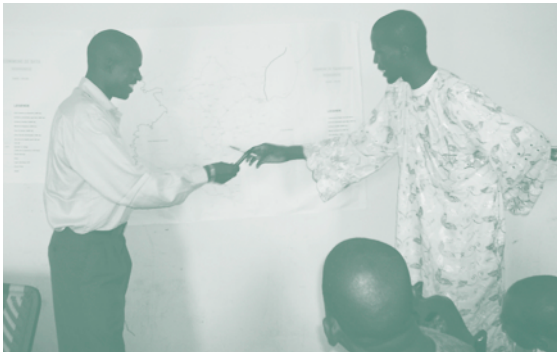
Working session in the municipality of Baya in southern Mali

In Cameroon, in order to step into their responsibility as principals, municipalities entered into contracts with service providers. In Mali, everyone's roles and responsibilities are set out in a tripartite contract: municipalities as principals, consultants as service providers working for municipalities and Helvetas-PAAD as a monitoring organisation.

■ Communities participate actively in the various workshops and provide information.

■ Service providers (consultants) help the municipality to organise planning, guide and supervise the technical drafting process and produce tools (workshop programmes, data collection forms, questionnaires, etc.). They also train municipal councillors in data collection techniques (Global Positioning System [GPS] and socio-economic data), act as moderators during workshops, especially workshops to analyse community problems, and draft reports.

In Cameroon, service providers were recruited by municipal officers from lists of consultants trained by Helvetas. In Mali, service providers were recruited through tendering procedures, then trained by Helvetas and made available to municipalities.

■ The external support organisation offers technical assistance (manuals, tools, consultant training) and financial assistance (contributions to the costs of the services provided by consultants, external expenses), helps to organise forums for exchanging ideas, mentors the drafting process and comes up with ideas to improve the process and the strategy.

In Cameroon, Helvetas paid a financial subsidy to municipalities to cover service providers' fees and other costs. In Mali, Helvetas paid service providers directly and granted a subsidy to municipalities for the organisation of workshops.

2.1.1.5. Drafting the monographic study and strategic plan: what stages have to be followed?

After deciding to draw up a monographic study and a strategic plan, municipalities work in stages (see diagram below). The process to draft the monographic study and the strategic plan may take between three and five months, depending on the size of the municipality and the human resources available.

In Mali, for instance, the process took four months in the municipality of Wassoulou Ballé (the largest), and three months in Baya and Tagandougou.
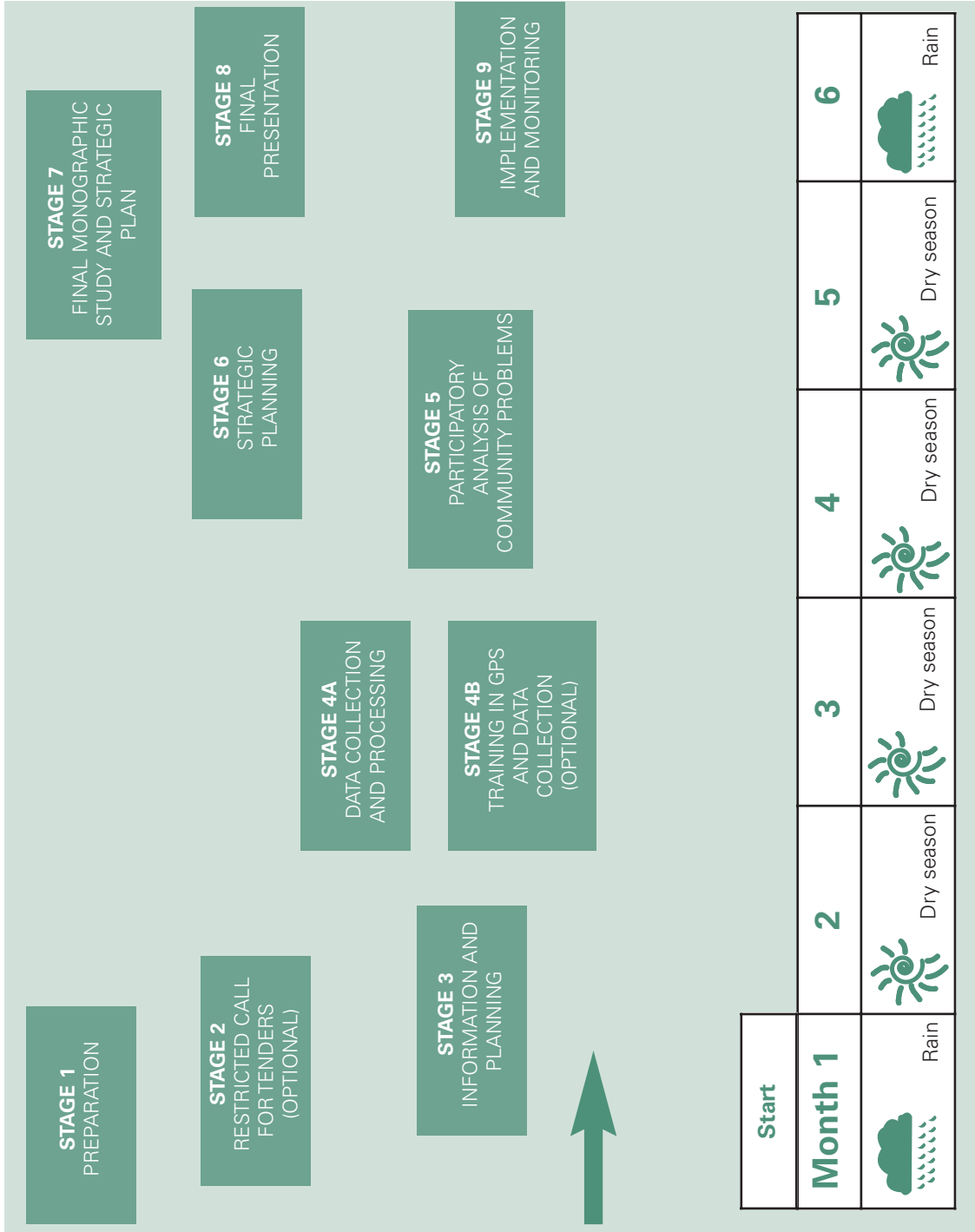
Figure 1 - Stages of drafting the monographic study and the strategic plan (source: Helvetas Cameroon)

2.1.1.6. Content of a monographic study and a strategic plan

While the monographic study and the strategic plan are very different documents, they are closely linked. If these two documents are to serve their purpose and reach the minimum required standard, their content should be presented as follows:

Table 1: Example of the table of contents of a monographic study

1. Introduction (context, importance, methods)
2. Administration, demography and sociology
    2.1 Administrative structure
    2.2 Population origins (migratory movements)
    2.3 Sociology
3. Environment and land use
    3.1 Climate
    3.2 Hydrology
    3.3 Soil
    3.4 Natural resources
    3.5 Ecological situation
    3.6 Land use
4. Economy
    4.1 Primary sector
    4.2 Secondary sector
    4.3 Tertiary sector
5. Infrastructure
    5.1 Technical infrastructure
    5.2 Social infrastructure
6. Council activities
    6.1 Councillors profile
    6.2 Strategy
7. Conclusions

Annexes: Diagrams/maps of the location of administrative units, villages and ethnic groups, population density, particular physical features, land use, physical and socio-economic infrastructure, towns, etc.

Source: Helvetas 2005.

Table 2: Example of the table of contents of a strategic plan

1. Introduction (context, importance, methods)
2. Identification of problems and prioritization on village level
3. Identification of problems and prioritization on council level
4. Main lessons learned from the monographic study
5. Logical framework of the council strategic plan

Global objective: for instance, successful poverty reduction in the municipality		
1. Planning objective (one per council committee)		
1.1 Specific objective	Verifiable indicators	Verification sources
1.1.1 Expected results		

6. Activities through which the expected results can be achieved

Expected results	Activities	Deadline

7. Hypotheses, potential and risks
8. Budget (investment budget over more than five years, fundraising, etc.)
9. Prospects (next stages: Annual Plan, Local Economic Development [LED])

Annexes: priority projects for the Ministry of Planning, Development Programming and Town and Country Planning (MINEPAT).

2.1.1.7. Costs

Table 3: The average costs of the process are as follows:

Description	Approximate cost (XOF)	Financing
Logistics: meals, accommodation and travel by participants	3 000 000	Municipality
Service providers	5 000 000	Helvetas
Total	**8 000 000**	

2.1.2. APPLICATION AND REPLICATION OF THE DRAFTING PROCESS FOR THE MONOGRAPHIC STUDY AND STRATEGIC PLAN

Following initial testing in Cameroon in 2001, many changes and adjustments have been made to the process. This led in 2005 to the publication of a book on the strategy and the tools used. Between 2001 and 2006, 16 municipalities in Cameroon drew up monographic studies and strategic plans with support from Helvetas. Following this testing period, the process could be replicated in other regions in which decentralisation is taking place and where municipalities are responsible for development work.

The exercise was carried out for the first time in Mali in 2006 in partnership with Helvetas-PAAD. Adaptations to the local context mainly involved the role of the key actors.

The process took place in three rural municipalities in the 'cercle' of Yanfolila in the South of the country: Wassoulou Ballé (53,978 inhabitants with 34 villages, 23 municipal councillors), Baya (14,654 inhabitants with 14 villages, 11 municipal councillors), Tagandougou (13,443 inhabitants with 7 villages, 11 municipal councillors). This was a multi-actor context where there was little experience of such matters.

2.1.2.1. Achievements

One of the main achievements is that this participatory approach has helped to build the capacity of communities. There is also better communication between the various actors, which has helped to smooth decision making and the transition to development work. The information required for the monographic study provides a reference point: action planned on the basis of this reference point is therefore realistic.

In more detail:

Cameroon	Mali
'Learning by action' helped municipalities to build their capacity in leaps and bounds.	Capabilities for collecting and analysing municipal data have been improved through 'learning by action'.
Since the monographic study and strategic planning exercise, cooperation has improved between municipalities, communities, private and public institutions, organisations for external support and civil organisations.	The council now has important basic data for the municipality. Team spirit has been improved in the municipal council.
Data from the monographic study and strategic plan made it possible to set up a municipal information system (SIC) in Cameroon.	The populace now knows more about the potential of their shared land. The process was carried out in a participatory way, helping to step up participation by citizens.
The design of the monographic study and strategic plan follows the structure of the regional master plan. The data collected may therefore be aggregated to contribute to provincial and national development plans.	Cooperative links between the municipality, technical services and the supervisory authority have been improved. This has made it possible to link the municipal plan with sectoral policies in a much better way.

2.1.2.2. Lessons learned

■ As it is difficult to carry out the process in the rainy season, the timescale of the initial stages needs to be thought out.

■ Municipal councils may feel that the process takes too long (an average of 26 working days in the case of municipal councils in Mali); resources over and above the capacities of the municipality may therefore be required.

■ A mentor is needed to provide support (technical and financial) for the monographic study and strategic plan drafting process.

■ Actors' contributions depend on their level of education and degree of motivation.

■ The approach is a multi-actor approach: weaknesses in one of the links of the chain may delay the whole process.

■ Visual information (maps) must be used as a tool for development and not for arbitration. In no way should the process be seen as a strategy for resolving disputes.

2.1.2.3. Challenges

■ Even though changes have been made, applying the drafting process poses a number of challenges. It still needs to be fine-tuned to improve performance and facilitate ownership of the tool by municipalities.

■ The degree of complexity and the resources entailed in implementing the tool mean that external support is needed to ensure full ownership. Therefore either new modules enabling less external support need to be developed or a tried and tested support mechanism needs to be set in place.

■ Documentation (a guide) on the use of the collection tools needs to be drafted to enable municipalities and service providers, where necessary, to carry out their work in a more straightforward way.

■ Using reference-situation analysis tools for strategic planning (linking the two stages) often requires a high level of expertise, which municipal councillors may not possess, as many of them are illiterate. This stage needs to be improved and well supervised if ownership is to be successful.

■ Participatory drafting of the monographic study and strategic plan by a whole range of actors may expose latent conflicts. This is why the process requires mutual learning and ongoing adaptation so that the strategy can be well controlled and the tools appropriately adapted to the context.

■ Only the municipal council is responsible for following through and owning the process. However, it might be better to open it up to other competent actors in order to ease the burden on the municipality.

■ In Mali, the other municipalities taking part in the programme are keen to start work on the monographic study and strategic plan. However, the average cost of XOF 8,000,000 is not within the reach of most rural municipalities. Support from financing partners is therefore needed if the process is actually to take place.

■ In Cameroon, there are plans to use the monographic studies and strategic plans to draft regional master plans and, possibly, national development plans. The process therefore needs to be institutionalised. The monographic study and strategic plan may be a way of speeding up the decentralisation process.

2.1.2.4. Practical advice for replication

Testing of this approach in two very different cultural and environmental contexts (English-speaking municipalities in Cameroon and French-speaking municipalities in Mali) proved that the drafting process of the monographic study and strategic plan could be replicated. However, successful replication will require adjustments to improve performance and bolster ownership of the process by municipalities.

If replication is to be effective, our main advice is the following:
■ communication needs to be improved between the various municipal actors;
■ a simpler training module needs to be devised with practical exercises and simulations;
■ tools need to be translated into local languages so that better use can be made of them;
■ training needs to be organised for newly literate villagers for optimum management of a municipality's human resources and better ownership of the process by non-elected actors.

2.1.3. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The monographic study and the strategic plan are capacity-building tools offering opportunities for 'learning by action'. Highly effective planning tools, they offer municipalities an opportunity to forge effective cooperative links with civil society and can help municipalities to carry out their remit of promoting development and reducing poverty. Finally, the logical framework of these tools facilitates a system of evaluation and monitoring by the actors themselves.

Implementing a monographic study and strategic plan provides a detailed overview of a municipality's needs and potential. The information is shared with all the community's actors. This kind of approach may well enable realistic planning and evaluation of municipal development projects.

Municipalities gain better knowledge of their environment and needs, with the result that their demands and investment plans are more realistic. As their capacity improves, municipalities become aware that completing the process gives them more credibility and makes it easier for them to approach and convince donors.

When the process has been run and the workshops to present results/reports held, we recommend discussing measures to update reference-situation data and to encourage municipalities to act as leaders in rallying all the actors. This would improve the tool's performance.

In Cameroon, the design of the monographic study and strategic plan followed the structure of the regional master plan. The information collected can therefore be put into provincial and national development plans. This is a weighty argument for generalised use throughout the country. It is particularly realistic because testing in a different area was a success. The task of Helvetas is now to convince the central government that this is the right approach, so that it can be institutionalised.

Annex I: ACRONYMS

CSP	Council Support Programme (Helvetas Cameroon)
GPS	Global Positioning System
LED	Local Economic Development
MINEPAT	Ministère de la Planification, de la Programmation du Développement et de l'Aménagement du Territoire/ Ministry of Planning, Programming and Regional Development
PAAD	Programme d'Appui aux Acteurs de la Décentralisation (Helvetas Mali)/Support Programme for the Actors of Decentralisation (Helvetas Mali)
PDESC	Plan de Développement Economique, Social et Culturel/Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan
SIC	Système d'Information sur les Communes/Municipal Information System

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2.2. Niger: Planning and M&E in municipalities, focusing on poverty reduction

The authors of this study, **'Planning and M&E in municipalities, focusing on poverty reduction'** are Gaoussou Sène and Zeinabou Ouédraogo who have been closely involved in designing and testing the tools described (see Annex IV).

They show how relatively recent democratic decentralisation and support measures by technical and financial partners has led to the design and testing of a number of tools with local authorities.

A particularly innovative feature is the stress placed on encouraging the actors to think how the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy can be taken into account in municipal planning and its monitoring and evaluation.

This experiment also shows the advantages of drawing on prior experience, such as certain elements of a self-evaluation tool for local authorities, already tested in Mali, and adapting it to the Nigerien context of decentralisation and local governance.

However, like many approaches aiming to help citizens to take a more responsible attitude to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of local development, the main challenge continues to be one of achieving a nationally acknowledged tool that will be used throughout the country once the test phase has been completed.

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INTRODUCTION

In Niger, the municipal elections in July 2004 marked an important step in the lengthy process of reforms designed to install a decentralised political and administrative system. At the end of this democratic decentralisation process, 265 municipalities were established (231 rural and 52 urban) as the basic territorial units.[78]

No map of the new post-reform administrative territorial breakdown is available as yet, but should eventually make it easier to identify national priority action areas under the new measures in the decentralisation process.

In November 2004, the Nigerien government set up the new decision-making and executive bodies for the municipalities. The elected municipal councillors and ex-officio members of the municipal council (traditional chiefs and MPs in the National Assembly) were invited to elect mayors and deputy mayors. Official inauguration ceremonies for the municipal councils were then held throughout the country. At the ceremonies, the State representatives described the mandate of the new municipal authorities as follows:

'In being elected, your job now is to design, plan and implement development measures in response to the priority needs of the people who elected you.'

To bolster the government's efforts, various development partners are helping the municipalities to improve their operation and develop their capacities in order to meet local people's expectations.

Since 1999, SNV-Niger has been providing support for the decentralisation process. It began by helping the central government to design and implement tools for the radical reform of the political and administrative system, and then helped to improve technical capacities in some urban municipalities, such as municipality V at Niamey or Magaria in the Zinder region. Once the new municipal bodies started work, the number of SNV-Niger's partner municipalities increased from 5 to 38.

Capacity building in these municipalities mainly involved helping to set up and run the municipal bodies by organising training and discussion days

and also by providing on-the-spot support to improve operations. Through these initial activities, the SNV advisors and their partners had identified a real need for tools to plan, manage, monitor and evaluate municipal activities. This was where the idea arose to develop a municipal planning and M&E guide, incorporating the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), with a view to developing a decentralised municipal planning system involving many different actors.

The approach developed in this guide is an attempt to respond to the many basic questions about municipal life. It also aims to help municipal councils with multi-annual planning so that they can provide the services and products that meet local needs.

The approach adopted responds to the following current needs:
■ to inform/improve decision making at various levels;
■ to monitor the operation and performance of the municipal authorities;
■ to make the various actors accountable for the use of resources;
■ to improve people's familiarity with and understanding of the concepts of MDGs/PRS and local governance;
■ to promote democratic control;
■ to establish a baseline as reference point;
■ to improve the way in which results are monitored.

What makes this guide different is its simplicity in relation to the concerns it deals with. It runs to 30 pages, starting with performance self-evaluation and concluding with annual monitoring

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78- Of the 52 urban municipalities, 21 already existed before the reform.

and the final evaluation of realistic development measures, which all the municipal actors have been involved in planning. All of these development measures refer to the MDG/PRS indicators at every stage of their planning and implementation. Emphasis is placed on exchanges of information between the actors throughout the process.

This case study gives a simple presentation of the various stages and steps involved, from design to testing, and how this participatory approach to planning and implementing development measures was put into practice.

2.2.1. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE GUIDE

In view of the problems encountered by the Nigerien Government in carrying out decentralisation and the huge range of measures taken by the technical and financial partners (TFPs), SNV was determined to develop a planning and M&E tool that everyone recognised.

2.2.1.1. Decentralisation challenges: the need to agree on how to support municipalities

Problems in implementing decentralisation

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, coming 177th out of 177 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI) in 2005. Successive coups d'état have seriously undermined the socio-economic life of the country. The national conference in 1991 marked the real starting point for democracy and decentralisation.

Prior to decentralisation, legislation was introduced that laid down the conditions for the free administration of local government, along with the conditions and procedures for the election and operation of the new municipalities. A massive information and awareness campaign was organised throughout the country to explain this legislation, but it appears to remain poorly understood at the municipal level. More workshops on the legislation could improve people's understanding of what decentralisation really involves. As matters stand, the various actors (decentralised technical departments[79], civil society, private operators and elected councillors) interpret the legislation as best suits them, as far as the redistribution of roles and responsibilities is concerned.

The State provided the municipalities with the following start-up help:
■ former administrative buildings for use as premises for the council and municipal executive;
■ office furniture;
■ help in getting the first municipal budget adopted and implemented;
■ a very small start-up grant, most of which was used for council and municipal executive running costs (mayor's salary and costs of meetings).

In such circumstances, how could the legislation be implemented and free administration achieved in practice? Once the new administrative system was put in place, the next urgent question was how to support the fledgling municipalities as they took their first steps.

As the State could not afford to support the municipalities itself, it turned to its technical and financial partners. These provided help, depending on their interests and the areas in which they operated, either for the national institutions responsible for establishing and supporting the municipalities or directly to the municipalities themselves. However, this help was not evenly distributed around the country. One year after the elections, while some municipalities were receiving plenty of financial and technical assistance, others were still wondering how they were going to get their municipalities up and running! This led to a two-speed decentralisation, with some adequately funded municipalities working well and others, with no partners and little funding, struggling to work at all.

79- This term refers to the 'services déconcentrés', i.e. the representatives and staff of different sectoral ministries with a mandate for providing public services at the sub-national level.

Growing demand from the municipalities for support

The municipalities soon began to seek approaches and tools for designing and implementing local development measures. The Ministry of Town and Country Planning and Community Development (MATDC), which is responsible for designing such measures, did not do enough to harmonise the support provided by the various partners and to ensure that everyone took ownership of the tools available. It left it to the development agencies to take the initiative, each acting as it saw fit within its own area. The Ministry confined itself to approving the results sporadically achieved, once it had checked that they complied with the legislation.

In this institutional environment, there was practically no consultation between development agencies or harmonisation of their activities. Different training modules were developed on the same subjects and sometimes distributed in the same municipalities. In the Zinder region, for instance, SNV and the Community Action Program (CAP), launched by the government and the World Bank, both distributed a training module for elected officers and municipal actors on their roles and responsibilities in Zinder municipality II and Niamey. The same thing happened with SNV and the Poverty Reduction Framework Programme/Local Development Support Programme (PCLCP/PADL), supported by the UNDP, in the municipality of Bandé.

In order to try to rectify this lack of coherence, stop the support effort from being dissipated and pool activities and tools, SNV attempted to link up the various partners involved with development support and local governance in the areas where it operated. This produced encouraging results, such as the provision by the partnership between SNV and LUCOP-TA[80] for training municipal actors in some municipalities and the creation of the working group 'Making decentralisation work in Zinder', which has made it easier for different development support and decentralisation actors to exchange information[81]. These exchanges have identified a need for tools that enable national poverty-reduction targets to be taken into account in municipal planning.

It was against this backdrop that SNV started work on a guide for municipal development planning and monitoring/evaluation, which includes a tool for self-evaluation of performance.

2.2.1.2. Targeted objectives and actors

Decentralisation in Niger is seen as a strategy to *get ordinary people more involved in the process of poverty reduction*. It has led to the introduction of elected municipal bodies and provides for local organisations to be involved in identifying, planning, implementing and M&E of municipal development measures.

The tools proposed in the guide are consistent with this idea of greater popular involvement. They are designed to:
■ give municipal actors greater capacity to evaluate their own performance as local actors in government, development and poverty reduction;
■ build the capacity of these actors to manage local affairs transparently and to be accountable to local people;
■ stimulate the interest of actors in civil society in the work of their municipality and their new role as both opposition to and partners of these new public entities;
■ give actors in civil society greater capacity to exercise this democratic control and to call municipal officers to account.

The guide for municipal development planning and monitoring/evaluation is intended for local actors, particularly:
■ municipal actors (elected and ex-officio councillors, municipal departments);
■ decentralised government departments (health, primary education, town planning, hydraulic engineering, etc.);
■ local actors in civil society and civil associations and organisations (NGOs, groups, cooperatives, trade unions, etc.).

The guide aims to help these actors to have a harmonised view of their roles and responsibilities in municipal development. It promotes a more participatory and realistic approach to planning municipal development. Initially, it enables the development of local tools to monitor, evaluate and reprogramme planned measures, and it then goes on to establish a mechanism for participatory monitoring and evaluation of the performance of municipal authorities.

80- *The German assisted poverty reduction project in the Tahoua region.*
81- *This group, under the guidance of SNV-Niger, has also proposed regional information days to raise the awareness of MDGs/PRS in regard to regional projects, programmes and directorates, NGOs, associations and opinion leaders, elected councillors and traditional chiefs.*

The guide offers tried and tested tools for the development agencies who provide the municipalities with help and support in their initial planning and in monitoring their activities.

It offers the central government simple and effective tools for planning and M&E of local devel-opment, with the aim of promoting ownership and in-depth exploitation of the MDGs/PRS at the municipal level.

2.2.1.3. Basic assumptions and tools

Basic assumptions

The design and use of this guide are based on the assumption that planning municipal development is an opportunity for ordinary people to feel responsible for their own development in terms of rights and duties to be observed. This can help to trigger a move away from a lack of transparency towards the transparent and sustainable management of local affairs.

In addition to planning tools, municipalities in Niger also need tools to monitor and evaluate the implementation of local plans, since these will serve to strengthen democratic control.

Stages and tools

SNV-Niger's 'local governance' team drew on existing planning, monitoring and evaluation tools from Niger and elsewhere in West Africa, such as the *self-evaluation tool for local government performance* in Mali[82] and in Guinea-Bissau, *the planning guide* in Mali and in Benin, and a number of reports on their application. These tools were reviewed and summarised and the indicators used were reformulated to take greater account of the gender dimension.

In addition, in order to take the idea of municipal self-evaluation further, SNV-Niger relied, in particular, on one component of the Mali self-evaluation tool, focusing on how the municipality is run and relations between the municipality and other local actors.

The Niger tool therefore focuses exclusively on how the municipal authorities operate, particularly the administrative operation of the municipal executive and the municipal council, and relations between these two entities and the other actors in municipal development.

The municipal planning guide incorporating the MDGs/PRS proposes dividing the planning and monitoring/evaluation of municipal development into four stages:

■ Stage 1: assisted self-evaluation of the running of the municipality;

■ Stage 2: planning of municipal development, taking account of MDGs/PRS;

■ Stage 3: monitoring the application of the annual programme of work, and reprogramming;

■ Stage 4: evaluation of changes over a number of years, and restarting the process.

82- This experiment was also reported at the sub-regional seminar 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning'. See MATCL/DNCT-SNV-Helvetas-PACT/GTZ (2004).

Stages	Steps	Actors	Results
Assisted self-evaluation of running of municipality	✔ Decision by municipal council ✔ Setting up of technical committee ✔ Preparation of evaluation ✔ Identification and invitation of participants ✔ Holding of workshop	Municipal council Technical dpts Associations Cooperatives Trade unions Groups Local leaders Resource persons	Action plan for the successful operation of the municipality established
Municipal development planning taking account of MDGs/PRS	✔ Preparation of technical committee and planning approach ✔ Holding forums ✔ Workshop to collate results of forums ✔ Planning workshop ✔ Drafting of plan ✔ Adoption of MDP by municipal council	Municipal council Technical dpts Associations Cooperatives Trade unions Groups Local leaders Resource persons	Municipal development plan drafted
M&E of implementation of annual action programme and reprogramming	✔ Setting up thematic monitoring committees ✔ Defining committees' mandate ✔ Producing performance indicators ✔ Drawing up of monitoring timetable ✔ Executing monitoring activities	Municipal council Technical dpts Associations Cooperatives Trade unions Groups Local leaders Resource persons	Monitoring mechanism operates side by side with implementation of municipal development plan
Evaluation of change over a number of years and restarting the process	✔ Collecting data ✔ Preparing evaluation methods ✔ Identifying and inviting participants ✔ Holding evaluation and reprogramming workshop ✔ Organising and executing reprogramming	Municipal council Technical dpts Associations Cooperatives Trade unions Groups Local leaders Resource persons	Process restarted on the basis of the lessons learned

Stage 1: assisted self-evaluation of running of municipality

This stage diagnoses how the municipal authorities operate and identifies how they interact with other actors in the municipality. It takes three to four days.

All the different groups of actors attend to ensure that each is equally well informed about its role and responsibilities. This makes the subsequent planning dynamic more effective.

Before this municipal planning process begins, a municipal technical committee is set up, chaired by the mayor and made up of legitimate representatives of the various socio-economic groups. The committee must be approved by the municipal council at the meeting when the process is launched. It prepares and leads the various steps involved in the different stages of the planning process.

The self-evaluation workshop is a sort of informal debate in which a shared view is developed of the legislation defining the roles and

responsibilities of each type of actor and how they might relate to the municipal bodies. Once this has been clarified, *the framework for assisted self-evaluation of internal organisation, administrative and financial man-agement and the mobilisation of resources* is used to analyse the municipality's performance in these three fields, as well as to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each group of actors. Once the three groups formed for the workshop (elected officers, decentralised technical departments and civil society) have met again for discussions, the consensus table or summary of scores is used to collate the scores awarded by the groups. This then highlights the priority areas where the municipal actors need to improve or need help. The three groups can then put forward proposals for improving their own performance and make commitments to improve their contribution to the management of the municipality and the implementation of the development measures.

At the end of this stage, a realistic, short-term action plan is produced using the framework for a short-term action plan to implement priority measures and containing the support and consolidation measures that the municipality needs. This plan is designed to solve the operational problems identified and is supported by all the actors, who know their responsibilities. The municipal council is responsible for implementing the plan.

Stage 2: municipal development planning, taking account of MDGs/PRS

This stage establishes to the extent to which the measures taken by the municipality are helping to achieve the MDGs/PRS. It can take between 15 and 25 days.

The planning phase begins in the municipality with a general presentation of the concepts of the Millennium Development Goals and the Poverty Reduction Strategy in Niger. Subjects discussed with the councillors and technical departments representing various areas of activities include the origin of the concepts, links with the development of Niger in general and of the municipality in particular, etc.

One of the examples used relates to Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goals: 'the developing countries must achieve universal primary education by 2015'. A comparison is made with the situation in the municipality (the proportion of children attending primary school usually varies between 40% and 60%). There is then a discussion of how to increase the rate of school attendance in the municipality.

Using the *framework for information/awareness of the MDGs/PRS*, the discussions look at questions such as the following: Aren't we all affected by the MDGs/PRS? What practical steps should we take to help to achieve some of the MDG/PRS indicators? The meeting ends with strong recommendations for analysing the municipality's development measures from the point of view of poverty reduction.

The technical committee is trained by the facilitator in how to prepare and run the 'fora', which are consultation meetings for the general public.

The fora are then held. The general public is informed about the concepts of MDGs/PRS and identifies the priority problems that they want to see resolved using the *table analysing the municipality's problems in relation to the MDGs/PRS*.

Type of questions asked: Do the problems raised come under the MDG goals? What level of achievement of the goals is provided for in the PRS? What contribution can the municipality make? What local solutions can be proposed involving all the local actors?

The technical committee (which is made up of resource persons who are very familiar with the various areas of activities or themes) then meets and collates the results of the forums using *the table listing the municipality's opportunities/potential*. At this point, an assessment is made of what the opportunities/potential are and which priority problems they could help to resolve. Then, using the *analytical grid of data by theme*, the committee classifies the solutions proposed under a maximum of three or four themes linked to the achievement of the MDGs/PRS.

A planning workshop led by the technical committee is then held, involving the municipal council, the technical departments, three to four representatives from each forum, the partner NGOs, resource persons, associations, cooperatives, groups from the municipality, and so on. The municipal planning matrix is then used to plan the main development strands over, at most, the next five years. The municipality undertakes to take practical steps to improve people's living conditions while at the same time helping to achieve certain MDG/PRS indicators. *The municipal annual programme table* then makes it easier to plan the municipality's priority development measures over the next year, providing estimates of the overall costs of the activities, and thus making it easier to approach the development partners.

Stage 3: monitoring/evaluation of implementation of annual action programme and reprogramming

The participatory mechanism for the quarterly or annual monitoring of the implementation of the annual programme is explained to all the actors in the municipality. The municipal council then has to set up monitoring committees for each theme selected at the planning stage. These committees have the job of ensuring that the priority measures are being implemented and, if necessary, of reminding the municipal council and all the actors in the municipality of the commitments they made to implement the annual programme. The committees can also make practical suggestions about how to carry out some of the activities planned.

This stage is carried out using a guide that gives the information needed, such as the tasks of a monitoring committee (drawing up simple indicators and a timetable of meetings to monitor progress in implementing the measures; issuing reminders and proposals, if necessary, for implementing certain measures, etc.) and who should be on it (to ensure that it is open to officials from the technical departments and civil society organisations). It also sets out working methods, such as how to produce minutes of meetings on which to base the final evaluation, etc.

Stage 4: evaluation of change over a number of years and restarting the process

In this final stage, the measures taken and those still to be carried out can be evaluated, either every year or at the end of the number of years decided at the outset.

An analysis of the implementation of the municipal development plan and the progress made by the municipal team during its term of office is given to all the local actors who have taken part. Everyone can therefore be involved in identifying the reasons for successes and failures, and pathways can be proposed for restarting the process based on the lessons learned from this initial experience. A workshop for the assisted self-evaluation of the municipality's performance is held. It looks at the services provided and the investments made as well as the running of the municipality itself.

This particular step and work on the various tools are currently ongoing.

Involvement of actors in designing and testing the guide

Local actors and the TFPs have been involved in designing and testing the guide.

Local actors (municipal councillors, decentralised State technical departments, members of civil society, opinion leaders, aid organisations and local people) have all been actively and continuously involved in providing a critical analysis of the methods and tools used during the process.

The municipality of Danchiao in the Zinder region, on the border between Niger and Nigeria, is a major trading area. The municipal actors therefore proposed measuring the municipality's performance using indicators related to promoting the export of local products.

Technical and financial partners contributed little to the design of this guide in the end, since they often already had a planning guide that they found satisfactory. They were, however, interested in some of the tools, such as information on the MDGs/PRS, assisted self-evaluation, etc.

Testing the guide and its tools

SNV-Niger began by testing the tool for self-evaluation of municipal performance in its partner municipality of Konni in the Tahoua region. A draft entitled 'Municipal development planning tools and method, taking account of the MDGs/PRS' was then produced.

Comments, particularly about the tool's ability to mobilise municipal actors in the pursuit of common objectives, encouraged other SNV-Niger teams, especially those in Zinder, Maradi and Niamey, to test Stage 1 in one or two municipalities.

The draft guide was also distributed to SNV decentralisation advisors in Mali and Burkina Faso for critical analysis, comments and proposed improvements. The reactions there enabled us to flesh out some of the stages and tools, the intended time-span, the proposed approach and, above all, the relative number of types of actors who should be involved in the activities.

An internal evaluation meeting was held at which the different teams pooled their observations. The approach and tools used were discussed and analysed, and an improved version of the guide was produced, which now took account of the need to bring the municipal actors up to standard through self-evaluation of the municipality's performance.

The outcome of the consultations on the first draft coincided with the signing of a cooperation agreement between SNV-World and UNDP for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the National Poverty Reduction Strategies in the countries where they operate. The self-evaluation tool indicators were then revised to fit better with the MDG and PRS indicators.

An ex-post evaluation of the technical and methodological support provided by SNV-Niger and its partners was also conducted to find out whether this helped the municipalities to operate efficiently and to provide local people with high-quality services. One of the recommendations that came out of this evaluation was that municipalities should be given more help to develop planning tools tailored towards poverty reduction, further reinforcing the idea that the guide needed to be improved.

Since June 2005, the improved guide has continued to be tested in municipalities in Niger.

Eight of the SNV's 11 partner municipalities in the Zinder region have completed the self-evaluation of their municipality's performance and are now implementing their short-term action plan. One of these municipalities has completed the entire planning process and is currently setting up the thematic monitoring committees. Three of the municipalities are at the stage of consulting local people (the forums). The municipality of Dantchiao is planning to send a member of its technical committee to the neighbouring municipality of Dungass in order to help get the process started.

SNV-Niger is continuing to collect comments, assessments and proposed improvements to the planning guide, particularly at informal meetings in the municipalities. Once the guide has been in operation for a year, SNV-Niger hopes to evaluate experiences of using it.

Role of SNV advisors and external moderators

The approach described here requires the municipality, as the authority in charge of municipal development, to steer the activities. However, because local actors have only limited experience, the municipalities need a facilitator/moderator to guide them through the various stages of the process. This moderator (currently SNV advisors, but eventually other people familiar with the tool) introduces the various parties to and trains them in using the planning and monitoring/evaluation tools, prepares meetings, gives introductory talks on the MDGs/PRS and explains the roles of the municipal actors.

Up to now, SNV-Niger has performed the role of facilitator. Initially it helped to set up the steering committee for the planning process and got it running. Then it supervised and guided the planning activities and, finally, helped the parties to evaluate the various stages of the test in order to capitalise on experience and contribute towards finalising the tools.

2.2.1.4. Cost of producing a municipal development plan

In order to give an idea of the costs involved in producing a municipal development plan using the approach proposed in the guide, we have summarised the costs incurred in the rural municipality of Dantchiao in the Zinder region. This is currently the only municipality for which SNV has sufficient data.

According to the 2001 general population census, the rural municipality of Dantchiao comprises 47 administrative villages, 39 hamlets and 31 tribes. At that time it had 41,430 inhabitants and a surface area of 522 km², giving a population density of around 79/km².

It should be noted that the costs listed are mainly logistical expenses (hiring meeting rooms, transport, meals and accommodation for participants, etc.) relating to the organisation of the first two stages of the planning process: self-evaluation of municipal operation and drafting of a municipal development plan, taking poverty reduction objectives into account. As the last two stages are long term, it is currently difficult to assess all the costs involved.

The cost of the technical assistance provided by the SNV-Niger advisors is not included in this table, but their involvement can be evaluated at 25 person/days, broken down into 15 days of field work and 10 days for preparing and helping to finalise documents (reports and plan). In some municipalities, just one advisor was involved, helped by a local resource person with the necessary skills. In others, two advisors were needed, so the number of days increased to 50.

COST OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Activities	Number of days	Number of persons	Total cost in XOF
SELF-EVALUATION			
Organising and holding workshop	5	40	500,000
Running technical committee	5	10	375,000
DRAFTING of MDP			
Preparing technical committee workshop	2	10	150,000
Organising forums	14	40-60	1 925,000
Pooling and summarising data	2	10	150,000
Organising planning workshop	4	40	400,000
Drafting MDP	3	10	225,000
Approval of MDP by municipal council	2	30	300,000
Handing-over of MDP to communities	7	3	157,000
GRAND TOTAL	**44 days**		**4,182,000**

The overall cost of the process varies depending on the size of the municipality, the size of its population, the number of forums organised, the number of members of the technical committee, etc.

2.2.1.5. Strengths and weaknesses of the approach

Strengths

■ All users of the guide particularly welcomed the constant reference made to the MDGs/PRS during the main planning stages. With the improved guide, all the measures decided upon are planned in such a way that they contribute towards achieving certain MDG/PRS indicators.

■ Local people know more about the international undertakings that Niger has given in relation to the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Millennium Development Goals, making them more willing to play an active part in reducing poverty.

■ The approach used by the guide requires local actors to be actively involved in the planning process. This then makes it easier to implement the measures decided upon and helps to establish a shared view of these actors' rights and responsibilities.

■ The development of the municipality is no longer solely in the hands of the municipal council, but becomes the responsibility of all the municipal actors through their representatives in the thematic monitoring committees.

■ Experience shows that setting up a technical committee to support all stages of the planning and monitoring/evaluation process enables the municipality to take responsibility for directing its own development.

■ The municipal development plan is seen as a *unanimously accepted reference document for the municipality, not just the municipal council*, which all the municipal actors use. The local contribution is stressed as being of primary importance; asking the TFPs for help in achieving priority goals only comes later.

■ The approach develops an atmosphere of trust between the municipal actors involved in the planning process. The technical departments are beginning to realise the need to overhaul their former practices, particularly developing and implementing local measures without involving local people.

Solidarity is undergoing a revival thanks to the renewal of trust between the parties involved (the municipality's executive and decision-making bodies, government departments and local people). This is because the municipal bodies have to be accountable for the measures taken and because efforts are made to find solutions to the most urgent local problems through consultation and consensus.

■ In some of the municipalities that followed the process proposed in the guide, the issue of mobilising municipal taxes and charges is no longer a major concern. People in the municipality wait for specific proposals from the municipal bodies and then make additional contributions on top of their ordinary taxes. When asked why they do this, they said, 'Now we know where our money is going. We can check how our money is being managed at any time. We really feel encouraged by what the local council is doing.'

■ The approach proposed in the guide allows the monitoring committees the scope to develop tools and methods that are appropriate for local situations, making monitoring easier.

■ Using local languages for presentations and discussions encourages as many people as possible to take part and to make relevant proposals. Planning and discussing the tools in local languages also encouraged those concerned to get involved in the discussion of methods.

Weaknesses

The guide's present weaknesses have to do with the fact that it is still in development.

■ In theory, implementing the planning approach proposed by the guide takes 45 days for each municipality, spread over six to nine months. In reality, the process takes longer. The time required for the planning stages is due to the fact that some of the steps are difficult to carry out in a country as poor as Niger. That is particularly true of the collection of quantitative data on the various thematic priorities chosen, which is necessary if the planning process is to be valid. It is therefore essential to involve the technical departments in providing more databases.

In the Tahoua region, for instance, the planning process was started in March 2005 in three municipalities. By May 2006 only one of the three had completed the planning.

■ Some procedures, such as the setting up and operation of the municipal steering committee, need further improvement. Experience has shown that there is a rapid turnover of members, resulting in delays and bottlenecks. It should therefore be ensured that members of this committee are chosen because they are available and committed rather than just representative.

■ The needs expressed by women at the public consultation days are not adequately reflected in the final municipal development plan. The reason appears to be that gender is not systematically taken into account in the second part of the guide. This must be rectified.

■ The municipal planning guide says nothing about how to set about drafting the municipal development plan. Information on the broad outlines to follow would make it easier to draft. Otherwise, even though the same approach is used, the quality of the final documents varies considerably.

2.2.1.6. Building the capacity of the decentralisation actors and strengthening the institutional framework

Supporting the municipal actors involves putting them in touch with each other so that they each know their own roles and responsibilities and are ready to join forces with others to work effectively and sustainably. Each stage of the proposed approach and all the tools and methods, adapted to local requirements with the help of all the municipal actors, are designed to be capacity building, since the actors are the ones who carry them out:

■ The assisted self-evaluation of the municipality's performance is a practical training course for the municipal actors in what they need to do to play a responsible and effective part in the autonomous free administration and development of the municipality. The end result is a very short-term action plan (six months on average) to correct the deficiencies identified, not just in the internal operation of the municipal council, but also in its ongoing interaction with the technical departments, civil society and the municipal leaders as part of successful development management based on participation.

■ The planning phase systematically refers to the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. This innovative aspect enables the municipal actors to find out about and understand these national objectives and to define municipal options so as to help to achieve some of them.

The process generates cooperation between members of the municipal council, the devolved technical departments of the State and the actors of civil society working on the ground in their municipality. Experience has shown that the interaction and cooperation developed during this planning and M&E process create confidence and overcome many prejudices. Rumours such as 'the technical departments are doing their best to ignore everything we set out to do', 'since it was set up there has been absolutely no transparency in how the municipal council has run the municipality' or 'the associations are refusing to work with the municipal council' are no longer heard in the municipalities that have adopted the participatory planning suggested in the guide. The inter-community consultation days are ideal occasions for the mayor, the municipal council and local people to get on the same wavelength.

> The mayor of one of the municipalities bore this out with this example: 'As part of the fight against malaria in my municipality, I banned people in the villages from sowing in order to avoid mosquitoes, and I was accused of being a dictator. At the six forums held in my municipality, four proposed banning seed in the villages to prevent malaria, so I am definitely in tune with my local people.'

The approach also strengthens accountability. All the documents produced are public and made available to local people, from initial design to final evaluation and reprogramming. The committees are aware that they have a duty to disseminate the results of their meetings regularly through local radio.

The guide tested by SNV has been welcomed by its partners. The MATDC often points mayors in the direction of municipalities that have used it so that they can learn from their experience, and the Ministry is currently hoping to draft a national municipal planning guide. SNV therefore needs to work on its arguments in favour of its guide to ensure that it is included when experiences from around the country are collated.

2.2.2. OWNERSHIP, SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICATION

It should be easy for users to take ownership of this planning and monitoring/evaluation approach because all the actors concerned are involved and have to face up to their responsibilities at every stage. Users thus feel motivated to do their best in their role of directing the municipality's development, in meetings both with the central government and with technical and financial partners.

The extent to which the approach is used depends on how far municipal officers are prepared to take ownership of tools of democratic governance. The guide tends to be used in proportion to their organisational and financial capacities, while the stages and tools tend to be used according to the interest they generate and at a pace decided by each municipality. This flexibility is another factor promoting ownership of the guide.

SNV-Niger designed this approach in the hope that it would be replicated in different environmental contexts, but it has as yet not yet been used outside the areas where it operates (38 of the 265 municipalities in Niger). Nevertheless, SNV is currently in talks with the Zinder and Tahoua management units of the Food Security Aid through Small-Scale Irrigation (AZAPI) and CAP with a view to testing the guide's approach in their partner municipalities. It is also planning to work with CAP to support certain municipalities in the Zinder region that do not have aid partners.

In line with developments in municipalities' needs, SNV-Niger has adapted the guide to allow scope for producing a short-term municipal development plan (maximum two years).

All of this has encouraged the SNV advisors to present the guide, its approach and some of the results obtained during testing at a preliminary meeting with the MATDC and the support partners in the decentralisation process. Since then, as we saw earlier, the MATDC has decided that it would like to produce a reference municipal planning guide. Defending 'its guide' to the Ministry is one of the challenges facing SNV.

2.2.3. LESSONS LEARNED

Experience with using this guide has taught us the following lessons:

■ Everyone has rights, responsibilities and roles to play in the decentralisation process, particularly the power to participate and the right to monitor decisions. But everyone needs to learn how to find out about them and exercise them. The participatory approach to planning and implementing development measures is a way of gradually achieving this.

■ Improving the guide will require considerable involvement from the State if a municipal planning guide is to be developed and standardised at the national level. Development partners must help the State here by sharing their experiences.

■ Officials from decentralised government departments are not always prepared to accept the changes required by the process, which affect the way they usually operate. More work needs to be done with them if they are to be successfully included in the participatory process. The tools and methods used in this guide help to develop a spirit of citizenship. Local people are involved in all the bodies preparing and carrying out the work of drafting the MDP. They are represented in the thematic monitoring committees, and they are, above all, made aware that it is their right and responsibility to keep up to date with progress in implementing the planned measures.

■ With decentralisation, the normal administrative and political way of doing things is reversed, with decisions and action taken from the bottom up rather than from the top down. Those who formerly wielded power are not always willing to make this change.

■ Most officials from the technical departments who took part in facilitating the planning process admitted that they had never heard of the MDGs/PRS. A large-scale information campaign is needed on these issues.

■ Some elected officers and civil actors pointed out that they were already working on the ideas covered by the MDGs/PRS, but the general public simply needed to realise this so that reference data (quantitative and qualitative) on the changes could be collected and published. The SNV guide, therefore, also helps to raise awareness in this area.

2.2.4. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

Test experiences with the municipal development planning guide, which takes account of the Millennium Development Goals and the Poverty Reduction Strategy, have shown that municipalities are capable of conducting their development planning process realistically and sustainably. The approach and the tools used in the guide enable communities to be consciously and responsibly involved in achieving certain MDG and PRS indicators.

The approach adopted is a response to municipalities' concerns about how to put their chosen development measures into practice. The composition of the monitoring committees and the way they operate guarantee that measures are implemented transparently, thus responding to the concerns of local people.

The different ways in which the guide has been used, the comments and favourable assessments received, the changes currently being made and the growing demand from other structures to use the approach have encouraged SNV-Niger to seek top-level State involvement in order to ensure that the methods and tools are standardised nationally. The arguments we have put forward in favour of producing a national tool are that the guide can be used on a much wider scale, thanks to the other technical and financial partners. In the medium term, the guide should be a tool in the future technical and financial support mechanism for municipalities in Niger (drawing on experience in Mali).

This document for participatory planning and monitoring/evaluation of the design and implementation of municipal development would be easy to use outside the Nigerien context. The approach and tools involved could be used by any development actor working to combat poverty in Africa or elsewhere.

In 2007, SNV is planning to involve its partners in producing a new version of the guide, which will then be regarded as the final product. This review will take account of all the comments received from the various countries planning to use the guide as a whole or just individual components of it.

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

AZAPI	Appui à la Sécurité Alimentaire par la Petite Irrigation/Food Security Aid through Small-Scale Irrigation
CAP	Community Action Program
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DTD	Decentralised Technical Departments
HDI	Human Development Index
LUCOP-TA	Lutte Contre la Pauvreté, région de Tahoua/Poverty Reduction, Tahoua Region
MATDC	Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Développement Communautaire/Ministry of Town and Country Planning and Community Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDP	Municipal Development Programme
MID	Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Décentralisation/Ministry of the Interior and Decentralisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PCLCP/PADL	Programme Cadre de Lutte Contre la Pauvreté/Projet d'Appui au Développement local/ Poverty Reduction Framework Programme/Local Development Support Programme
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
SNV	Organisation Néerlandaise de Développement/Netherlands Development Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

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2.3. Ghana: Experiences with district-based poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor planning as an M&E tool

This study **'District-based poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor planning as a monitoring and evaluation tool'** has been prepared by Bruno B. Derry and Audrey Dorway (see Annex IV).

The case study describes a poverty mapping and profiling approach which has been jointly developed and tested by the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana, the German Technical Co-operation Agency (GTZ GmbH), the Ghana Poverty Reduction Programme of the Social Investment Fund and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. This approach has been conceived for actors in local governance at the district level in the context of decentralisation and with a view to support the implementation of the countries poverty reduction strategy at the local level.

While this poverty mapping and profiling method was originally developed with a view to facilitate pro-poor planning and a better targeting of interventions to the poor, the authors argue it can also form the basis for monitoring and evaluating the effects and impacts district development plans as well as other projects and programmes have on the poor.

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INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) brought poverty onto the global development agenda and encouraged all nations to renew their commitment to the battle against poverty. As a result, governments and development agencies all over the world are now paying more attention than ever before to measures to improve the quality of life by reducing poverty. The need to formulate Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) also brought the issue of poverty to the fore in almost all socio-economic and political debates in developing countries. The PRS process presents a range of challenges, from facilitating and managing effective participation to identifying policies for pro-poor growth. By making its PRS its main development policy instrument, the government of Ghana is displaying its commitment to poverty reduction and wealth creation, especially in rural areas.

In order to make the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I & II) more effective in addressing the needs of the poor, the Ghanaian government has been pursuing a number of programmes, including special presidential initiatives. Whilst the comprehensive nature of these pro-poor policies and programmes is the strength of the current approach to poverty reduction, it is also its weakness, as the programmes are not sufficiently targeted at the poor. Policies and programmes intended to help the poor cannot succeed unless the government and other stakeholders know who the poor are, where they live and how they are likely to respond to different growth strategies. Thus, providing information on the spatial heterogeneity of poverty can greatly assist anyone wishing to identify the poor and find out where they live and what causes their poverty.

Poverty is a multi-faceted problem that tends to vary considerably in terms of space. The pro-poor targeting of development initiatives is both a political and a technical procedure. The political process in Ghana often results in the packaging of comprehensive support measures that address the needs of the poor as identified and prioritised by the government. When this political approach is pursued as a way of pro-poor programming, it tends to skew the responsibility for poverty reduction unduly towards the government, generating a recipient mentality among the poor and creating dependency in the community.

The political approach has to be balanced with a technical approach that seeks to address the root causes of poverty and strengthen the coping mechanisms of the poor. This technical approach starts with indicators such as low income, poor health, unemployment, etc. However, it uses these symptoms as entry points towards understanding the forces and factors that combine to keep people poor. Thus, instead of addressing the symptoms as the actual problems, the technical approach is interested in the causes of poverty and how they prevent the poor from breaking out of the mould. This is where the techniques of poverty profiling and poverty mapping come into play.

Basically, poverty profiling and mapping are a set of tools and procedures that enable development agents to identify the incidence and prevalence of poverty, locate the groups that are regarded as poor, and describe and categorise them in socio-economic clusters as well as in geographical terms. Poverty profiling and mapping can be performed as a quantitative and computer-supported exercise that manipulates a socio-economic dataset obtained through a population census or a carefully organised survey.

The project that is the subject of this paper used an alternative, participatory form of poverty profiling and mapping pivoted on a series of guided dialogues, involving the poor themselves and the agencies that supply services to them.

This approach, based on a participatory dialogue, brings together quantitative data on poverty and the poor, as well as qualitative information on how the poor perceive themselves, what they consider as the causes of their poverty, and the coping mechanisms they use in organising the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. The result of this participatory process is that both the poor and change agents interested in helping to reduce poverty gain a better understanding of the forces that keep people poor, the minimum threshold of support that could get the poor out of the poverty trap, and the technical and human resources needed to initiate poverty reduction support measures.

Acting in collaboration with the Ghanaian Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and the Environment (MLGRDE), the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) and the Social Investment Fund (SIF), the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ) embarked on a nationwide project to compile poverty profiles and maps for all the country's 110 districts. The aim was to help make the pro-poor targeting of development initiatives more effective. The participatory methodology for poverty profiling and mapping was first piloted in two districts and later implemented in 16 districts. In 2004, assistance was given to the remaining 94 District Assemblies in preparing poverty profiles, maps and pro-poor programmes. The implementation process is summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Implementation - poverty profiles, maps and pro-poor approach

8 Preparation of poverty profiles, maps and pro-poor programmes for 94 districts

7 Training of selected national and regional stakeholders

6 Training of three representatives from each of the 110 District Assemblies

5 Preparation of poverty profiles, maps and pro-poor programmes in 16 District Assemblies

4 Training of selected institutions in poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor programming

3 Consultations between SIF, GTZ, MLGRD and NDPC on poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor programming

2 Pilot exercise in Kintampo and Atebubu districts

1 Preparation of a 'How-to-do Guide' to poverty mapping and pro-poor programming

Source: MLGRD, GTZ, Nkum Associates (2004).

2.3.1. METHODOLOGY

The use of participatory methods is one of the core elements of poverty profiling, mapping and programming. The methodology allows for grass-roots involvement and inputs from local civil servants. Another feature is that the symptoms of poverty are not addressed in designing interventions. Instead, interventions stem from identifying the causes of poverty and how these combine to keep people poor. The approach uses planning tools and procedures that are both quantitative and qualitative. Another noteworthy aspect is the use of existing institutional structures for implementation purposes.

The district poverty-profiling and mapping technique consists of five steps that can be completed in five or six days using existing technical expertise. The District Planning and Coordinating Units (DPCUs), NGOs/CSOs, private-sector actors and traditional authorities in the district come together in a process lasting two or three days to prepare a district profile and make a preliminary analysis of local pockets of poverty. The process then goes into the poor areas identified in the first step to engage assembly members, local council staff and focus groups comprising women, young people, settler communities and other identifiable groups so as to validate, correct and/or refine district-level perceptions and finalise the poverty profiles and maps for the district.

Organised as a series of dialogues between the poor, the poverty profiling and mapping process generates fairly accurate data on the poverty situation in a district and identifies the factors and forces that cause and maintain poverty. The process also generates ideas for realistic target-group and gender-specific interventions that could help alleviate poverty in the district in question.

2.3.2. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE APPROACH

2.3.2.1. The context of decentralisation and local governance

Although the Fourth Republican Constitution of 1992 provides a broad framework for the government's policy of decentralisation, the Local Government Act of 1993 was enacted to devolve authority, resources, competences and capacity from central government to lower administrative and political structures and the communities. The decentralisation policy was intended both to strengthen local government and to encourage citizens to participate in governance and local development. The policy also sought to promote popular participation and ownership of the development process, so that all are part of the development process, within the framework of national policy. The main features of the policy include:

- redefined roles, functions and structures of institutions at various levels of government;
- the transfer of responsibility for 86 statutory duties to local government bodies;
- empowering District Assemblies as the prime administrative, planning, development, budgeting, legislative and rating authorities in their areas of jurisdiction;
- modifying the criteria for district and sub-district elections by removing literacy as a qualification for those seeking to stand for election;
- restructuring the allocation and transfer of development resources so that these are managed and controlled by the District Assemblies, in the form of discretionary funds placed at the disposal of the districts.

Salient features of Ghana's local government system

The local government system introduced by the 1988 legislative reforms is a four-tiered structure (see Figure 2), with a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) at the top, followed by Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies and the Urban/Town/Area Councils. The Unit Committees are at the base.

Source: Republic of Ghana (1988).
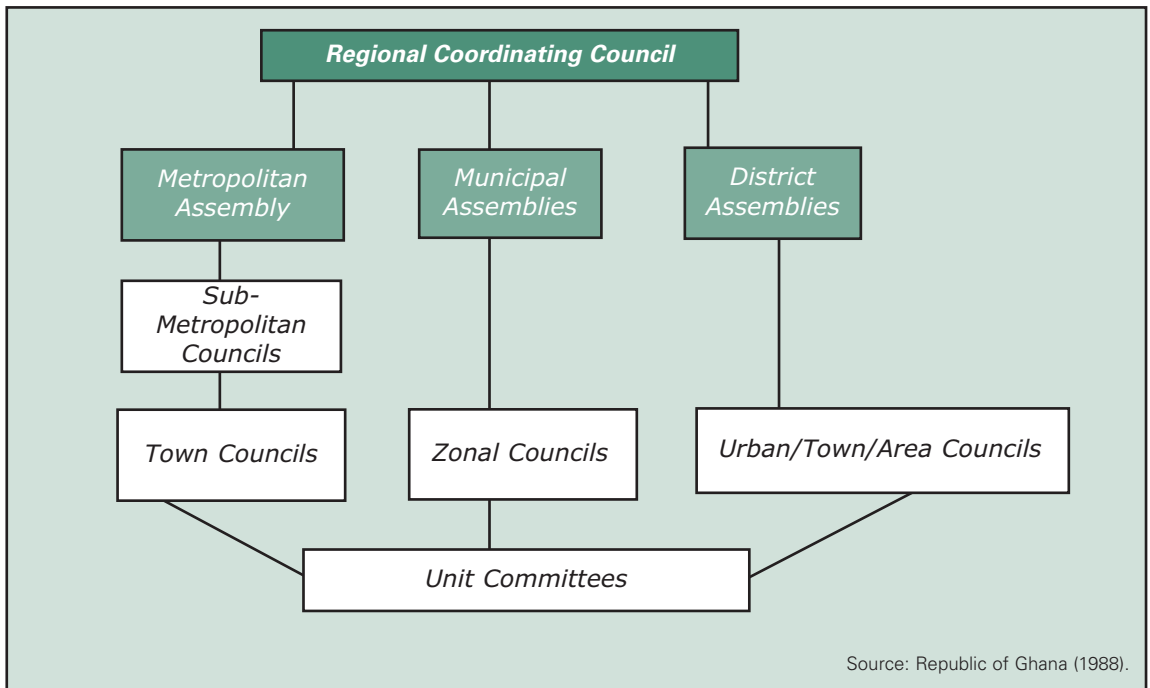
There are ten regions, each headed by a Regional Minister who is appointed by the President. All regions have a Regional Coordinating Council (RCC), which consists of representatives of District Assemblies (DA) and Traditional Authority (TA).

Each district (currently 138) has a District Assembly consisting of elected and appointed members. Seventy per cent of the members are elected by the population, and the remaining 30 per cent are appointed by the President. Of the seats reserved for appointees, 50% are intended for women. In spite of this, women account for only a small proportion of District Assembly members - less than 10 per cent.

District Assemblies are headed by a District Chief Executive (DCE), who is nominated by the President. The DCE acts as the District head and the central government representative at district level.

2.3.2.2. Purpose of and demand for the tool

The poverty-profiling, mapping and pro-poor programming tool was developed to meet the demand for a technical means of improving the targeting of poverty reduction programmes drafted under the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I). Finding ways to reduce poverty and inequity is a daunting challenge for local and national authorities in Ghana. One important aspect of this challenge is the spatial heterogeneity of poverty. District Assemblies and NGOs/CBOs in Ghana are asking for more and more geo-referenced information on the location of the poor and the magnitude of poverty so that they can set priorities, target interventions, empower local communities and improve their understanding of the causes and effects of poverty.

This tool was designed to strengthen the capacity of district-level actors to design their own poverty reduction programmes by taking a bottom-up approach. The tool also provides an objective basis to improve the targeting of poverty reduction programmes, and generates local data that can provide a baseline for monitoring and evaluation.

The principles underpinning the tool are based on evidence that poor people tend to work very hard, using their own coping mechanisms to survive and improve their lot. They remain poor because their efforts do not earn them enough income or enable them to gain better access to those goods and services they require in order to escape from poverty. Therefore, if poverty reduction measures are to be effective, they must first recognise and understand the barriers poor people need to overcome in order for their efforts in producing, distributing and consuming goods and services to bring them more direct benefits.

Identifying spatial patterns of poverty using maps provides new insights into the causes of poverty. For example, do physical isolation and poor agro-ecological resources prevent people from escaping from poverty? This in turn can affect the type of interventions under consideration.

Poverty maps can be used to improve the allocation of resources. They can help the authorities to decide where and how to target anti-poverty programmes. Geographic targeting, as opposed to across-the-board interventions, has been shown to be a useful means of maximising coverage, while minimising leakage to the non-poor. Geographic targeting at community level can help to make anti-poverty programmes more effective, for example by promoting subsidies in poor communities and cost recovery in less poor areas.

Detailed information on the spatial distribution of the poor can also assist policy-makers, executive agencies and development partners in designing socially and geographically targeted pro-poor policies and programmes. With more and more attention being given to poverty targeting below the district level, detailed poverty maps should provide development planners with a powerful tool.

Poverty mapping should also help the District Assemblies and the sub-district structures to take account of the national and regional priorities set in the GPRS II with regard to programme design, development financing and the monitoring of poverty reduction indicators.

Table 1: Key stakeholders and their needs

Stakeholders	Needs and demands
National policy-makers	■ Good governance and general policy framework. ■ A yardstick for setting standards. ■ Information on main areas of deprivation.
NGOs	■ Assistance with targeting of interventions.
District administrators	■ Advice on resource allocation. ■ A means of justifying the allocation of interventions for poverty reduction. ■ A source of baseline data on the poverty situation in the district.
Development partners	■ Assistance with targeting of interventions.
Consultants	■ A source of baseline data on districts.
Communities	■ Assistance with monitoring the implementation of projects. ■ Assistance with questioning the allocation of resources.

Source: MLGRD, GTZ, Nkum Associates (2004) .

2.3.2.3. The moderators and participants

District-based poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor planning was designed and implemented by the following actors.

The consultants engaged as facilitators to coach the district teams were experts in development planning and poverty reduction in Ghana. They drafted a training manual and performed a pilot profiling and mapping exercise in two districts. They were then engaged to train trainers and professionals from four institutions, viz. Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), the University of Development Studies (UDS), the Institute of Local Government Studies (ILGS), and Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). These trainers were then tasked to lead the teams in the 16 districts that were to prepare poverty profiles and maps. The consultants were subsequently re-engaged to facilitate the up-scaling exercise in the remaining 94 districts.

The knowledge and skills of the participants varied from one district to another, depending on the composition of the respective teams. This was also reflected by the varied quality of the outputs. Whereas high-quality work was produced in some districts, sub-standard reports were received from other districts.

2.3.2.4. Key elements of the tool

Figure 3 summarises the key steps in the poverty profiling mapping and pro-poor programming process.

Figure 3: Key steps in the poverty profiling and mapping process

Source: MLGRD, GTZ, Nkum Associates (2004).
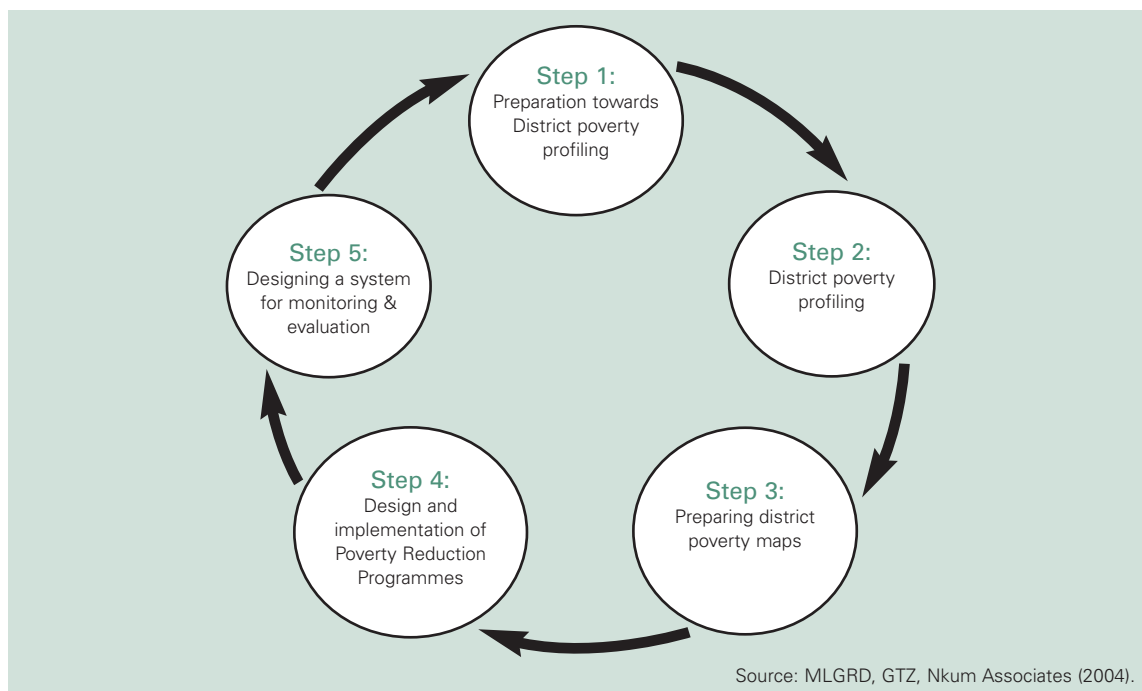
The first of the five steps involves setting up and preparing a technical team to undertake the exercise. The district technical team consists of staff of the district administration and sector departments (i.e. the expanded DPCU), major NGOs/CSOs operating in the district, traditional council members and major private-sector operators. The team is introduced to the principles and concepts underlying participatory poverty profiling and mapping. They are then assisted in

procuring the necessary updated base maps and assembling data on the local poverty situation. This district-level data may include the results of the Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaires (CWIQ), relevant data from the latest census and statistics from the Ghana Living Standard Surveys. The sector departments may use data from their district database and strategic plans. This is where the quantitative data and research findings from other poverty reduction or poverty mapping initiatives in the district come in useful.

The second step in the process is preparing a poverty profile for the district. Since each district has certain socio-economic and cultural characteristics that distinguish it from other districts, the district profile seeks to capture these peculiarities along with other standard measures of poverty. Some of the standard variables relate to access to health care, education, water and sanitation, credit, extension services and markets. Over and above these variables, other variables used specifically by local people in describing their poverty status, as well as the perceptions of service-providers regarding the dimensions and manifestations of poverty in the district, are then identified and recorded in the form of a simple matrix. This results in a poverty profile for the district, showing the various target groups and gender-specific dimensions. The tool also allows each of the target groups to indicate and specify the variables which they use to describe their poverty, specify the causes of their poverty and show the efficacy or otherwise of their respective

coping mechanisms. The district poverty profile which emanates from this step is a vivid description (in quantitative and qualitative terms) of the extent, dimensions and causes of poverty, as well as the potential of and the coping mechanisms used by various groups of poor people.

The third step involves preparing district maps and identifying pockets of poverty and areas that are better endowed. The poverty data, perceptions, dimensions and manifestations of poverty are translated into maps showing the spatial distribution of the various dimensions of poverty in the district in question. This is done in the form of thematic maps showing:

a) the spatial distribution of settlements by population;

b) the location of infrastructure, services and facilities;

c) the hierarchy of settlements in terms of service centres;

d) access to services and facilities;

e) volumes and centres of major production;

f) commodity flows and market outlets;

g) volumes of area/town council contributions to district assembly revenue.

These thematic maps are then converted into composite maps showing areas of deprivation (i.e. poverty pockets) and areas that are better endowed. Figure 4 below is an example of a composite poverty map.

Source: MLGRD, GTZ, Nkum Associates (2004).
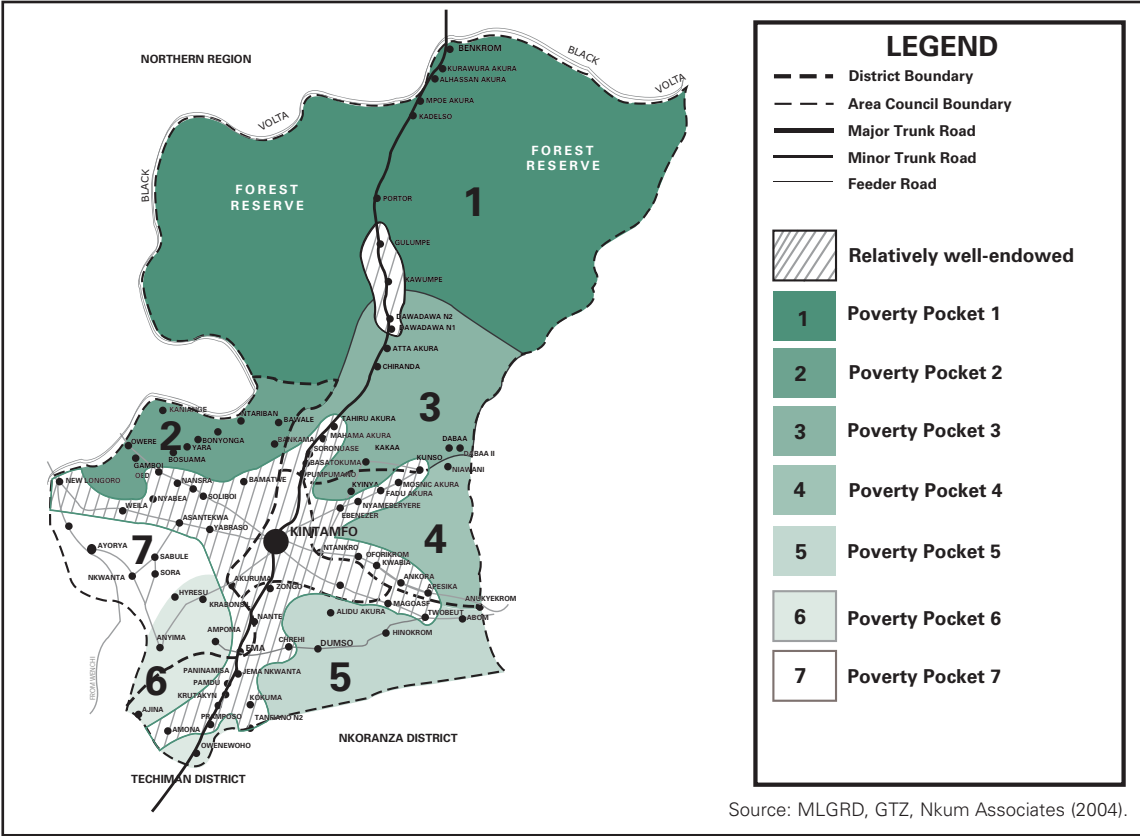
The fourth step involves designing pro-poor development programmes. Strictly speaking, it means mapping out, in terms of sectoral and geographical space, a number of potential pro-poor programmes that could address the problems that the poor need to resolve. Due to the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, a holistic approach embracing all sectors needs to be taken to the design of pro-poor or poverty reduction programmes. Yet this inter-sectoral, multi-departmental approach must be strategic in its focus and content. For this reason, the fourth step in the poverty profiling and mapping process identifies key areas of sectoral intervention at identified nodal points that could address both the immediate and the long-term causes of poverty in terms of prioritised sectors and geographical space. The existing capacity (in terms of infrastructure, human capital and financial resources) for performing pro-poor interventions is also identified at this stage. This leads to the delineation of possible strategic support measures for reducing poverty in the poverty pockets, nodal points and defined sectors. The potential for economic growth and income redistribution benefiting specific groups of poor people is also brought together at this point.

The final step of the process involves clarifying and benchmarking the indicators that could be used to measure the improvement in people's living standards. These indicators (along with national and regionally consistent or standard poverty variables) are then built into a simple framework that enables the poor and their service-providers to track the level of change which is acceptable evidence of an improvement in their socio-economic well-being. A simple monitoring and evaluation model can then be designed to track:

- the extent to which poverty has been reduced among the various target groups and across genders;
- the reasons for success or failure;
- the reactions of beneficiaries to programme implementation and outcomes; and
- the lessons for future planning and policy-making.

2.3.2.5. Sustainability and ownership

Ownership and a capacity for sustainable management and repetition were created at various levels. At a local level, the exercise was performed by district teams consisting of technical personnel and representatives of civil society and the traditional authorities, with technical coaching from external facilitators. The training programme was designed to involve the District Coordinating Directors, Planning Officers and Town and Country Planning Officers. The main purpose was to equip local authorities with the capacity they need in order to prepare and implement local poverty reduction programmes. Essentially, the poverty profiling and mapping project built capacity at a district level for analysing and understanding the manifestation of poverty, the coping strategies and mechanisms used by the poor and the appropriate targeting of poverty reduction interventions. The outputs, as a result, were their own efforts and are owned by them.

At a national level, the role played by the collaborating institutions was also vital to the sustainability of the exercise. Policy-level institutions, which are responsible for decentralisation and local governance, were active partners in the process. Their involvement commenced during the planning and design stages, through implementation to monitoring and evaluation. Institutions such as the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the National Development Planning Commission took part in the upscaling and implementation of the exercise nationwide. The NDPC integrated the poverty profiling model into the National Development Planning Guidelines for the 2006-2009 period. By this measure, sustainability has been created as the process will feature in the medium-term development plans of all 138 District Assemblies. While national policy-making institutions provided technical support, development partners such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) provided financial support.

Consultants played a vital role during the planning stage, acted as facilitators for the training-the-trainers and orientation workshops for District Administrators, and coached the district teams during the upscaling to the 94 districts.

2.3.2.6. Challenges and lessons learned

Two major challenges were encountered. The first was a matter of competing activities. Because of the numerous and uncoordinated capacity-building interventions taking place at a local level, many District Planning Coordination Units and other departments were overloaded during the period when the project was running. This resulted in competing demands on their time and resources, resulting in interruptions in the work plan.

The second challenge related to local technical capacity which, in some cases, was not up to the task. Although teams were formed in all districts, some members were transferred and others resigned during the course of the project. Additionally, some districts lacked key personnel such as Town and Country Planning Officers who were needed to perform the vital task of preparing accurate district maps.

Despite these problems, the project succeeded in strengthening the capacity of the district technical teams, including representatives of local government (District Assemblies), the traditional authority and civil society. The broad composition of the technical teams also helped in documenting local knowledge. A laudable outcome is that the poverty profiles and maps were used to design and implement targeted programmes for dealing with areas of deprivation in the districts in question.

2.3.2.7. Present use of the tool and the way forward

As already mentioned, the tool is intended to improve the targeting of poverty reduction programmes at a district level. It is currently being used mainly for the purpose for which it was designed. Numerous district-based NGOs, development partners and District Assembly administrators are using the output to target their interventions as shown in Table 2. However, the model has great potential as a monitoring and evaluation tool thanks to the vast amount of district-specific data it generates. We recommend that a poverty mapping and profiling exercise be conducted in each district after five years. The current data and maps will then provide a basis for analysing any changes in the poverty situation during this period.

Table 2: Current use made of poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor programming output

Type of stakeholder	Name of institution	Focus of operations	Use made of output
NATIONAL POLICY-MAKER	National Development Planning Commission[83]	1. Designing policies to guide the country's development e.g. GPRS I & II, National Planning Guidelines etc. 2. As a participatory monitoring and evaluation tool.	Tool incorporated into Planning Guidelines. Tool incorporated into District M&E Guidelines.
NGOs	'KITE'	Promotion of cost-effective energy services for agro-processing. Interventions focus on communities without electricity.	Baseline information to assist in selecting communities for direct intervention.
	Assemblies of God Development And Relief Services	Capacity-building programme for selected groups; members of the Ghana Association of Social Workers to be trained in targeting of poverty reduction interventions at district level.	Information in reports will be used to create awareness among members of the Association of methods for targeting poverty reduction programmes.
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS	USAID: Trade and Investment Programme for a Competitive Export Economy	Nationwide programme which seeks to make Ghana's private sector more competitive by creating an enabling environment and strengthening the capacity of the private sector.	Baseline data for identifying vulnerable areas, so that interventions can be targeted directly at households in these areas.
	World Food Programme	Supplementary Feeding Health and Nutrition Education is one aspect of the WFP's programme in Ghana. The idea is that children and expectant and nursing mothers should be able to meet their nutritional needs under the GPRS. The area of operation consists of the regions in the north of Ghana.	Data used as baseline information in preparing the next Country Strategy for the WFP Nutrition Programme.

83- The National Development Planning Commission is an institution mandated by Articles 86 and 87 of Ghana's 1992 Constitution to guide the formulation of development plans and monitor and evaluate the country's development efforts.

Type of stakeholder	Name of institution	Focus of operations	Use made of output
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS	Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA)	A consultant was engaged for a rural electrification project in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions.	Reports used as a source of baseline data for conducting a socio-economic study in preparation for a rural electrification project.
	German Bank for Reconstruction (KFW) Feeder Roads Project	Study for the construction of feeder roads in the Volta, Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions.	The maps were of particular interest, as a source of information on existing feeder roads. The reports were used as a source of data for a socio-economic study paving the way for the project.
	European Union	A consultant was contracted for a capacity-building programme for district education offices, with the aim of improving their responsiveness.	Review of district-specific data from an educational perspective.
CONSULTANTS	Kesse, Tagoe and Associates	Contracted to prepare a land use plan for selected areas in the Greater Accra Region (GAR).	Baseline data on salt deposits in the Dangme areas of the GAR.
	Consultants for Agricultural and Rural Development Services (CARDS)	Contracted by EU Micro-Projects Programme.	Baseline information for the next stage of the EU's Micro-Projects Programme.
TRADITIONAL AUTHORITIES	Asanteman Council of Ashanti Region	GoG/World Bank Project supported the Asanteman Council in a project aimed at promoting the participation of traditional authorities.	Baseline information for preparing development plans for all local authorities in the Ashanti region.

2.3.3. CONCLUSIONS

There is inevitably a spatial dimension to welfare and poverty. Although the spatial distribution of poverty remains one of the oldest puzzles, it is also a highly contemporary issue. The incidence of poverty in a specific area may be attributed to a variety of lifestyle-related and environmental factors. The characteristics of the location, including socio-demographic and environmental data, are a valuable source of information in moving down the road to poverty reduction.

The results of poverty profiling and mapping suggest that there is considerable heterogeneity in poverty levels between and within districts in the same communities. The exercise has identified areas in which the poor are heavily concentrated. The results also help to explain why certain areas are poorer than others. If this type of detailed information is linked with other socio-economic and geographical data, it becomes even more useful in assisting efforts to target the poor.

In conclusion, the poverty profiling and mapping tool helps to make the targeting of pro-poor development interventions more effective, and provides baseline information for monitoring and evaluation. The maps are important tools for effectively implementing poverty reduction programmes under the District Medium-Term Development Plans for 2006-2009.

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

CARDS	Consultants for Agricultural and Rural Development Services
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CWIQ	Core Welfare Indicator Questionnaires
DA	District Assembly
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DBO	District Budget Officer
DCD	District Coordinating Director
DCE	District Chief Executive
DPCU	District Planning and Coordinating Unit
DMTDP	District Medium Term Development Plan
DP	Development partner
DPO	District Planning Officer
GAR	Greater Accra Region
GPRS I	Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy
GPRS II	Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Agency
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ILGS	Institute of Local Government Studies
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
KFW	German Bank for Reconstruction
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDAs	Ministries, departments and agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MLGRDE	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and the Environment
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PM&E	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
RCC	Regional Coordinating Council
RPCU	Regional Planning and Coordinating Units
SIF	Social Investment Fund
TA	Traditional authority
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Useful links:

http://population.wri.org/

http://www.ecdpm.org/

http://www.snvmali.org/

*http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/evaluation/
methods/pcm.htm*

http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/strategies

2.4. Mali: Geographical information systems (GIS) for the development of rural municipalities

This study, **'Geographical Information Systems (GIS) for the development of rural municipalities',** has been prepared by Florence Dumont and Bakary Samaké (see Annex IV).

The authors describe and compare the approaches taken by SNV and PACT to their GIS, as well as their own experience and that of their partners with these systems at both the regional and municipal level. Leaving aside overly complex technical details, the authors look at the challenges of designing, using and managing a GIS and the issues raised by access to information in the context of decentralisation and municipal development.

The focus is particularly on capacity building issues and the conditions needed for the ownership and viability of these tools for collecting and storing data that can be processed in many ways and spatially analysed.

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A wealth of data, but is it being properly used?

Everyone – non-governmental organisations (NGOs), researchers, donors, development organisations, authorities, local government – now collects data without always knowing how best to store them, how to process them effectively and how to share them efficiently. The human and financial investment channelled into data collection may well come to naught, especially if any of these actors stop participating.

Conventional databases are often shrouded in anonymity, becoming the monopoly of their managers, who see them as their personal property. Moreover, data are often difficult to exchange because they might not be codified on the basis of standard statistical units.

Analysis and decision-making could be much easier with a geographical information system (GIS) — a geo-referenced database whose statistical units are spatially located, making it possible to carry out query by location and to convert statistical information into maps. But most organisations do not know where to start and are reluctant to do so because of the expertise and investment needed to create and manage a GIS.

Although differing in some respects (such as the working methods tested, the tools developed, the

problems encountered, etc.), the experience gained from the creation of the GIS of the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV-Mali) and the Local Government Support Programme of German Technical Cooperation (PACT-GTZ) may well be able to 'point the way' for development organisations to take up the challenge of creating a GIS. This would enable local governments to see how useful these systems are for analysis and decision-making.

This paper looks chiefly at the usefulness of this tool and its relevance to those who could benefit from it. It does not, however, look at the technical aspects of these systems, which are often complex. The GIS has to be seen as a tool that is multi-scale (enabling changes of scale), multi-theme, and multi-user (an in-house tool of development organisations, for example, or a support tool for municipalities and 'cercles').

2.4.1. METHODS FOR CAPITALISING ON THESE TWO GIS EXPERIMENTS

Two people responsible for designing GIS databases, a geographer at SNV-Mali and a computer scientist at PACT, compared their working methods, looking at how thinking was progressing with the teams involved, how the databases were evolving, what themes were being tackled, etc.

PACT has more experience with the use of this tool and is better able to analyse how successful the approach has been. It has a better overview of the problems that have been encountered and, by analysing user demand for GIS products, they know

how users (i.e., local actors in decentralisation and local governance) perceive this GIS.

Despite having less experience, teams at SNV are increasingly of the view that the GIS database needs to be enhanced.

Because it is highly technical in nature, the methods of capitalising on the GIS are not very participative, nor does the type of design encourage participation, which could make it seem that these tools were being imposed from above. They are nevertheless meeting real needs and their usefulness has been rapidly appreciated by all users.

Interest in this kind of approach lies more in the use, testing and ownership of GIS tools than in the strategy for their creation and introduction.

What is interesting is how the results (i.e., the GIS products) are being used.

2.4.2. DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF GIS TOOLS

2.4.2.1. Managing a municipal area without reference maps

Dutch and German cooperation organisations are supporting the national decentralisation policy in Mali, particularly through support for various municipal advisory centres (CCCs). Work by SNV-Mali and GTZ's Local Government Support Programme (PACT) is geared towards developing tools to help municipalities take on their new responsibilities and to provide them with data on which they can base their decisions.

When we talk of decentralisation, we also mean land management and spatial planning at the local level. How can informed decision be made in these areas if spatial relationships are disregarded? Tools such as the GIS had to be developed if it was to be possible to draw up detailed reports, monitor the spatial outcomes of planning, observe effects and evaluate activities. If this information is produced in the form of maps, it can be rapidly read, understood and remembered.

Broadening the use of maps seemed especially important as most economic, social and cultural development plans (PDESCs) did not contain any at all. Mapping using the computerised M&E tool (the OISE database) was a first attempt to process data in map form but is still at a rudimentary stage and is showing its limits. Only maps pre-designed by the database creators can be produced and users have no freedom to choose frames.

SNV-Mali and PACT have therefore developed GIS tools in the areas in which they are working (see Figure 1) to assist municipalities and their support structures: the present CCCs and the other organisations that will follow on from them. These tools can also be used by any development body or organisation working at a municipal or inter-municipal level.

In addition to providing support for decentralisation, the tools make it possible to focus on other topics of work: sanitation, natural resource management, rural economic development, etc. The fact that the same database contains multi-theme data also means that these data, which have previously been processed separately, can be cross-referenced to produce more sophisticated analyses.

Figure 1: Map of areas in which SNV and PACT are working in Mali

Source: Oise mapping
Cartography: F. Dumont
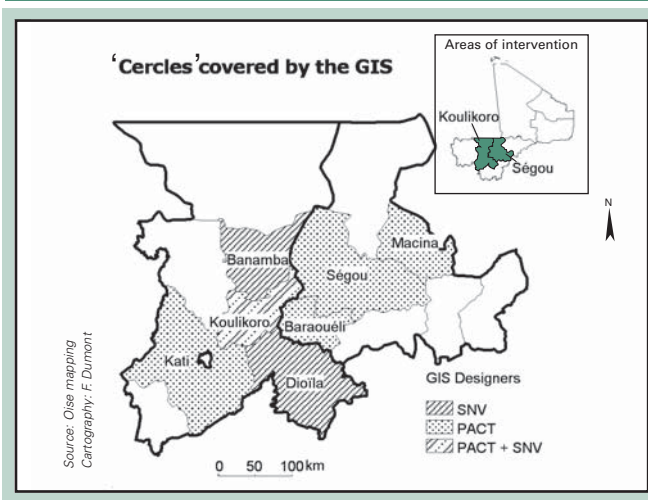
Local authorities concerned:[84]

PACT: 5 'cercles', 97 municipalities
SNV: 3 'cercles', 41 municipalities

(Mali: 703 municipalities in total)

84- There are three tiers of local government in Mali: regions, 'cercles' and municipalities (communes). The rural and urban municipalities are the basic entity of local government.

2.4.2.2. Stages of development

The construction of SNV-Mali's GIS tool has been completed, and it is now at the development stage. Throughout this work, SNV colleagues have thought about the indicators to be included, have entertained new ideas in terms of expectations and are already looking at developments related to new themes.

PACT's GIS tool is at the stage where users can begin to capitalise on the information provided. In operation since 2003, this GIS is essentially geared towards providing support for local governments. Since it was commissioned, the demand for GIS products (paper or electronic maps) has increased, which indicates their relevance.

Both tools will reach maturity as they are used, as new data are included in the databases, as the existing data are validated and as they are matched to the work priorities and needs of users.

2.4.2.3. Different objectives for the same goal: better knowledge and understanding of spatial relationships for improved planning

The GIS as a data-processing and analysis tool for SNV-Mali and its partners

The local governance team (LG) in Koulikoro was looking for a tool that would enable it to make better use of the information collected for reference situations and to illustrate some of the findings of the self-evaluation tool for local government performance.[85] The programme team for Rural Economic Development of the Koulikoro Region (DERK) was also keen to gain a better visual knowledge of spatial relationships in regard to the economy and the natural environment. Indicators were therefore developed around three main themes[86]: decentralisation, rural economic development and natural resource management. The impetus provided by DERK's financing agency (the Embassy of the Netherlands, which is also supporting work in the health sector in

the region) genuinely helped the process to get off the ground.

The GIS as a communication, planning and documentation tool for PACT

The decision to design a GIS tool came from GTZ, which felt that such a tool could be very useful in achieving the results anticipated in the context of local government support.

The GIS has been developed as a multi-sector, interactive tool for documentation, knowledge management, assistance with planning and spatial monitoring and evaluation of PACT's work in the areas of municipal administration and management, municipal development, natural resource management and sanitation. It can be used to analyse and aggregate data, improving the presentation of documents produced by the programme and making them more readable. And it is helping to provide PACT with a more visible profile on the internet.

The results obtained from the GIS, particularly the descriptive municipal maps and maps of basic social infrastructures, are made available to local governments and used as information tools and planning instruments at municipal workshops. This approach has also helped to improve the presentation of documents on local areas, making them more readable.

In both cases, more is now known about local governments, and information that can be readily analysed is available to help them to make informed decisions.

2.4.2.4. Actors and partners in the design and use of the GIS

Technical designers and managers of the database

At SNV, a geographical consultant was brought in to provide expert help with the various technical issues involved in the database and its development and monitoring. She worked with the members of the 'local governance' and 'rural economic development' teams to draw up the

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85- The Seminar on 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning', Bamako, 17-18 May 2006, has provided an opportunity to capitalise on these two experiences (see 'Municipalities in figures: needs and realities', as well as 'Assessment of local government performance: experiences with a self-evaluation tool').

86- SNV tries, as far as possible, to develop synergies between its various programmes and those of other technical and financial partners working in the same geographical area.

indicators and the thresholds and standards to be included. The designer will manage the parent database for its first two years.

At PACT, the GIS tool was designed with assistance from the cartography department of the Technical University of Berlin (TUB), which also monitored PACT's work during the stages of testing, adaptation and improvement. However, this is now part of PACT's remit and the task of a Malian GIS computer scientist trained at TUB (who manages the Kati and Ségou databases). At present, the use and development of the tool require only occasional support from TUB.

Data collectors

The statistical data for the SNV's GIS were largely taken from existing databases, especially the OISE database, and from the data produced by the tools used by SNV and its partners. An SNV advisor, working with the technical services of the Koulikoro region and CCC advisors, verified and collected data locally in order to supplement the GIS database.

The statistical data for PACT were collected by advisors from the Kati CCC (working with elected municipal officers and devolved state services) and by the programme teams.

'Validators'

For each database use, SNV drew on the critical spirit of the members of the two teams (LG, DERK), of the CCC personnel and of the SNV-Mali's partners and their knowledge of the area in order to detect any errors that might have slipped into the database. This will help identify and correct gaps when the users have ownership of the database and its products are being used with other partners.

At municipal validation workshops organised by PACT (especially those on the reference situations, the PDESCs and the natural resource management action plans), local actors were asked to compare their knowledge of the area with the maps produced from the GIS, following which appropriate corrections were made to the database.

Users of the GIS databases: two different practices

Users, including the SNV teams, personnel from the three CCCs (Banamba, Dioïla and Koulikoro) and, ultimately, from the 'cercles', municipalities and the regional chamber of agriculture, will control and guide the use of the tool since they will provide and select the data required to meet their needs, and feed the system, with advice and assistance from an experienced person. As they will have direct access to the database, they will be able to use its full potential and will, in particular, be able to carry out their own query by location. This is the tool's strength. They will also be able to produce maps to meet their own needs or the needs of their partners.

This option requires substantial training and refresher training. If ownership is to be successful, support from a person experienced in using the GIS will continue to be necessary for sometime.

In addition, a map library containing maps likely to be of general interest will shortly come on line.

The GIS advisor from PACT, based in Bamako, retrieves information, analyses data and produces maps for users in the 'cercle' of Kati. Based at the PACT office in Ségou, another advisor (who is an experienced user and cartographer), assisted by the GIS advisor in Bamako, carries out the same work for the 'cercle' of Ségou.

Local governments are indirect users of the PACT GIS and use the finished products in three forms: electronic maps (the digital GIS, or 'd-GIS'), paper maps (the analog GIS, 'a-SIG') and maps published online (the internet GIS, 'i-GIS').

Users' opinions and perceptions are assessed from what they say about the GIS products and the formats of the maps produced. In the case of the a-GIS, the main focus was on whether the information contained on the maps actually matched the situation perceived in the field by the actors themselves. Comprehending the symbols and colours used in the legends of the maps was a further focus.

Elected municipal officers are the right people to help to improve the tool because they have a very good knowledge of their area. If the GIS results are to be used, especially at planning workshops, moderators and support personnel (PACT advisors or service providers) have to be proficient in reading maps. If the symbols are appropriately chosen, local actors merely need to be literate to be able to use the results.

2.4.2.5. Hypotheses, problems, indicators and reference standards

Both organisations were of the view that the information needed to be made easier for people to analyse and remember and that data normally analysed separately needed to be linked in order to improve understanding and to provide municipalities with databases that they could use for decision-making. The GIS tool, combining conventional database software (Access®, for instance) with mapping, therefore seemed ideal.

Two types of data are needed to build GIS databases: cartographic and statistical. Both have problems. The problem raised by cartographic data lay in the fact that municipal boundaries are not yet physically fixed in Mali. While each village knows to which municipality it belongs, the boundaries of the municipal area have yet to be exactly defined. The solution used during the design of the GIS tools was to use the mapping boundaries contained in the OISE database maps, as validated by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL). However, local actors do not always agree with the maps produced. Giving municipalities a 'tangible' boundary may lead to protests. From the point of view of statistics, the main problems lay in the reliability of data; in problems identifying sources, dates and other information needed for data analysis; and in the laborious work to standardise computer files to enable them to be entered into the GIS databases.

As the initial objective was to draw up a municipal overview, information was collected on basic infrastructure in the fields of health, education, water, etc. These data were converted into descriptive and location maps:

- a map showing municipal divisions with all villages;
- a map of health areas;
- a map showing the location of the community health centre.

To enhance these analyses, thematic processing was then carried out for various indicators and parameters.

As regards the theme of local governance, prior to the design of the database, the SNV teams had decided to use the indicators of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with their associated standards and thresholds. In the case of rural economic development, standards of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) were applied. In this way, information can be retrieved from the database using various criteria, such as compliance or non-compliance with the PRSP or MDG standards or, more simply, criteria of proximity, population numbers, etc. It can then be converted into maps so that it is easier to read. Data for new indicators will be input in line with needs like the following:

- a map of villages not meeting the standard of one water point per 400 inhabitants;
- a map of municipalities whose municipal council does not hold the four mandatory meetings each year.

PACT's GIS uses result indicators to support capacity building in the communities within its area of work:

- a map of land use;
- a map of resource management;
- a planning map.

No indicators were set in advance as they are included when there is a demand for them.

Both GIS tools are making it necessary to develop and use allied tools and methods, for instance:

■ the Global Positioning System (GPS) in order to correct maps or include new localised data. At PACT, the GIS officer, the CCC advisors and the programme team have carried out this kind of work, following preliminary training;
■ good practice in the formatting of Excel® spreadsheets;
■ helping local actors learn to read and understand maps.

2.4.2.6. Procedures, formalisation, institutionalisation and links with existing tools

These GIS tools are largely intended for municipalities and will ultimately be 'fuelled' by municipalities. One of their strengths is that it is easy to increase the scale of a map from the level of a village to the level of a municipality, a number of municipalities, a 'cercle', a number of 'cercles' (for instance the three 'cercles' in which SNV works) or a region. This could be important in ensuring that municipal and regional development plans are consistent. The fact that the GIS can aggregate data (i.e., taking village statistics as a starting point for municipal, 'cercle' or regional statistics) should particularly be noted. Municipalities need to make the most of this opportunity, which can force technical services to provide statistical data at the village level.

In the case of SNV, the GIS is being formalised and institutionalised. This will be further consolidated when the tool is owned by the municipalities and their partners in the field, whether national or international, in the context, for instance, of decentralised cooperation.

Both GIS tools have very strong links with the OISE monitoring and evaluation system because they use its coding for administrative entities (villages, municipalities, 'cercles' and regions)[87]. Data from OISE can therefore be readily input and processed in the GIS, which seems to bear out a willingness to share data nationally.

In the case of SNV's GIS, there are also plans to process some of the data produced by other tools, such as the reference situation, the self-evaluation tool for local government performance and the basic health-sector information system for municipalities[88] (SIEC-S). The GIS will therefore complement other tools so that all the data collected can be processed more efficiently.

2.4.2.7. Deciding how to use the system

Although the GIS is not a new tool, it has not been used to any great extent in developing countries. TUB, PACT's technical partner in the design of the GIS, had been trying it out for several years in the context of GTZ's scientific projects in China. TUB has also used it as an interactive planning tool in projects to rebuild local government in East Germany following reunification. Since 2004, there has been three-way cooperation between TUB, PACT and the GTZ's North Mali programme.

The SNV consultant had used the GIS at a national level to produce the atlas of Mali's population, at a regional level to help the regional assembly of Mopti to prepare its PDESC and at a 'cercle' level for the CCCs of Douentza and Mopti.

All these experiences mean that the GIS has already proved its worth as a decentralisation support tool at any administrative level in the decentralised system.

The SNV's primary maps, taken from the OISE database maps for administrative entities and produced for the natural environment by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), was drawn up for the whole Koulikoro region. Detailed cleaning and correcting was done and information on the three 'cercles' in which SNV is working (Banamba, Dioïla, Koulikoro) was entered into the database. At present, the SNV teams, CCC advisors and partners in the field (such as the regional chamber of agriculture of Koulikoro) are being trained to use the GIS database so that everyone can master the tool and use it to meet their needs. It will also be possible to validate the database at this stage. These learning stages are very important as they will enable everyone to discover the tool's potential and the problems entailed in data entry. Initial training will be followed by refresher training and more detailed thematic developments in keeping up with the demand from users. The ultimate aim is for municipalities themselves to be able to use and add to the database.

87- *This database re-uses the single identifier allocated to each administrative entity by the National Statistics and Informatics Directorate (DNSI) during general population censuses. This code makes it possible to exchange data readily but is unfortunately only rarely used.*

88- *See the Seminar on 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning', Bamako, 17-18 May 2006.*

At PACT, the process started with a trial in the 'cercle' of Kati. The GIS database was then extended to other 'cercles' covered by the programme. In both cases, primary maps were drawn up and satellite images and aerial photographs were included along with statistical data. PACT then carried out data analysis and processing and the results were presented in three forms: electronically, on paper and on the internet. PACT now offers GIS products on demand in line with local needs.

Some advisors have also been trained to use GPS devices and to understand the notion of global positioning (geographical coordinates, projections, etc.). Having to get used to using a 'sophisticated' device was felt to be a test but was ultimately considered to be an interesting experience. The advisors are now regularly able to supply the data collected during field trips.

The costs of the process are difficult to estimate as, in addition to the costs of purchasing computer equipment, software, imaging and map stocks, there was a major investment of time. However, when the system is up and running, data analysis and processing may be faster, providing high-quality products to support decision-making or to help municipalities to improve the documentation they offer to their financial partners.

2.4.2.8. Capacity building

The GIS tool is helping to build the capacity of local governments. As municipal actors know more about their area, they are able to take decisions in full knowledge of the facts and to provide better support for their arguments when talking to their partners. Moreover, GIS products are making local authorities and their activities more visible.

The challenge of capacity building continues to be one of harmonising GIS and statistical production work. All those involved in local governance will nevertheless have to adopt good practices to ensure that usable, updated data are available for efficient planning and monitoring of their development work.

If this tool is well understood and if all those involved have ownership of it, it should change the relationships between technical departments and local governments. It should be noted that a degree

of synergy needs to be developed as regards the information needed for these databases and their use, if the GIS is to be a tool that is useful for everyone, at all levels of decentralisation.

2.4.2.9. Ownership, viability, adaptation and replication of the process

The approaches of SNV and PACT differ in regard to the actual users of the GIS. PACT does not consider the computerised tool to be directly usable by municipal actors. They will use only the products produced to meet their needs. Only specialist personnel in charge of the GIS will use the tool directly to produce maps. In contrast, SNV wants to make the tool directly available to users (the regional chamber of agriculture of Koulikoro, for instance), so that the full potential of the tool can be exploited. An approach of this kind obviously requires a major investment in initial and refresher training, detailed thematic development and backup from someone with high-level experience of this kind of tool. In particular, guides to operating and working methods and safeguards to preserve the quality of the parent database will be needed. A great deal of work will therefore be required to support ownership in the following ways if the system is to be sustainable:

■ GIS instruction manual: information on the metadata (table content) + methods of constructing indicators and the thresholds and standards used;
■ user manual for a GIS database using MapInfo;
■ GIS database operating methods for basic users;
■ guide to good practice in the formatting of data spreadsheets;
■ module on statistical processing and mapping notions, etc.

In the case of SNV, ownership of such a highly complex and technical tool by local actors is a very ambitious challenge.

In the case of PACT, it is not the computer tool itself but the GIS products that are to be owned. During the testing process, many advisors (PACT staff, CCC advisors, service providers) received training from PACT so that the maps could be used specifically at municipal planning meetings.

PACT mentors in the field helped municipal actors to understand the content of these maps and to use them in their daily work.

The dynamic and evolving nature of the GIS is one of its strengths. It is open to and is even 'greedy' for data at different dates, enabling comparisons. It is this 'time dimension' in practice that makes it an interesting monitoring and evaluation tool. It is also easy to open the initial database up to new themes and to include new geographical areas.

If each organisation setting up a GIS were to observe a few common rules, it would be possible to join the pieces of the puzzle and obtain an overall GIS for Mali that everyone could use. However, an overall GIS containing all existing statistical data on the administrative entities of the country would seem to be a rather utopian concept. It would be better to develop a platform for concerted action and exchange using GIS tools, so that proper and updated maps from individual and thematic databases can be made available. This would give everyone the information that they need to construct a GIS in keeping with their needs and, as part of a shared process, either to pass on the data that they have collected or the new primary maps that they have digitized.

2.4.2.10. Results and lessons learned

Results

In the case of SNV, it is still too early to discuss results. Future users are nevertheless expecting a great deal from this tool.

The PACT tool makes it possible to produce thematic maps that CCC and PACT advisors can use at municipal development planning workshops. It also provides maps that can be used for brochures presenting information about each local authority and providing information on municipalities for visitors or potential partners (state departments, development organisations). It can be used to flesh out municipal PDESCs, reports on visits and study reports. It can be used to draw up reference situations for 'cercles'. The PACT's GIS products, moreover, provide much better knowledge of the environment and are making municipalities more visible. The tool also has an educational role to play in learning about municipal areas and municipal organisation. The GIS computer tool can also be used to simulate different scenarios for a given problem, which may well facilitate decision-making.

In the 'cercle' of Macina, for instance, the GIS, by locating water points, the paths followed by animals and pasturing zones, proved to be very useful when an agreement between municipalities was being drawn up. The joint formulation (by municipal actors, technical departments and PACT) of an agro-pastoral map of all the municipalities of the 'cercle' greatly facilitated decision-making. By enabling various actors to compare and contrast their spatial perceptions, this exercise provided a climate in which farmers and pastoralists could work together, leading, in 2006, to a reduction of conflicts (which had often ended in death) between farmers and stockbreeders.

Lessons learned

■ In Malian society few maps are available and little use is made of them. If they are to be better appreciated, their use needs to become more commonplace. If schoolteachers were to use maps of their municipality, children could learn to read them. These children are the citizens and potential elected officials of tomorrow.

■ It is still difficult to obtain integrated, up-to-date primary maps and correct computer files with reliable, dated statistics whose source is known and whose statistical units are identified by a code that everyone recognises. All data producers therefore need to be encouraged to provide instructions on the use of their databases. Geocoding that is accepted by everyone (such as DNSI's village, municipality, 'cercle' and region codes) needs to be applied as a principle so that data are easier to exchange, and rules on data formatting, especially in Excel® spreadsheets, need to be followed.

■ Obtaining statistical data at a municipal level is no easy task in Mali. In some cases, the data are available only at 'cercle' level. Technical departments need to be more closely involved to make them more aware of this shortcoming and to take steps to remedy it.

■ Development of the GIS and the use of its products are generating additional costs. Growing numbers of maps and their distribution increase the consumption of physical resources (ink, paper) as well as the human resources required for such work. Some principles therefore need to be applied: the use, wherever possible, of computer files rather than paper printouts and the production of maps in black and white, which are not just easier to copy but also cost less than colour printouts.

■ Maps can be used to support municipal or inter-municipal decision-making and planning, even in a country where literacy is low. Training and local capacity building is nevertheless a must if people are to learn how to read maps.

■ Learning to use a GIS database is not enough on its own: statistical processing abilities need to be improved and technical notions about cartography taught. Otherwise, the database and its applications will have to be the preserve of a 'specialist', which increases costs and decreases managers' and users' autonomy.

2.4.3. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

From the point of view of governance, it is as important to possess information as it is to possess power and financial resources. Good sharing of information is a major step towards good governance, but it may not be to the taste of people who derive their power from the information that they possess. Making information more democratic is therefore a challenge and a gauge of transparency. The GIS, because it helps information to be shared, may pave the way for a dialogue among all the actors: local government/ state, local government/civil society, as well as actors from the private sector.

As these two examples show, GIS tools can be used for municipal planning (particularly for PDESCs) and as a support for decision-making. Maps can be produced from the GIS, making statistics easier to understand and interpret. Query by location also helps to improve spatial analysis and to provide a better knowledge of an area. Municipalities and their support structures can therefore know more about their areas and better understand how they are organised. They are then in a better position to develop and manage them.

As these systems make it possible to draw up overviews for different dates, the GIS may also be a tool for monitoring and evaluation. The maps produced illustrate what changes have actually taken place between two periods and are easier to analyse than statistical tables. The GIS thus helps elected officials and other local actors to work more effectively and to make decisions that are more objective — and easier to justify to local people. Elected officials can use the maps to demonstrate the impact of their policies, choices and actions to local people. The GIS may also be used to underpin negotiations with national and regional authorities with a view to improving the location of basic infrastructures.

The cross-referencing that the GIS enables means that the data collected from other monitoring and evaluation tools can be better analysed. Municipal data, processed in a more systematic way, become more readable and accessible. As the tool makes it possible, moreover, to aggregate data to higher levels ('cercle', region), it is making people aware of the problems inherent in the current statistical system (i.e., the fact that data are rarely available at the local level). The fact that basic data collection is such a major task is, moreover, one of the reasons many people are reluctant to set up a GIS. The GIS could therefore, if it is felt to be useful, bring about a 'reform/revolution' of the whole Malian statistical system and could readily combine information at a level that can realistically be managed. In practice, these tools help populations, through their municipal representatives, to use statistics for their own management purposes without having to depend on national or regional experts.

Setting up a platform for an exchange of GIS experiences could well be a further challenge. This would provide a forum for concerted action and for sharing methods, allied tools, statistical data and primary maps. It could serve not just to avoid re-inventing the wheel but also for the digitalization, verification and correction of primary maps or the standardisation of statistics.

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

CCC	Centre de Conseil Communal/Municipal Advisory Centre
DERK	Développement Économique Rural de la Région de Koulikoro/Rural Economic Development of Koulikoro Region
DNCT	Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales/National Directorate for Local Government
DNSI	Direction Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Informatique/National Statistics and Informatics Directorate
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPS	Global Positioning System
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit/German Technical Cooperation
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics
LG	Local Governance
MATCL	Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales/Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OISE	Outil Informatisé de Suivi Évaluation/computerised monitoring-evaluation tool
PACT	Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales/Local Government Support Programme
PDESC	Plan de Développement Économique, Social et Culturel/Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SIEC-S	Système d'Information Essentielle pour la Commune dans le secteur de la Santé/Basic Health Sector Information System for Municipalities
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
TUB	Technical University of Berlin

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Mullon, C. and P. Boursier. 1992. Éléments pour une analyse critique des systèmes d'information géographique. Revue SIGAS, Vol. 2, No 2/1992: 152-172.

ANNEX III: RESOURCE PERSONS, ONLINE DOCUMENTS AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

Resource persons:

Florence Dumont
Email : dumontflo@yahoo.fr

Bakary Samaké
Email : bakary.samake@gtz-pact.org

Links:

PACT's GIS:
http://www.tu-berlin.de/fb7/kartographie/projekte/mali/ mali.htm

SNV's GIS (shortly):
www.afribone.net.ml/spip-snv

Useful addresses:

PACT
Badalabougou Est
BP 100, Bamako, Mali
Tel: (+223) 223 62 63
Fax: (+223) 223 38 05

SNV
Rue 17, porte 305 Badalabougou Est
BP 2220 Bamako, Mali
Tel: (+223) 223 33 47 and 48
Fax: (+223) 223 10 84

2.5. Mali: Municipalities in figures: needs and realities

This case study, **'Municipalities in figures: needs and realities'**, was prepared by Elsbet Lodenstein and Ulrich Caspari, assisted by Florence Dumont (see Annex IV).

The authors compare two approaches to the participatory drafting of a municipal Reference Situation (RS) that were tested in the same region of Mali. These trials, run jointly by SNV and GTZ/PACT, are part and parcel of efforts to improve the municipal planning methods used in the local government support system of the Malian government and its financial and technical partners.

The study highlights the enormous challenges faced by local governments, which are increasingly in need of statistical data in order to improve municipal planning, and thus pave the way for genuine monitoring of local development. These challenges are also being faced by the various technical partners (development organisations, state technical departments and private service providers) who have to be able to adapt the services they offer to changes in demand from local government, and to assist with the replication of promising approaches.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Mayor, what is the area of your municipality, and how many people live there? What indicators need to be taken into account if the health sector is to be successfully developed? To what extent are natural resources in your municipality being exploited? With regard to education, do you want to build a new school or invest in maintaining the one you have?

Where can all this information be found and how can it be used to plan municipal development?

These questions, often connected with basic municipal services, are faced by the actors in local governance during municipal planning processes. The mayors and councillors then have to decide how the problems of their area can be resolved. On what basis? They can draw on the policy guidelines of the municipal council, the technical expertise of local public service workers, and/or the opinions of the local population. In most cases, however, baseline data, guidelines, and other precise points of reference are not available in Mali at the municipal level. Municipalities, which are now responsible for their own development, do not have access to detailed studies *(monographies)*[89], and sector information is aggregated at the higher level of the 'cercle' or the region.

One of the lessons learned from the shortcomings of the first generation of Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans (PDESCs), dating from 2001, was that the planning process needed to be improved. A simple and pragmatic proposal was therefore to draw up an inventory of the key indicators of municipal development before embarking on any long-term planning. With the support of the Local Government Support Programme (PACT) of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and SNV Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV-Mali), 60 or so municipalities in the Koulikoro region (in the 'cercles' of Banamba, Dioïla, Kati and Koulikoro) drew up such an inventory using the 'Reference Situation' (RS) drafting tool designed for this purpose (see Box 1).

Box 1: Place of the Reference Situation in the municipal planning process (2004/2005)

1) Translation Box
- Decision by the municipal council
- Creation of a steering committee
- Drafting of a code of ethics
- Drafting of the review of the previous PDESC
- **Drafting of the Reference Situation**
- Definition of planning policy

2) Planning
- Information and awareness campaign
- Village diagnosis
- Consultation days / consultation between communities
- Planning meeting
- Drafting of the plan
- Feedback on the plan
- Validation of the plan

3) Implementation
- Dissemination of the plan
- Meeting with partners
- Annual budgeting
  - Presentation to population
  - Resource mobilisation
  - Monitoring mechanisms

89- In our case, the study provides a snapshot of the features of the municipality - history, demographics, economy, natural resources, infrastructure, etc. - that can be used as reference point for planning future action.

This experiment was conducted against the backdrop of many challenges faced by all the support programmes involved in the administrative reform arising from decentralisation:

■ the lack of financial and human resources on the part of local government;
■ the transfer of a host of responsibilities from the state to local government, without the concomitant transfer of the resources and means needed to exercise these new competencies;
■ the responsibility for designing, planning and implementing development measures now incumbent on local governments;[90] and
■ parallel sector planning unconnected with municipal planning, and vice versa; and
■ the insufficient decentralisation of state technical departments.[91]

The RS tool was initially designed for municipal planning. As matters stand, the trial described cannot yet claim to be a tool for monitoring and evaluation. The tool, its method of use, and its technical aspects, are still being adapted and improved. It has been validated locally, but has been used only once as a reference document in the limited context of an inventory of municipal development indicators. It is nevertheless useful to present this tool and to discuss the challenges that we and our partners faced in improving the planning, and monitoring and evaluation, of

decentralisation and local governance in Mali. We feel that the best way to improve the RS tool, which is undoubtedly necessary, and to fuel thinking about future developments, is to share the knowledge and experience gained from the use of this tool. The approach used to build local actors' capacities, and the lessons learned, may also provide food for thought for sub-regional partners keen to use similar tools.

This case study summarises the process by which the RSs were drawn up in the areas covered by SNV and PACT. Methods of documenting and assessing the experiences gained in the use of these RSs are briefly reviewed in Chapter 2.5.1. The context, objectives and approach of the RS are discussed in Chapter 2.5.2. The stage-by-stage process by which the RS was drawn up is reviewed in Chapter 2.5.3. Technical issues are put to one side in Chapter 2.5.4 which highlights the development of cooperation between local government and technical departments in the process of drawing up the RS. The impact on local government capacities for data collection and analysis is also examined. The lessons to be learned from this experience are discussed in Chapter 2.5.5. Chapter 2.5.6 offers the actors involved some recommendations and prospects for further progress with the RS.

90- Law 93-008 setting out the conditions for the freedom of administration of local government, as amended by Law 96-056 of 16 October 1996.
91- MATCL and UNDP (2005). p. 7.

2.5.1. METHODOLOGY OF STOCK-TAKING AND ASSESSMENT

The stock-taking and assessment of the experiences described in this case study took place over a period of two years. In this process, three main stages can be identified:

Stage 1- defining problems:

All of the support organisations involved in the National Support Programme for Local Government, and local governments themselves, identified several shortcomings in the first generation of Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans (PDESCs). These included lack of consistency in municipal plans, gaps in the starting data and low-level links with national objectives, PRSP indicators and the MDGs. The same findings were also set out in a national study of local planning in Mali conducted by the National Local Government Directorate (DNCT) of the Ministry of Local Governance and Territorial Administration and by the Ministry of Planning and Regional Planning (MPAT).[92]

Stage 2- mobilising the available knowledge:

Joint stock-taking and analysis with actors in governance took place chiefly through working sessions at regional, 'cercle' and municipal levels. A wide range of actors were involved: local municipal planning actors, decentralised state technical departments, providers, municipal advisory centres (CCCs)[93] and their support organisations (SNV and PACT).

Stage 3- drawing the strands together:

Thinking about the knowledge to be shared started at the municipal level and continued at the national level. At the local level, a panel of actors, representing cases of both successful and unsuccessful use of the tool, took part in a final survey and in the working sessions. At the national level, the core municipal planning group[94] organised a discussion of the tool's relevance to other planning tools. Finally, at a sub-regional seminar, 'Capacity building for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning', the tool was compared with other initiatives and the lessons learned were fleshed out.

The broad lines of the whole process of stock-taking and analysis, as well as its results, were therefore shared with local users: elected officers, town clerks and municipal workers from decentralised services. The CCCs, PACT and SNV drew up documents on the key stages (see Annex IV).

In the case of the 'cercle' of Kati, an RS tool was modified in order to better meet the needs of this level of government. The points of view of users in the 'cercle' of Kati have yet to be summarised. The views of national actors are also included, although they have yet to give their views on replication and institutionalisation.

During the stock-taking and assessment process two main problems emerged:

■ The first is connected with the inherent dynamics of the municipal planning process. The RS tool was initially designed in practice to fill a gap within a multi-stage planning process (see Box 1). Analysis of the data collected was therefore to be used as a starting point for further stages following on from the RS process. It was difficult, however, to pinpoint observations on the process to draw up the RS within the local environment, where there are constraints on the time and resources available for the planning process as a whole.

■ The second problem is connected with the method of steering the approach and modification of the RS tool by local planning actors and the structures working with them. When local actors felt the tool to be incomplete or overly ambitious, they added or removed some indicators. While such adaptations to the local context are understandable, they led to changes in the trial variables, which ultimately made it difficult to compare the lessons learned.

92- PRECAGED (2004).

93- The role of the CCCs is to provide local government with advice on the drafting of the PDESCs and support plans and to lead the local policy committee (CLO - Comité Local d'Orientation).

94- The core municipal planning group of practitioners and decision makers was set up in 2002 to foster exchanges of experiences in the context of decentralisation in Mali. The group includes representatives of support programmes such as SNV (Koulikoro Local Governance programme), PACT, Decentralisation Support Programme in the Koulikoro Region (PADK) and the National Local Government Directorate (DNCT), the National Coordination Unit (CCN), municipal advisory centres (CCCs), the central services of the Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development: the National Territorial Development Directorate (DNAT), the National Population Directorate (DNP), the National Planning and Development Directorate (DNPD), the National Statistics and Informatics Directorate (DNSI), and the National Capacity Building Programme for Strategic Development Management (PRECAGED). PACT & SNV/EGLK (2004, 2005).

2.5.2. CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

2.5.2.1. Decentralisation, devolution and municipal planning

Decentralised local government in Mali includes 70 communes, 49 'cercles', 8 regions and one district, all of which have legal personality, financial autonomy and decision-making powers exercised under the supervision of a state representative. Local government prerogatives include freedom of administration and the gradual transfer of powers, particularly in the fields of education, health and water. Although this transfer of powers should have been accompanied by a concomitant transfer of resources needed to exercise these powers, local authorities have not yet received them.

Very slow progress is being made with devolution and increased decision-making powers on the part of local staff. The 2005 GOLDD[95] study showed, among other things, that almost no devolved state services are to be found at municipal level. Moreover, those services to be found at 'cercle' level are not really functional, as they lack even the most basic operational requirements.

Local authorities have a mandate for planning and implementing development measures.[96] When the first planning process was run (2000), the 684 new rural municipalities used the methodological guidelines disseminated by MATCL, their supervising ministry.[97] Proposed improvements to these very simple and comprehensible national guidelines in 2004 took the form of a preliminary draft training module for CCC advisors on PDESC drafting.[98] Unfortunately, however, these proposals have never been adopted. New national guidelines are not yet available, and ways of improving the second municipal planning process, between 2004 and 2005, were therefore left to the discretion and capacity of local actors and support organisations.[99]

Between these two municipal planning periods, the institutional environment underwent far-reaching changes. While the ministry supervising local government was still competent when the first generation of municipal plans was drawn up, it had to share the steering of the second process with the central departments of the new Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development. Improvements to the municipal planning process were not helped by this changing institutional environment.

2.5.2.2. The area covered by the case study: the Koulikoro region

The RS tool was designed and applied in 66 local authorities of the Koulikoro region that had been targeted by PACT and the SNV in the context of their support for decentralisation and local governance (see Box 2).

Consisting of seven 'cercles' and 108 municipalities, the Koulikoro region covers an area[100] of 90,677 km². The urban municipality of Koulikoro is the capital of the 'cercle' and the region. Bamako, the national capital with six urban municipalities, forms an enclave within the region and the specific administrative entity of the District of Bamako.

95- *Local Governance and Decentralisation Programme (GOLDD) study, MATCL & UNDP (2005).*

96- *Law 93-008 setting out the conditions for the freedom of administration of local government, as amended by Law 96-056 of 16 October 1996, and Law 95-034 establishing a local government code in the Republic of Mali, as amended by Law 98-066 of 30 December 1998.*
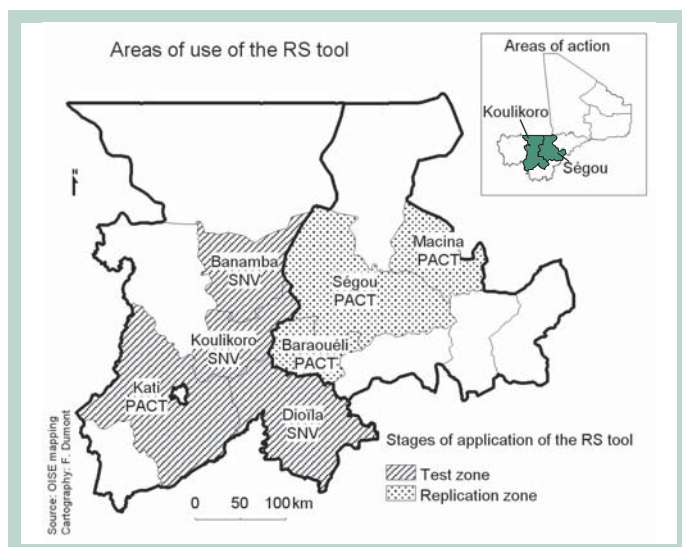
97- *MDRI (2000). For a summary of discussions of municipal planning in Mali, see also Nassire, M. (2001) in MATCL/DNCT (2001), p. 16-31.*

98- *DNATCT (2004).*

99- *PACT (2004).*

100- *Calculated from OISE mapping.*

Areas of use of the RS tool

Source: OISE mapping
Cartography: F. Dumont

Stages of application of the RS tool
Test zone
Replication zone

SNV led the CCCs of the 'cercles' of Banamba, Dioïla and Koulikoro and thus assisted 41 municipalities and three 'cercle' councils in the Koulikoro region. PACT, currently the support and assistance organisation for the CCC of Kati and its 37 municipalities, led the CCC up to 2005.

Together, the two support programmes assisted these 78 municipalities in drawing up their municipal plans in 2000 and 2004. PACT then extended the use of this tool to the 'cercles' of Ségou, Barouéli and Macina.

With an estimated population of 1.7 million in 2001[101], the Koulikoro region covers four climatic zones, ranging from arid near to the Mauritanian border in the north, to humid near the Guinean border in the south. Some 80% of its multi-ethnic population work in agriculture.

The problems faced by municipalities in obtaining advisory support from technical departments and statistical data on the municipality can be seen from the extent to which technical departments have been devolved in the region: 23 regional directorates (devolved state services) are represented in the region's capital, 11 are to be found at 'cercle' level and only five at municipal level, where they represent the sub-sectors of agriculture and livestock, nature conservation and health[102].

2.5.2.3. Motivations and objectives

SNV and PACT and their partners supported a participatory process to devise an RS tool. Their initial motivations and objectives were:

■ to improve the municipal planning process;
■ to build the capacities of local actors in municipal data collection and analysis; and
■ to improve cooperation between the local actors involved in municipal planning and local technical departments.

During the trial, we found that the approach could be used to meet other objectives in the area of decentralisation support:

■ by demonstrating, in a pragmatic way, the links between decentralisation (municipal planning) and the fight against poverty (use of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators);
■ by promoting long-term strategic planning;
■ by encouraging municipal actors to take a more responsible attitude towards data management and monitoring and evaluation; and
■ by stepping up the introduction of basic services and improving their operation.

Three sets of actors played an active part in developing the RS tool:

■ support organisations - the municipal advisory centres (CCCs), SNV and PACT - steered the design of the tool and provided backup for local government;
■ the municipal steering committees (CPCs) applied the tool. Each CPC is a streamlined working group that is not subject to any administrative formalities[103]. Each CPC is chaired by a member of the municipal executive (the mayor or a deputy mayor) and includes a municipal councillor, the town clerk, representatives of local technical departments (health, education, agriculture) and a representative of civil society. It can also call upon resource persons if specific expertise is needed.

101- DRPS Koulikoro (2003).
102- MATCL and UNDP (2005), p. 37-38.
103- Article 35 of the Local Government Code (Law 95-034) on working groups. In contrast to the working groups, CPCs do not need the approval of the supervisory authority.

The CPC supervises municipal planning on behalf of the municipality, and facilitates ownership of the tools used by local actors. Its mandate is specific and limited in time;

■ the users of the end product, the RS document, are the municipal council and staff and local technical departments at 'cercle' level, the supervisory authority, the CCCs, support organisations, providers, members of the local policy committee (CLO),[104] and the 'cercle' council.

These actors wanted to take part in the process of drawing up the RS or to use the product for different reasons:

■ SNV and PACT wanted to try out new approaches and to help in the design of planning tools;
■ for the CCCs, this was their conventional task of support for local government as specified in their remit;
■ local technical departments were aware that the task of setting up municipal databases would be tricky at all levels for all the actors involved in decentralisation. They were keen to take part in the process as technicians and as local government advisors;
■ municipalities needed to make progress with the planning process and to obtain a reference document (monograph); and
■ providers were keen to get to grips with a new working tool.

2.5.2.4. The approach

The RS tool was devised in a multi-actor environment, in a context in which the stakeholders had little experience with the use of municipal databases. For this reason, SNV and PACT opted for a learning and experimentation approach through which the capacities of the actors could be strengthened and the tool adapted in line with the experience acquired. Ongoing thinking and the process of stock-taking and analysis made it possible gradually to improve the tool and the process, and to plan the subsequent stages.

104- See Decree 269/PM-RM of 8 June 2000 creating the National Policy Committee (CNO) on technical support for local government. The remit of the CLO at 'cercle' level is to draw up, steer, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the technical support needed for the implementation of local government development programmes in the 'cercle'. The CLO is composed of the Prefect, one elected officer per municipality and the representative of the Chambers of Agriculture and Trade and may be extended to include technical services.

2.5.3. DRAWING UP THE REFERENCE SITUATION

2.5.3.1. Stages

The drafting of the RS took place in three stages: the design of the tool, the drafting of the municipal RS, and the use of the RS document (see Box 3). The three stages were structured as follows:

Box 3: Drawing up the Reference Situation: the stages

Phase	Stages	Actors involved	Outcome
Design	Stage 1: Drafting of the first version of the RS data collection guide	Koulikoro CCC Network	**Data collection guide for the Reference Situation, October 2004**
	Stage 2: Testing of the collection guide	LG (CP, SG), providers, CCC	
	Stage 3: Adaptation of the guide, drafting of the second version of the data collection guide Koulikoro CCC Network	Technical departments (TD), providers, CLO, CCC	
Drafting	Stage 4: Information, training and awareness-raising for municipal actors	TD, LG, providers, CLO, CCC	**Reference Situation available for 66 municipalities and 3 'cercles', December 2004-March 2005**
	Stage 5: Data collection	LG (CP, SG), TD, providers, CCC	
	Stage 6: Data analysis	TD, providers, CCC, CPC	
	Stage 7: Inputting and compilation of data	Providers, CCC, support orgs.	
Use	Stage 8: Analysis and use of the RS for drafting the PDESC (Social, Economic and Cultural Development Plan)	LG (municipal council, municipal staff), CPC, TD, NGOs, associations, CCC	**2005-2009 PDESCs**

Stage 1: Design of the RS data collection guide

In order to draw up the RS data collection guide (stage 1), the CCC network of the Koulikoro region[105], PACT and SNV drew on their own experiences of planning and data collection. The RS was designed as a technical diagnostic tool with conventional content. Advisors drew on Malian planning sectors and planning tools such as the draft DNATCT guide (2004) and the guide for the drafting of development schemes.[106] They also consulted sector programme indicators, the Malian Poverty Assessment Survey (EMEP)[107], Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The first draft version of the RS tool included 40 or so tables covering four development sectors (see Box 4). The source of the information was given below each table. From the point of view of the types of information, the qualitative data were

105- The seven CCCs of the Koulikoro region formed a network to pool experiences in carrying out their remit. In 2004, they decided to draw up the data collection guide for the drafting of the RS.
106- PRECAGED (2001).
107- Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development - National Statistics and Informatics Directorate: Malian Poverty Assessment Survey (EMEP), Principal findings, Bamako, 2004.

on a par with quantitative data. This particular method made it possible to understand the problems and potential of each sector, and to supplement statistical information that was of mediocre quality or not available.

Box 4: Planning sectors and types of information

Planning sectors:
 ‣ *Human resources:* population, health, education, political environment, voluntary sector, private sector
 ‣ *Rural economy:* agriculture, livestock, fisheries, horticulture, forestry
 ‣ *Infrastructure and equipment :* public buildings, roads, communications
 ‣ *Industry:* crafts, commerce, industry, tourism

Types of information
 ‣ *Statistical:* demographics, election results, education, health, agricultural output and equipment, livestock, forestry, infrastructure, roads, energy, industry, craft sector, tourism, commerce
 ‣ *Qualitative data:* socio-cultural fields, organisation of professional and agricultural structures, service providers and basic services, natural resources management (use, potential, constraints), ecology. 'Gender' relations were described for each sector
 ‣ *Indicators (norms, standards, values):* education, health, water, forestry, agriculture, livestock

This first draft version of the data collection tool was adapted after trials (stage 2) in six municipalities of the 'cercles' of Banamba, Koulikoro and Dioïla (SNV). In the 'cercle' of Kati, the tool was adapted by the supervisory authority, technical departments, mayors and town clerks at a two-day working session of the local policy committee (CLO).

The criteria for the choice of the trial municipalities were the number of villages they contained, and their areas, so that the time and resources required could be evaluated and compared. Local actors in the 'cercle' of Koulikoro then met at a workshop at which technical departments, providers, NGOs, local authorities and municipal staff gave their views on the quality of the tables. Internal consultations within SNV and PACT also made it possible to improve the content of some tables. A second version of the data collection tool emerged from the trials and consultations (stage 3). At present, the tool is still a working document. The CCCs of the region are discussing its content, as well as the process and the roles and responsibilities of the various actors, and the support they need. At the national level, the tool has been presented and discussed at two meetings of the core planning group.

Stage 2: Drafting of the RS

In the 'cercles' of Banamba, Dioïla, Kati and Koulikoro, the CCCs organised a training course on municipal planning, with a module on the use of the data collection guide when drawing up the RS. Town clerks, municipal officers and providers participated in this course. After this training, the CCCs in the 'cercles' of Dioïla and Kati provided municipalities with individual counselling and support, particularly at working sessions with the steering committees.

In all the 'cercles', the local policy committee was a very good vehicle for raising awareness among mayors and for monitoring how the stages were progressing. At these CLO meetings the administration (the Prefect) could be informed and persuaded to make technical departments available to the local authorities. In the 'cercle' of Kati, an additional meeting was held with elected officers, technical departments and town clerks to conduct a mid-term review of the application of the tool.

SNV: a provider-based approach

One of the findings that emerged from the trials of the data collection guide was that the workloads of local authorities and CCCs, and their lack of human and financial resources, could slow down the process of drawing up the RS and affect the quality of the results. As a result, SNV asked a group of providers to collect these data. These providers came from the Regional Coordination of NGOs in Koulikoro (CR-ONG), which brings together NGOs, researchers and private consultants, most of whom had considerable experience in the area of decentralisation and were aware of the realities facing the municipalities. SNV set up a fund to coordinate and organise their travel and for centralising the data input process. The RS exercise was also intended to provide information for an SNV study of poverty in Koulikoro region.

These providers, often assisted by technical departments and town clerks, began data collection in those municipalities that possessed basic registry data, old reports or other project documents. To supplement these data, visits were made to villages, community facilities and technical departments. After the municipal RSs were prepared, SNV drew up a summary document for the 'cercle' council.

PACT: 'learning from experience'

Limited financial resources and the desire to strengthen cooperation between local government and technical departments were factors that ruled out a provider-based approach. PACT therefore used a different strategy for applying the tool in the municipalities of the 'cercle' of Kati.

In this 'cercle', the CLO had opted to make the CPC responsible for applying the RS tool. The task of the CPC was to facilitate data collection and to draw up reports on and summaries of the work conducted. Two-thirds (25) of the 37 municipalities of the 'cercle' of Kati drew up their RS using the process steered by the CPC.

Following this stage of awareness raising, information and training (stage 4), the actual data collection was launched. For this, SNV and PACT used different methods (see Box 5).

In both cases, the CCCs coordinated data collection and analysis (stages 5 and 6). They systematically monitored the work of the providers or CPCs, checked the extent to which the tables had been completed, and assessed the availability and quality of the data collected. They identified any gaps and worked with technical departments and providers to make corrections so that a satisfactory result could be achieved. Finally, they computerised the data (stage 7). Paper versions of the RS documents were then made available to municipalities and the other actors.

Stage 3: Using the RS for municipal planning

The municipal planning module made provision for the RS to be 'used' to draw up the PDESC. However, there were no standard methods for analysing the RS, so that the CCCs, PACT and SNV had to try out various data analysis tools. Approaches then had to be developed to translate the results of the analysis into policies, objectives and indicators for the municipal council.

In general, the RS data were analysed before or during municipal council planning meetings. The analysis took the form of a presentation of the quantitative and qualitative data by sector and sub-sector, followed by a discussion of their strengths, weaknesses and challenges. Interpretations of details were validated, where necessary, by technical departments. Following the discussion, the participants drew up five-year global and specific development objectives for each sector. These objectives were then compared with regional sector plans to check whether the objectives set by the municipality were in keeping with national development policy.

In the 'cercle' of Kati, the steering committee had the task of analysing the data and proposing strategic guidelines and policies. Members then had to explain these outcomes to the various municipal councils at their planning meetings.

2.5.3.2. Strengths and weaknesses of the Reference Situation

Data accessibility and availability

Initial experiences with the diagnostic technique used to draw up the local government RSs provided much food for thought on the accessibility of statistical data at municipal and 'cercle' levels.

From the point of view of data availability, data, indicators and standards with regard to basic social services (health, education, water) were available at the higher levels (national and regional) of the respective central departments (see Box 6).

> ### Box 6: Examples of existing databases
>
> ■ the SIGMA II database of the water authorities;
> ■ National Statistics and Informatics Directorate database;
> ■ Health Information System (SIS);
> ■ the Ministry of Public Health's DESAM (Malian Health Development) database;
> ■ the 'school statistics in basic education' yearbook of the Ministry of Education's Planning and Statistics Unit, updated locally by the educational support centres.

These are recent data, either aggregated to the regional, 'cercle' or former *arrondissement* level, or broken down to the municipal level. However, these statistics are often not disseminated beyond 'cercle' level. Paradoxically, they are not made available to devolved state departments at 'cercle' or municipal levels, whose main partners are local actors, even though they are the first link in the data collection chain. It continues to be difficult for municipalities to gain access to exhaustive data on the environment, commerce, transport and natural resources, forestry and fisheries.

Breaking down the data for many sectors is problematic if the data are available only at a higher administrative level ('cercle') or cover geographical entities other than the municipality (agricultural areas, health units, former *arrondissements*, etc.). Data on the agriculture and livestock sub-sectors, for instance, are still

processed for the former *arrondissements*, which include a number of municipalities. Although an initial effort was made to 'municipalize' the data for the RS, i.e. to make the data for all the development sectors available at municipal level, data breakdown continues to pose a challenge for technical departments in some cases.

This was not a problem for the 'cercle' RSs, as all technical departments are to be found at this level. Thus the 'cercle' RSs are more complete than the municipal ones.

The Reference Situation is available - what next?

This first completed exercise provided a 2004 inventory for the various municipalities, with raw data. As the sources of the data were provided, updating the RS in the future should be straightforward.

The RS document has been appreciated by the actors. Elected officers take the view that they need to keep an inventory of their municipality and are convinced of its usefulness for planning. Even though some data are still not available, they feel that the RS is the reference tool for the municipality. At the same time, it is felt that, in its current form, the tool is too 'cumbersome'. Elected officers consider that too many tables need to be completed, and that some data are not very relevant.

The use of the RS to draw up the 2004-2009 economic, social and cultural development plans (PDESCs) took place in an improvised way as there were no standard tools. There is still no RS user guide that is accessible and comprehensible to council and municipal staff. The stages of data analysis and translation into objectives need to be improved to take account of the capacities and needs of the various actors. It will then be important to examine whether the technical diagnoses (the RS) complement the participatory village diagnoses for which elected officers are calling. Moreover, specific analytical tools will need to be developed if the RS is to be used for matters other than municipal planning, such as for sector planning and monitoring and evaluation.

To date, therefore, the main task has been to simplify the content and use of the RS tool in cooperation with technical departments and municipalities.

2.5.3.3. Relevance of the RS for planning and monitoring/evaluation

The initial objectives of the RS were, first, to provide a 2004 inventory and, second, to improve the PDESCs. The knowledge provided by the inventory, and its analysis and synthesis, were intended to provide a basis for municipal councils' strategic policy making over five to ten years, and to enable monitoring and evaluation indicators to be drawn up. The PDESCs would be more coherent as they could take account of all the available data. The extent to which these objectives were achieved is examined below.

Planning municipal development

One of the main outcomes of the process is that 66 communes now have a 2004 RS. The quality of the PDESCs has improved; the second-generation PDESCs, drawn up since 2004 using the municipal RS, reflect a better knowledge of what is happening than those of the first generation drawn up in 2000/2001.

First, development measures are better identified in many PDESCs. The first-generation PDESCs tended to present a list of infrastructure to be built *(quantity)*, while the new ones contain measures to improve the overall performance of sectors through investments in human resources and equipment *(quality)*.

Moreover, by comparing the figures within local government areas it is possible to pinpoint areas that are less 'well-off', and to gear measures to those areas. For instance, the cattle vaccination coverage per agricultural area is now known from the RS, making it possible to target vaccination measures rather than simply planning to 'increase vaccination levels in the municipality'.

Second, the level of investment in basic social services has increased. Now that elected officers are aware of the indicators and the causes of poor

social service performance, they are making more of an effort (see Box 7). These sectors are also key fields in which local government is required to make considerable efforts to achieve the MDGs. Thus, the use of the RS tool has made it possible to integrate the MDG framework into the PDESCs (see Box 8).

Box 7: Comparison of the 2001 and 2005 PDESCs: investments in health and education

In the municipality of Dinandougou ('cercle' of Koulikoro), the planned investment in health in 2001 was XOF 20,783,673, compared with XOF 74,325,000 in the new 2005 PDESC.
In the municipality of Nyamina ('cercle' of Koulikoro), the planned investment in health in 2001 was XOF 21,630,000, compared with XOF 81,600,000 in the 2005 PDESC.
Also in Nyamina, the planned investment in education in 2001 was XOF 59,524,000, compared with XOF 168,615,000 in the 2005 PDESC.

Now that elected officers have access to information, they are better able to take action to assist neglected sectors, or to address problems that had previously been unknown or concealed. For instance, the municipal RS contains information on human resources, education, health, associations and community life, migration, employment, working conditions in technical departments, and dispute settlement. As a result, many PDESCs now include a wider range of activities involving capacity building for local actors, awareness raising, and consultation with and participation by associations in the running of municipalities. The inclusion of 'gender' has also made the PDESCs more coherent. The availability of data broken down by gender and information on the roles of men and women in the various sectors has meant that 'gender' is now playing a greater role in the activities planned.

Monitoring and evaluation of municipal development

The RS tool has considerable potential for monitoring and evaluation. From the point of view of basic municipal social services, objectives, standards and targets are now known, so that trends in development indicators can be monitored in the long term. This initial application of the tool offers some pointers for monitoring and evaluation:

■ First, in our experience with the RS, the indicators are seen in *diagnostic* rather than in process terms. However, the RS tool may be used for evaluation purposes after a period of time. If so, the information contained in the RS will need to be reviewed every three or five years, a comparative analysis carried out and conclusions drawn.

■ Second, the RS contains only a few specific monitoring indicators[108], except in the health, education, water, agriculture, forestry and livestock sectors. In practice, these performance indicators may be monitored more regularly (every year). A weakness of the tool at this stage is that it was not possible to draw up numerical targets for each indicator at the planning meetings.

The tool may therefore have a part to play in monitoring and evaluation, and may also be used to monitor the MDG indicators (see Box 8). At present, however, the frequency, methods and actors involved in updating the RS have meant that the comparative analyses have not yet been drawn up. Updating the RS is a prerequisite for monitoring and evaluation, but little support for this is available, and as yet no guidelines or methodology have been compiled.

Box 8: The Reference Situation and the MDGs

The MDG framework is at present a global framework for development. Applying the RS tool made it possible to take the first steps towards translating national goals into local goals by:

▸ raising awareness, through information sheets and feedback from technical services, which helped to improve understanding of national policies (MDGs and PRSPs). The MDGs are no longer seen as the 'business' of the national government or ideals to be discussed at international conferences. Rather, the actors have been made aware that much of the work of local government is already connected with the MDGs and that this framework may make it easier to draw up policies and help to flesh out goals;

▸ integrating the MDG/PRSP indicators into the RS, especially in the areas of education, water and health. An analysis of the current situation and comparisons with national and regional targets have made it possible for municipalities to pinpoint what measures would be needed to achieve them.

These initiatives led to PDESCs that were much better geared to the fight against poverty since they:

▸ pinpointed the less advantaged areas of municipalities and circles;

▸ contained a greater commitment to basic social services, as reflected in increased investments and measures to improve the ways in which services are run; and

▸ made it possible to monitor each municipality's progress towards achieving poverty reduction goals.

The MDGs provided a general framework for the RS exercise. However, while the MDGs provide a framework for action, more detailed analysis by sector and by indicator is needed. This type of work is not possible at present as a result of the ways in which the PDESCs are drawn up. Moreover, the inclusion of a 'monitoring and evaluation' chapter in the PDESCs, including the key indicators of the RS, may help with monitoring and evaluating the MDGs in relation to the specific needs of the municipality, the population and the local context.

108- *Enabling the achievement of a standard, such as the number of inhabitants per modern water point (MWP). In Mali, the standard for drinking water supplies in rural areas is one MWP per 400 inhabitants.*

2.5.4.1. Capacity building and improving relations between actors

From the local organisational and institutional points of view, the RS drafting process had three effects:[110]

- increased interest in data management;
- improved capacities for data collection and analysis on the part of local government; and
- improved cooperation between technical departments and local government.

Shared interest in data management

The RS drafting process increased the interest in and demand for municipal data management tools. All the actors were aware of the importance of a single database amalgamating municipal data. The fact that local authorities put pressure on technical departments to make data available is a good example of this. At the same time, technical departments understood the importance of data broken down to municipal level, not just because such data were needed by municipalities, but also for their own planning and overall monitoring of trends in each sector. All actors felt that the quality of the data needed to be improved, and that they need to be kept up to date. The RS drafting stage therefore became a key stage for any kind of planning or monitoring and evaluation.

Local government capacities for data collection and analysis

Data collection capacities

The data collection process had little impact on the capacity of elected officers and municipal executives, particularly in the SNV area where a provider-based approach was chosen. Elected officers tended to be passive actors. However, in all areas, town clerks mastered the approach needed to draw up a municipal RS, i.e. the collection of data, checking of survey records, compiling and drafting the document. The mayors tended to regard town clerks and technical departments as 'RS technicians' and often delegated the tasks of data collection and updating the RS to them.

Data analysis capacities

First, the RS drafting exercise gave elected officers a better knowledge of national policies. The PRSPs and MDGs were discussed and used in the analysis of the indicators, and were linked to national policies and translated into local goals (see Box 8).

Second, elected officers felt that the RS had helped them decide on the main outlines of the PDESCs, especially in the education and health sectors[111]. Discussions of the figures and interpretation of the data were the most important factor. Elected officers therefore discovered that statistical data could enhance qualitative village diagnoses. They found that the RS made it possible to pinpoint shortcomings and opportunities that had not been identified during participatory diagnoses. Comparative analysis enhanced the municipalities' overall knowledge of the situation and highlighted specific opportunities/issues in the various fields for which they are responsible.

Third, when analysing the data, local actors discovered that it is difficult strictly to apply the sector and sub-sector classification. They discovered the 'intersectoral' (see Box 9).

Box 9: The 'intersectoral' in the PDESCs

The 'human resources' sector of the RS gives figures on school access to drinking water. During the planning process other water-related issues were included in the 'rural economy' and 'infrastructure' sectors. The RS showed that there were strong links between various sectors and thus encouraged an integrated and more coherent understanding of development, a principle that was not applied in the first PDESCs.

Elected officers became aware that data analysis was not solely the work of technicians.

One of the initial objectives of the planning process was to pave the way for a longer-term vision and to integrate the monitoring and evaluation indicators into the PDESCs. While the RS ought to foster such objectives, analytical tools are still not good enough to enable forward thinking or planning for a five- or ten-year period. Local government monitoring and evaluation capacities have not been adequately strengthened and additional work is needed by sector or sub-sector (see, for instance, SIEC, section 4.1.4.2).

Finally, as the approach focused on municipal planning it did little to meet the capacity-building needs of technical departments, even though these were known.

Improved cooperation between technical departments and local authorities

Technical departments were not very involved in the drafting and implementation of the first generation of municipal plans. Often, they were invited only at the final stage, i.e. to the planning meeting. The drafting of the RS made it possible to involve technical departments from the outset, and in particular from the data collection stage. As a result of a period of information exchange, training and discussions in the local policy committees, most of the technical departments undertook to provide and correct data and indicators. The direct, intensive exchanges between technical departments and local authorities during all the planning stages led to the development of mutual trust and a spirit of cooperation. The planning meetings became a real forum for concerted action where technical departments explained the indicators to elected officers and provided advice for decision making. The concrete outcome of this was improved cooperation. Local governments and technical departments now invite one another to participate in joint activities such as sector planning, preparing case files or implementing municipal projects (see Box 10).

Box 10: Using the RS for sector planning

At a meeting organised by the Kati education authority (17-19 November 2005), all the municipalities of this 'cercle' played an active part in drafting municipal action plans for education by providing the data from their RSs and the list of activities set out in their PDESCs.

Local data and information management is now much more open and transparent, and the various actors are more aware of where to find data and how to access it.

Finally, the negotiating skills of elected officers have been improved, leading to improved dialogue between local governments and technical departments. The result has been to reduce the information gap between them - elected officers now understand what the technical departments are saying - with the result that communication is now on an equal footing.

2.5.4.2. Ownership and replication

It would seem that elected officers do not as yet own the process. All elected officers are calling for technical support when the exercise is repeated, even though data collection has been mastered by town clerks and technical departments. This is probably due to the problems of data accessibility and the intensive nature of the collection work. Data interpretation and analysis require technical assistance especially if they are to be used for planning and for monitoring and evaluation. It would be preferable for assistance to be provided by the service provider commissioned to carry out the data collection and analysis for the first RS.

External assistance will also be needed when the approach becomes more widely disseminated as a result of its institutionalisation. In this case, technical departments will have to be involved as the main mentors for local actors. Some examples of the replication of the RS tool are presented in Box 11.

Box 11: Examples of replication

The RS tool is being replicated in other 'cercles'. In the PACT area, for instance, the members of the Réseau Synergie Décentralisation (SYNDEC)[112] used the RS tool as a starting point for the drafting of municipal RSs. The tool was modified as the collection of qualitative data has been abandoned in order to streamline the process. The modified tool was then used in the planning processes of 11 municipalities of the neighbouring 'cercle' of Barouéli.

112- SYNDEC is a working group formed by decentralisation support structures in the 'cercle' of Ségou. It was set up in 2004 to enable concerted action to support municipal planning in the 30 municipalities of this 'cercle'. It includes ten or so support organisations, including the CCC and PACT. See Réseau SYNDEC, 'cercle' of Ségou (2005 a, b).

SNV has introduced a further municipal planning and monitoring and evaluation tool - the 'Système d'information essentielle de la commune' (SIEC, Essential Information System for the commune) - which can be seen as a continuation of the RS for the health sector. Its aim is to improve the way in which municipal health service performance is monitored. With a view to the transfer of skills, municipalities analyse problems, rank them and identify monitoring indicators in order to evaluate the impact of the proposed solutions. This process is taking place in conjunction with the services concerned and the community health associations.

For the purposes of their geographical information system (GIS), PACT and SNV are transferring some information from the RSs to municipal databases. The GIS can be used to compile thematic maps and efficiently process and analyse the mass of information collected for all municipalities.[113]

2.5.5. LESSONS LEARNED

2.5.5.1. Managing differing interests

Managing such diverse actors and interests was obviously difficult. While support from SNV and PACT helped to improve cooperation between technical departments and local governments, it did not manage to resolve some of the problems resulting from their different points of view. Data management is, in practice, a question of power. Those in possession of information are not always keen to share it. If the RS is not to the liking of technical departments, associations and NGOs, they may not want to validate it. Both cases arose, raising problems from the point of view of the quality of the tool and its institutionalisation.

We learned that it is important to discuss data accessibility and quality with all stakeholders at the outset. An ideal solution would be a database that all the actors contribute to, share, use and in particular validate, and which is managed by a structure appointed by mutual agreement.

2.5.5.2. Finance or capacity building?

In the area of organisational capacity building, a key assumption is that ownership and strengthening of organisational capacities would be undermined when financing is made available for projects. Another assumption was that a provider-based approach (SNV) would be more expensive than a municipality-based approach (PACT).

With regard to these prior assumptions, during the assessment of the experiment, however, two findings emerged:

■ The two approaches had the same effects on the capacities of elected officers and on improved cooperation. In all municipalities ownership was limited, and only town clerks were able to replicate the exercise (chapter 2.5.4). The impact of the municipality-based approach (implemented and financed by the municipality) on capacity building does not seem to be any greater. It would nevertheless be interesting to compare data quality and the municipalities' satisfaction with the results to gain a more detailed idea. We also consider that factors such as leadership and the quality of external facilitation are just as important.
■ Contrary to our expectations, the provider-based approach did not prove to be much more expensive than the municipality-based approach (see Box 12). The total cost of an SNV RS was some XOF 300,000 (EUR 458), compared with XOF 250,000 (EUR 380) for a PACT RS. As a result, this cost, which had played a major part in the choice of the strategy, is therefore not as important as had been assumed.

As the various options did not have the effects envisaged, it would therefore be more interesting to try to find out which option is preferred by municipalities, and which is most satisfactory from the point of view of results.

The following figures only partly reflect the efforts of the stakeholders to facilitate the process, but give an idea of the range of expenditures and the different budget items to be considered.

113- *The sub-regional seminar 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning', Bamako, 17-18 May 2006, provided an opportunity to assess the SIEC and the GIS.*

SNV estimates the total expenditure to prepare the RS in 44 local authorities (41 municipalities and three 'cercle' councils) to be:

Item	Costs in XOF (for 44 RS)
Data collection providers	8,000,000
Providers (data processing)	500,000
Assistance from a CCC advisor at municipal offices in order to help with analysis and synthesis of the RS	2,640,000
CLO technical services and costs	2,200,000 approx. XOF 50,000/authority)
Total for 44 RS	13,340,000
Total cost per RS	300,000 XOF (458 EUR)

PACT estimates the costs of the municipal/'cercle' RS as follows:

Factors	Municipal RS (XOF)	'Cercle' RS (XOF)
Steering committee (operation)	50,000	200,000
Technical services (XOF 4,000/day)	75,000	75,000
Provider (data collection and processing of the document)	250,000	1,000,000
CCC advisor	-	-
Support structure	-	-
Mid-term meeting	25,000	75,000
Feedback workshop	100,000	150,000
Total cost per RS drawn up with a provider	500,000	1,500,000
Total cost per RS drawn up without provider	250,000	500,000

Costs of drawing up a 'cercle' RS

The municipal data have to be aggregated to the 'cercle' level, corrected and supplemented where necessary at feedback meetings with technical services.

SNV's experience (data collection at the 'cercle' level assisted by a provider using a tool in keeping with this local government level) shows that the average costs are comparable with those of an RS. PACT's trials in the 'cercle' of Kati are estimated at some XOF 1,000,000 over a six-month period.

The time needed to draw up a municipal RS in the SNV area (with a provider) was 1 to 2 months. In the PACT area it took 2 months (with a provider) and 4 months (without a provider).

2.5.5.3. Prerequisites

For the application of the tool and, in particular, when mentoring a multi-actor process, some conditions have to be met:

Specifying the roles of the actors involved

Field experience has shown that the roles of local actors in data collection, the provision of the resources needed for the exercise and data management needed to be better specified[114]. Civil society organisations and NGOs have information that can be put to use in data collection and interpretation. Cooperation between municipalities and technical departments should be specified and formalised in a protocol. In Mali, this cooperation is set out in the laws and decrees on decentralisation[115], but it would be better to opt for low-key administrative management of this cooperation and to involve the local government supervisory authority.

Considered choice of data and indicators

For a reliable database, the choice of data and indicators required has to be shaped by the information that is available. A complicated database is difficult to manage, especially by local actors who are not technicians. Consequently, needs have to be met while taking account of the actual situation in the field. For this reason, our advice is to focus on an inventory of existing data. When starting data collection, the first step has to be for technical departments to draw up an inventory of the official information available and to gain agreement on the approach. Prior definitions of indicators should also be drawn up with technical departments.

Analysis of existing capacity

In order to avoid institutional problems from the outset, the support organisations mentoring the approach should make particular efforts to ensure compliance with the principle of involvement of the local government supervisory authority (the Prefect) and the higher hierarchical level of local technical departments (the heads of unit of technical departments at the 'cercle' level and the department responsible for planning).

Over and above municipal planning, external mentoring is needed from the point of view of capacity building. We recommend a prior analysis of existing capacity, followed by drafting of a specific capacity building strategy based on the results of this analysis. On the basis of our experience, we recommend that the following areas be included:

■ communications and improving professional relations (lobbying, presentation, argument);
■ on-the-job mentoring/follow-up for local actors (elected officers, town clerks and technical departments), possibly supplemented by targeted training. Mentoring of this type is needed to develop expertise in local data management and analysis; and
■ mentoring of the local government support and advisory process for staff of technical departments.

114- *Local actors need to be involved in any prior communication on data collection and in the compilation of the data and its subsequent provision to the municipal steering committee and in the analysis of the data with this committee.*
115- *Decree 96-084/P-RM on the conditions and methods under which devolved state services are supplied to local government.*

2.5.6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the process was started in 2004, the Reference Situation has been discussed at local, regional and national levels. It has been discussed and sought out by elected officers, municipal staff, doctors and municipal school staff, support organisations, planners, researchers, technicians from technical departments, partners and donors, etc.

The RS - referred to in this case study as a 'technical diagnosis' 'review', 'database' or 'reference document' - has been used to draw up municipal plans and development plans involving transfers of skills in the fields of education, health and water. It is also starting to be used to manage municipal equipment and resource mobilisation since the RS inventories existing infrastructure and makes it possible to find out what aspects need to be taken into account for tax purposes.

The RS has become the only document of its kind in municipalities that includes a substantial amount of data on all development sectors. It is able to satisfy the information needs of a wide range of actors with different specific objectives. This outcome is encouraging, even though the initial objectives were not all achieved.

The process of joint stock-taking, analysis and exchange made it possible to gather advice from the stakeholders on how the RS could be progressed. We also took account of comments and advice given at the sub-regional seminar in Bamako on 17 and 18 May 2006.

The stakeholders are keen to improve the tool and the approach, the quality of the data collected and the role of users. Representatives of local actors (decentralised technical departments, town clerks, CCC advisors, providers, NGOs and support organisations) put forward various suggestions after the municipal planning process,[116] the most important of which were as follows (for further details, see Annex II):

■ developing an application manual for the RS tool to provide the actors with better guidance;
■ streamlining the tool by eliminating information that is of no use for technical diagnosis and for monitoring and evaluating municipal development;

■ taking steps to break down data to municipal level;
■ making data more reliable by conducting surveys and polls to flesh out the available data; and
■ envisaging the joint management of future municipal databases by municipalities, under the responsibility of mayors, and technical departments.

SNV and PACT recommendations concerned the regular use of the tool and monitoring of PRSP and MDG indicators. We have put forward specific measures for local actors, national actors and the municipal advisory centres, and options for improvement and consolidation (see Annex II).

The other case studies presented at the Bamako seminar convinced us that the involvement of technical departments is paramount in ensuring that the approach is actually applied, since local authorities already have a full workload and their technical capacities are not always adequate.

While exercises to draw up reference situations, monographs or poverty profiles (see the case studies on Cameroon and Ghana) have played an important, even essential, part in planning, they still, as in the case of the RS, have to prove their worth for monitoring and evaluation.

The monitoring and evaluation system of the new European Union Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation (PARAD), under which budget support has been provided for the state reform and decentralisation process in Mali since 2006, drew our attention for two reasons. On one hand, this tool involves specific indicators from the point of view of skills transferred. On the other, although these indicators are few in number (four) they can be seen as an attempt to harmonise the monitoring and evaluation of municipal development. As municipal performance will play an important part in gaining access to the local government investment fund, municipalities will have to focus their efforts on the PARAD indicators.

This new context helped us to pinpoint what potential there was for the future of the RS in the local authorities concerned. First, the 2004 RS may continue to be a reference document or

116- PACT (2006): the survey was conducted in December 2005 in 10 municipalities in the 'cercles' of Kati, Barouéli and Ségou with a working session in Koulikoro on 10 February 2006 organised by SNV.

inventory that covers all sectors of development. Ongoing updating and management are necessary if the information needs of users are to be met. Our wish to institutionalise technical diagnostics at the municipal level is underpinned by the PARAD monitoring and evaluation system. Support from the CCCs and support organisations could be concentrated on achieving the PARAD indicators and possibly other indicators that they or municipalities consider to be relevant. The aim,

as mentioned above (section 2.5.4.1), is to build the capacities of elected officers to carry out detailed sector analyses, and to plan and monitor and evaluate basic services (see the example of the SIEC). This policy could at the same time help to streamline the RS by focusing on some key indicators. Experience of the RS in the Koulikoro region has undoubtedly created a climate in which these proposals could be put into practice.

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

AMM	Association des Municipalités du Mali/Association of Malian Municipalities
ANICT	Agence Nationale d'Investissements des Collectivités Territoriales/National Agency for Local Government Investment
CAP	Centre d'Animation Pédagogique/Educational Support Centre
CCC	Centre de Conseil Communal/Municipal Advisory Centre
CCN	Cellule de Coordination Nationale/National Coordination Unit
CLO	Comité Local d'Orientation/Local Policy Committee
CNO	Comité National d'Orientation/National Policy Committee
CPC	Comité de Pilotage Communal/Municipal Steering Committee
CP	Comité de Pilotage/Steering Committee
CR-ONG	Coordination Régionale des ONG/Regional Coordination of NGOs
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DED	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst/German Development Service
DNAT	Direction Nationale de l'Aménagement du Territoire/National Territorial Development Directorate
DNATCT	Dispositif National des Appuis Techniques aux Collectivités Territoriales/National System for Technical Support for Local Government
DNCT	Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales/National Local Government Directorate
DNP	Direction Nationale de la Population/National Population Directorate
DNPD	Direction Nationale de la Planification du Développement/National Development Planning Directorate
DNSI	Direction Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Informatique/National Statistics and Informatics Directorate
DRPS	Direction Régionale du Plan et de la Statistique/Regional Planning and Statistics Directorate
DRPSIAP	Direction Régionale du Plan, de la Statistique, de l'Informatique, de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de la Population/Regional Planning, Statistics, Informatics, Territorial Development and Population Directorate
EMEP	Enquête Malienne sur l'Evaluation de la Pauvreté (2001)/Malian Poverty Assessment Survey (2001)
GOLDD	Programme de Gouvernance locale, Décentralisation et Déconcentration/Local Governance and Decentralisation Programme
GTZ	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit/German Agency for Technical Cooperation
LG	Local Government
MATCL	Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales/Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals

MDRI	Mission de Décentralisation et des Réformes Institutionnelles/Decentralisation and Institutional Reform Mission
MPAT	Ministère du Plan et de l'Aménagement du Territoire/Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODHD	Observatoire du Développement Humain Durable/Observatory of Sustainable Human Development
OISE	Outil Informatisé de Suivi Evaluation (base de données)/Computerised Monitoring/Evaluation Tool (database)
PACT	Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales/Local Government Support Programme
PADK	Programme d'Appui au Développement de la région de Koulikoro/Decentralisation Support Programme in the Koulikoro Region
PARAD	Programme d'Appui à la Réforme Administrative et à la Décentralisation/Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation
PDESC	Plan de Développement Economique Social et Culturel/Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan
PNACT	Programme National d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales/National Support Programme for Local Government
PNIR	Programme National d'Infrastructures Rurales/National Rural Infrastructure Programme
PRECAGED	Programme de Renforcement des Capacités nationales pour une Gestion stratégique du Développement/National Capacity Building Programme for Strategic Development Management
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
REDL	Réseau de Réflexion et d'Échanges sur le Développement Local/Local Development Think Tank and Discussion Forum
RS	Reference Situation
SAD	Schéma d'Aménagement et de Développement/Development Plan
SIEC	Système d'Information Essentielle pour la Commune/System of Essential Information for Municipalities
SIG	Système d'Information Géographique/Geographical Information System
SIGMA	Système Informatique de Gestion des ressources en eau au Mali/Computerised System for Water Resource Management in Mali
SIS	Système d'Information Sanitaire/Health Information System
SNV	Organisation Néerlandaise de Développement/Netherlands Development Organisation
SYNDEC	Réseau Synergie Décentralisation SYNergy DECentralisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

SNV and PACT recommendations on further progress with the RS

For local actors

In relation to the regular use of the tool and the monitoring of PRSP and MDG indicators, we recommend that elected officers, town clerks and CSOs:

▶ regularly update, for instance on an annual basis, the RS document in order to provide an up-to-date picture and gradually to discover other reliable sources of information;

▶ carry out this updating and data analysis work prior to the annual municipal programme review and before the new annual programme is drawn up;

▶ regularly request the involvement of technical services in updating work in order to show a long-term interest in the compilation and provision of municipal data;

▶ share the updated documents with the actors involved and disseminate them on request;

▶ refer, in the management of municipal business, to the data collected in order to make decision-making mechanisms transparent;

▶ test the relevance of data on a daily basis and retain a critical spirit as regards the reliability of data;

▶ compare each local government RS with those of other municipalities or 'cercles', and share analogies or disparities;

▶ follow up, or even become involved in the discussion of the fine-tuning of the PRSP and MDG indicators in order thereby to assess the pertinence of the municipality's own indicators.

For national actors

With regard to the central, regional and local services of decentralised state departments and the provision of data at municipal level, we recommend:

▶ promoting long-term internal technical capacity building, down to the local level, for the management of the data required by the remit of the respective service;

▶ promoting the breakdown of data to municipal level and regular data updating;

▶ giving local technical services access to the statistics available at national level and training them to process and interpret these data;

▶ obtaining regular information on the statistical services of the respective service.

For CCCs

With regard to the CCCs and their role as intermediaries between local government and their environment, we recommend:

▶ assisting, through practical examples and simple exercises, local government to update and interpret data, in particular town clerks, CPCs and working groups;

▶ facilitating the dissemination of information (sector programmes, PRSPs, MDGs), initiating discussions at the CLO level and strengthening local government and technical service communication strategies;

▶ organising exchanges between CCCs on data management and successful cases (see 'link with other tools');

▶ attaching particular importance to building the capacities of local actors in analysis and long-term planning;

▶ facilitating exchanges and sharing data between technical services, local government, NGOs and local associations.

Options for improving and consolidating the RS

Replication and improvement

▸ apply the RS in the 'cercles' of Ségou and Barouéli and apply the SIEC tool in the 'cercle' of Dioïla (under way). A process of stock-taking and analysis is planned;
▸ produce an RS user manual;
▸ streamline the RS tool and break down the data;
▸ draw up RS documents at the circle level and specify the role and content of the RS.

Institutionalisation

▸ at municipal level: specify how the RS is subsequently to be used in the planning process and improve the municipal development monitoring and evaluation system based on the regular updating of the RS tool;
▸ at 'cercle' level: reach a stage where the structure (format, content) of the RS is finalised so that it can be validated by the supervisory authority and technical departments (see the example of the 'cercle' of Kati);
▸ involve the Association of Malian Municipalities (AMM) with their resource centres;
▸ involve the 'cercle' councils in the management/ supervision of municipal databases;

▸ at regional and national levels: include municipal data management and the contribution of the RS in discussions of the monitoring of PRSPs and MDGs.

Strengthen links with other tools

With a view to harmonisation at national level and learning at sub-regional level, we have planned for regular exchanges with the organisations involved in monitoring and evaluation that have drawn up similar or complementary tools:
▸ DNCT/CCN DNAT (National Territorial Development Directorate): PDESC drafting guide;
▸ REDL Mali, SNV Niger, Benin (ANCB, GTZ, Helvetas), Burkina Faso (GTZ, MATD/DEP): self-evaluation tool for local government performance;
▸ DNAT: drafting guide for the Development Scheme (SAD) at 'cercle' and regional levels;
▸ local government/support organisations/ treasury: municipal resource mobilisation strategies;
▸ GTZ, SNV Mali and other structures: geograph- ical information system (GIS);
▸ SNV Mali: Essential Information System for the Commune (SIEC) - HEALTH;
▸ CCN: Computerised Monitoring/Evaluation Tool (OISE);
▸ sector and ODHD databases.

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ANNEX IV: RESOURCE PERSONS, DOCUMENTS AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

Resource persons:

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Ulrich Caspari
Email: korkv.mli@cefib.com

Florence Dumont
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Consultation documents on the RS:

- Collection guide for the drafting of the Reference Situation (CCC network, July 2004)
- Reference Situation drafting guide (PACT)
- Collection guide for the drafting of the RS (SNV, 2004 version)
- RS analysis tools (SNV Mali, October 2004)
- 41 RS of the communes of Koulikoro, Dioïla, Banamba (available from SNV Koulikoro, CCCs and municipalities)
- 3 RS for the 'cercles' of Koulikoro, Dioïla, Banamba

The documents are available from the SNV-Koulikoro and PACT offices (as electronic files or printouts). The RS are also available from the CCC and authorities (see useful addresses).

Useful addresses:

PACT (Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales)
    BP.: 100, Bamako, Mali
    Tel: (+223) 223 62 63
    Fax: (+223) 223 38 05

SNV-Koulikoro
    BP.: 20, Koulikoro, Mali
    Tel: (+223) 226 24 71
    Fax: (+223) 226 20 92

CHAPTER 3. SELF-EVALUATION TOOLS FOR ASSESSING LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

3.1. Mali: Assessment of local government performance: experiences with a self-evaluation tool

This study **'Assessment of local government performance: experiences with a self-evaluation tool'** has been prepared by Sonia Le Bay, in collaboration with Moussoulimoune Y. Maïga and Osé Tiénou (see Annex IV).

The authors (who have also played their part in designing, testing and promoting the use of a performance self-evaluation tool) describe the various stages involved in developing this tool. In a context of municipal ownership, and drawing on the publication of the tool and the proposed approach (MATCL/DNCT-SNV-HELVETAS-PACT/GTZ, 2004), they highlight the important role that mentoring plays in self-evaluation exercises and the potential pitfalls that users might encounter. They also examine the problems that the various stakeholders may come up against if they focus solely on performance-based results and disregard the wealth of communication before and after the exercises, which may well pave the way for shared responsibility and consensual decisions.

They show that a key factor in the success of a process of this kind, developed with and for local government in Mali, has been the ongoing strategic alliances that have been forged between the Ministry for Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL) and various development organisations working with municipalities.

The authors caution all those keen to develop this kind of tool that the path from design to large-scale use may be a long one fraught with problems. If an approach is to be participatory and draw on the support of a wide range of actors, the interests and opinions of the stakeholders (municipalities, civil society, the State, development partners, etc.), differing in some cases and often changeable, have to be carefully managed over the long term.

At the same time, efforts to devise similar tools in neighbouring countries, encouraged by the publication of the tool tested in Mali, show that these approaches have considerable potential for replication. This is especially so because their aim is, in particular, to make it possible to pinpoint the effects of capacity building through the improved performance of local government.

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Local government performance: everyone's business, but who is responsible?

> For us, as elected officers, and for municipal staff in general, decentralisation and our mandate has meant that we spend our entire time in training. We have hardly any time to spend on municipal business…
>
> (Statement by a mayor from the 'Cercle' of Banamba, Koulikoro region - Mali, 2001)

In the late 1990s, the Malian government devised a *National Programme in Support of Local Government (Programme national d'appui aux collectivités territoriales)* with the assistance of donors and development organisations (TFPs). At that time, decentralisation had just taken shape in the form of 703 municipalities, 49 'cercles', 8 regions and 1 district (Bamako). Ninety-seven percent of the municipalities had just been set up and a whole new generation of elected councillors were starting to learn their trade.

The aim of this national programme was to meet the challenges likely to shape the success or failure of decentralisation and, in particular, to build the capacity of municipalities to take on and perform their tasks. This included looking at the role of elected municipal councillors as prime movers of decentralisation, their capacity to rally the various actors in municipalities around local development and to ensure that devolution of competencies and resources to municipalities would take place.

The technical component of this programme, which has since been implemented, revolves around the support and training provided by the centres de conseil communal (CCCs) (municipal advisory centres) and private service providers. It also relies on the decentralised State services *(services déconcentrés)*, which are to assist the munic-ipalities and provide information to them[117].

The National Programme in Support of Local Government is intended to be temporary. It is expected to build municipal capacity, chiefly in municipal administration and management, local planning, and ownership. For this purpose, the municipalities draw up a support plan stating their specific needs of assistance.

In 2001, the Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales (DNCT - National Local Government Directorate) along with some development organisations were keen to find a way to track the outcome of capacity building with elected municipal councillors and municipal staff. Moreover, they were interested to see how the municipalities in different environments were functioning and facing the challenges of development. At the same time, the municipalities were anxious to be operational and to be able to meet the different expectations of citizens, the supervisory authority[118] and the development organisations.

This led various actors involved in the decentralisation process to pool their experience and skills. They designed a participatory and educational approach to performance self-assessment, which could provide answers to their concerns.

117- *These public service providers represent and implement the policy of the central government at the sub-national level. They are managed by their respective ministry.*

118- *Over and above their specific duties, governors, 'préfets', 'sous-préfets' and tax collectors ensure that laws, regulations, decisions and guidelines from central government are enforced.*

While this seemed to be attempting the impossible, it was a worthwhile challenge to undertake.

It was this challenge that finally led to the publication of the 'Local Government Performance Self-Evaluation Tool' in April 2004 (see Figure 1). In the following chapters, we would like to share our experience with designing, testing and replicating this tool with the various actors, in Africa and elsewhere, who are thinking about or taking steps to build local capacity to monitor and evaluate decentralisation and local governance.

> If you can't stand smoke, you won't get any charcoal.
>
> (Peul proverb)[119]

Figure 1: Title page of the guide on the local government performance self-evaluation tool

3.1.1. METHODOLOGY FOR STOCK-TAKING AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS

During such a wide-ranging and complex multi-actor experiment, taking place over several years, documentation often builds up informally. Documents (such as personal notes, mission reports, minutes of meetings and workshops, information on instruments having similar objectives, summaries of questionnaires carried out during the test phase, comments gathered on preliminary documents, photographs, etc.) are filed away and often forgotten. This case study offers an excellent opportunity to draw on this documentation and to look at certain issues in more detail. It is then possible to:

■ reconstruct the main stages of the process;
■ put the initial objectives and those actually achieved into perspective, while attempting to take the points of view of the various stakeholders into account (bearing in mind that, in practice, users' initiatives may well improve the approach over time);
■ compare the options chosen with the results actually obtained;
■ go beyond the lessons learned, to find out what challenges still exist, what avenues remain to be explored and what strategies can be used to meet these challenges, along with the potential alliances that could help mobilise additional actors.

For this study, a guideline[120] was distributed to a number of volunteers, who had been involved in designing and testing the self-evaluation tool, in order to help them to jointly take stock, analyse and document their experiences with the authors of this study. Their contributions were collated by one volunteer acting as a focal point. This main author was also responsible for drawing up an initial version of the information and analysis. This was then sent to the initial contributors and to three resource persons. Two of these resource persons had taken part in the design and use of the tool. The third was more 'external'; she was a recent user of the results obtained by local governments for the creation of a geographical information system (GIS)[121]. Taking into account the comments received, the person acting as a focal point then drew up a second version for discussion at a sub-regional seminar[122]. This version was then fleshed out with information from exchanges in the plenary sessions and workshops and from the informal discussions between delegates from various backgrounds in six West African countries.[123]

119- The proverbs were collected by Sonia Le Bay.
120- See C. Loquai and S. Le Bay (2005).
121- The GIS experiment was presented at the sub-regional seminar 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning; Bamako 17-18 May 2006. See Foranim Consult (2006). It was also used in the case study 'Mali, Geographical information systems for the development of rural municipalities'.
122- See preceding footnote.
123- This relates in particular to the examples of replication in other countries: Niger, Benin and Burkina Faso. See chapter 3.1.5. and Foranim Consult (2006).

It was mainly the staff of donor agencies and development organisations, who had worked on the approach as a whole, who was involved in the drafting stage, but it was possible to obtain a direct contribution from the various stakeholders by taking account of the following:

■ the information provided by user municipalities at the time of the self-evaluation exercises (late 2005 and during 2006) and the discussions of various ways of improving the strategy that had taken place with them;
■ discussions that took place throughout 2005 and 2006 with the Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales (DNCT) and its National coordination unit for technical support for local government (CCN), along with donor agencies and development organisations, particularly the members of the Réseau de Réflexion et d'Échanges sur le Développement Local (REDL).

This method of work was chosen as a result of lessons learned in previous exercises of joint stock taking and analysis. If such an exercise is to be truly participatory, it has to be well managed. It is not feasible to involve all those who have participated in the design and testing of the self-evaluation tool or are users.

3.1.2. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE SELF-EVALUATION TOOL

To help the various actors to capitalise on this experience and enable readers to better understand the process of conceptualisation, testing and replication and its dynamics, we have drawn up a summary table showing the timeframe for the main stages, the measures taken and the actors involved (see Table 1).

When the process was launched, none of the actors had any real idea of the time that they would have to devote to it. Even now, it is difficult to provide figures for individuals or stakeholder organisations because detailed records have not been kept. Nobody imagined, however, that almost 30 months would pass between the design stage and the publication stage. Had the actors involved known that this would be the case, it might well have undermined their motivation. In retrospect, a 'critical number' of actors managed to retain enough motivation to overcome the challenges and achieve the objective, perhaps even going beyond it.

The publication is a collective work, drawing on contributions from those directly involved as well as many others who provided support.

Phases	Stages	Measures	Actors
DESIGN (08/2001-08/2002)	**Pooling of concerns, discussions/proposals, decisions**	Definition of roles: - process coordination - facilitation of the process and initiatives - technical contributions to the process - identification of stakeholders	DNCT/CCN SNV DNCT/CCN, SNV, Helvetas, PACT/PRODILO-GTZ, CCC, REDL
		Definition of basic principles (a tool for local government), stages and a provisional timetable	idem
		Dissemination of the outline document: guide to the use of the tool for evaluating municipal performance	SNV with Helvetas, PACT/PRODILO-GTZ, CCC, REDL, DNCT/CCN
		Review of existing information: documentary search/forging of contacts	Same actors with other TFPs/CCC operators
	Devising the tool and its method of use	- Outline proposals/thematic discussions, comments, adoption	DNCT/CCN, SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ, représentatives CCC
		- Proposals for the content of the tool (indicators) and its methods/discussions, comments, adoption	idem
		- Drafting of a provisional version of the tool (04/2002) and an outline of the methods for testing it	SNV
		- Collection of comments at a workshop on the provisional version (05/2002)	DNCT/CCN, SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ with REDL, CCC, PTF, AMM, resource persons
		- Meetings with potential users (explanations, discussions, comments)	CCC with the CLO and municipalities
		- Feedback workshop (07/2002)	DNCT/CCN, SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ, CCC, REDL
		- Finalisation of the tool and the methods for testing it (08/2002)	SNV
TEST (09-12/2002)	**Testing of the self-evaluation tool for local government performance (list of indicators + methods)**	- Drafting of the terms of reference for the test + standardised tools (grid for verifying the relevance of the indicators and feasibility of the tool + summary sheet of the test results + proposed outline for drafting of the report) 09/2002	SNV, CCN for CCC (SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ advisors)
		- Testing on a representative sample of municipalities: urban/suburban/rural, different sizes and geographical areas (09-11/2002)	CCC with 3% of municipalities (elected officers, municipal staff, population, civil society and supervisory authority)
	Workshop to pool the test results	- Drafting of terms of reference for moderation of the workshop and proposed programme (10/2002)	SNV, DNCT/CCN with 'Foranim-Consult'
		- Workshop to pool the test results (11/2002): discussion of the general summary of results provided by the CCCs, proposals to improve the tool and its methods, validation of the results	DNCT/CCN, SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ, CCC, REDL, 'Foranim-Consult'
		- Further development of the process and allocation of tasks: ● coordination ● drafting ● comments	DNCT/CCN DNCT/CCN, SNV DNCT/CCN, SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ

Phases	Stages	Measures	Actors
FINALISATION 2003	**Drafting of the final version of the tool and its methods**	- Draft version - Final comments - Drafting the final version - Validation of the final version - Drafting the preface	SNV/CCN CCN/SNV, DNCT, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ SNV/CCN MATCL/DNCT MATCL
PUBLICATION 01-04/2004	**Selection of service provider and printing of the document**	Call for tenders (01/2004): - selection procedures and criteria for providers (technical publishing specifications, number of copies to be printed/document distribution key, work to be performed, submission of bids, roles and responsibilities of actors, work schedule, etc.) and creation of a selection panel - financial package - technical follow-up	DNCT/CCN with SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ SNV, Helvetas/DDC, PACT/GTZ SNV, DNCT with 'Communicances'
DISTRIBUTION 07-12/2004	**Distribution of the document to users, potential mentors and other interested parties**	7000 copies distributed to: - direct users (60%) - potential mentor organisations offering counselling and support (20%) including 20% as stock to meet emerging needs in Mali and the sub-region	DNCT/CCN with SNV, Helvetas, PACT/GTZ
USE 01/2005-to date	**Local government self-evaluation exercise**	- Local governments informed at CLO meetings - Mentoring services proposed - Synergy between technical partners for joint mentoring of local government exercises - Local governments evaluate their own performance (17% had carried out the exercise once by 06/2006)	Regional monitoring officers of the CCN and CCC CCC advisors, technical partners, service providers For instance: PGP/National NGOs/ SNV/CCC, PGP/National NGOs/ Helvetas, CCC Network, etc. Elected officers, municipal staff, local populace, civil society and supervisory authority
REPLICATION 01/2005-to date	**Take-over/adaptation of the local government performance self-evaluation tool: some examples**	- Mali: 2004 plan to monitor the effects of financial support for local governments and to index their drawing rights (58% of indicators taken from the tool) - Mali: since 2005, during 'municipal diagnostics', leading to capacity building action plans, 90% of the questions asked taken from the tool (in 36% of local authorities) - Niger (a): 2005, adaptation of the tool to include the MDGs (b) - Benin: underway, adaptation of the tool to include the MDGs (b) - Burkina Faso: in development (b) - Mali: 2006, national municipal competition with fields and indicators taken from the tool (64% of indicators used)	TFPs 'Decentralisation' Group, DNCT By national NGOs, partners of the PGP Planning Ministry, SNV ANCB, Helvetas, GTZ, SNV, PNUD MATD, GTZ MATCL/DNCT

Source: Le Bay, S.(a). Experience shared at the 'sub-regional seminar',Bamako, 17-18/05/06.
(b). Millennium Development Goals.

3.1.2.1. Working towards a common goal on monitoring and evaluation

In early 2001, organisations that were involved in implementing decentralisation and which regularly pooled their experience, in the REDL Network[124] and with the DNCT quickly became aware that they were focusing on the same problem: ways of measuring the effects over time of building the capacity of local government. The DNCT was also trying to gauge these effects so that the strategies being implemented nationally could be fine-tuned.

As a result, the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), Swiss Association for International Cooperation (Helvetas) and German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) decided to share their results. They pooled their efforts and resources, and made the experience of their various advisors, working groups, programmes[125] and CCCs throughout Mali available to the DNCT. The DNCT was already engaged in various time-consuming matters, which took up a great deal of its human and financial resources. This support meant in principle that it could make better progress preparing a consensual and functioning approach.

This set-up itself entailed some challenges, especially with regard to the ability of the various partners to do the following:

■ to find a shared, harmonious and efficient way of working;
■ to draw up a time schedule for common actions and to follow it without holding up other commitments elsewhere;
■ to mobilise the necessary resources (human, financial[126] and physical) in a timely, flexible and concerted way;
■ to share a common vision of the choices to be made, including the approach, the methods, options to meet the targeted objectives, etc.;
■ to communicate regularly with one another and with other TFPs in order to keep them informed about the process, ask for their contributions, and prepare for the implementation phase of the approach.

In consequence, from the very outset, these organisations had to work out a number of things in a participatory way (see Table 1, design stage), particularly the following:

■ role sharing: process coordination by DNCT/CCN; process and initiative facilitation by SNV; technical contributions to the process by DNCT/CCN, SNV, Helvetas, GTZ, CCC, REDL;
■ adoption of common basic principles;
■ objectives to be achieved;
■ stakeholders, cooperation and sources of information available;
■ an outline of the various stages of work to be carried out, a draft time schedule and monitoring mechanism, etc.

> If you climb a baobab, you'll get more fruit, but if you stay on the ground you'll know when you are going home.
>
> (Bambara proverb)

In retrospect, keeping to the schedule caused the most problems, largely because:

■ the people working on the strategy had heavy workloads;
■ the work to be carried out was rather 'repetitive': discussions, production of a draft version of documents, calls for comments/discussions, drafting a new version and so on;
■ the participatory approach required the organisations involved to work together on a regular basis and to devote considerable amounts of time to cooperating with the other key actors, depending on their availability, etc.

However, over and above these factors, which complicated the process, the managements of the various organisations always gave it priority, and some people worked on it throughout to ensure its successful completion.

Aside from the real need for this tool, two factors undoubtedly played a part:

■ Donors and development organisations supporting decentralisation and local governance were keen to draw lessons from previous experiences. There had been considerable individual investment in the design of monitoring and evaluation tools that had

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124- *Specific objectives of the REDL: a) to share tools, documentation and information on support for implementing decentralisation; b) to help to improve the tools and strategies devised by member organisations, to systematise and to disseminate them; c) to analyse and share opinions on local development problems, concepts, approaches and strategies; d) to share lessons from field experiences with the authorities responsible for implementing decentralisation. See http://www.snvmali.org/actus/redlinfo0606.pdf*

125- *For SNV, the programs included the Decentralisation Support Programme in the Koulikoro Region (PDRK), Bamako Urban Development Programme (PDUB), Development Support Programme for the Municipalities of Ménaka (PDCM). For Helvetas, they were the Decentralisation Support Programme (PAD); and for GTZ, the Local Government Support Programme (PACT) and Local Initiative Promotion (PRODILO) project.*

126- *Everyone took part in the programme during the hours they would normally work for their own organisation, so the specific costs incurred by the activity arose only from the test phase onwards.*

ultimately been used for a short time only in their own areas of action (as part of the implementation of a programme or project, for example) and by only a few actors (almost solely by direct partners). The latter often felt that these tools had been proposed/imposed from outside.

■ The DNCT felt that this was an opportunity to make headway in harmonising monitoring and evaluation tools for local governance to make them consistent. They also felt that coordinating a multi-actor process to design an approach (tool and methods) would help to build and consolidate strategic alliances.

Following the years of relatively standardised training, support and advice, it was important for the 'supporters' to offer municipalities an opportunity to examine their performance on a regular basis. This would enable them to identify the specific technical support that they still needed in order to carry out their duties and provide their populace with high-quality services. Analysing their situation would help them to progress to the point where they were not just consumers of services but real partners able to negotiate with the outside world. Following the municipal elections in June 2004, where the renewal rate was 70%, these were increasingly acute questions for the new municipal councils.

3.1.2.2. A key actor: the local government and its various components

From the point of view of elected councillors, the CCC advisors responsible for supporting a large number of municipalities could not always readily perceive their particular needs or help them to identify these needs in order to draw up a support plan.

In parallel, a multitude of 'supporters' (lacking any coordination in some cases) were going from municipality to municipality, all offering training of variable quality without any particular concern for real needs. Elected officers were also aware that they did not really know what their needs were - or could not agree on them - because they lacked any tangible reference information. They also admitted that rather than starting from actual observation within their municipality or any problem-solving strategy, they tended to refer to the titles of the training modules they had heard about.

> In the space of two years, I have attended, together with other councillors, five training courses on the subject 'what is decentralisation?' In hindsight, I know what I think about the quality of these courses. . . . It is always difficult, however, to talk about this issue with the village chiefs, who do not understand that things have changed. Even among the people, those who have had training do not want to understand because that often suits them.

> (Statement in 2001 by a mayor from the 'Cercle' of Bougouni, Sikasso Region, Mali)

Elected councillors, municipal staff, the populace, the supervisory authority, deconcentrated State services and the CCCs became increasingly aware that the 'training approach' did not provide all the answers. The grievances and malfunctions reported in different municipalities often had different causes. Some were due to a lack of competence or the resolve to carry out certain tasks, others seemed to be the result of poor circulation of information, a lack of exchanges between the actors in decentral-isation and the lack of any common vision or shared objectives.[127]

Mayors were keen to take up any approach that would help them tackle these problems and put them in a better position for discussions with the populace, the supervisory authority and the 'actors' (donors, projects/programme, NGOs, CCCs, service providers, etc.).

The priority for the DNCT and its partners was to enable elected officers to take the lead within the monitoring and evaluation approach. The aim was to respect the role of mayors as municipal leaders responsible for the development and functioning of their municipalities, while enabling them to 'lead' by working in synergy with other actors (municipal staff, the people, civil society - associations, groups, NGOs, private sector, service providers, etc. - supervisory authorities). The idea was to encourage them to play an active role in analysis. At the same time, the initiative to analyse the performance of their municipality had to come from the mayors, if it was to be credible.

127- This was confirmed in the study conducted by the DNCT/CCN in June 2003 (see Annex II).
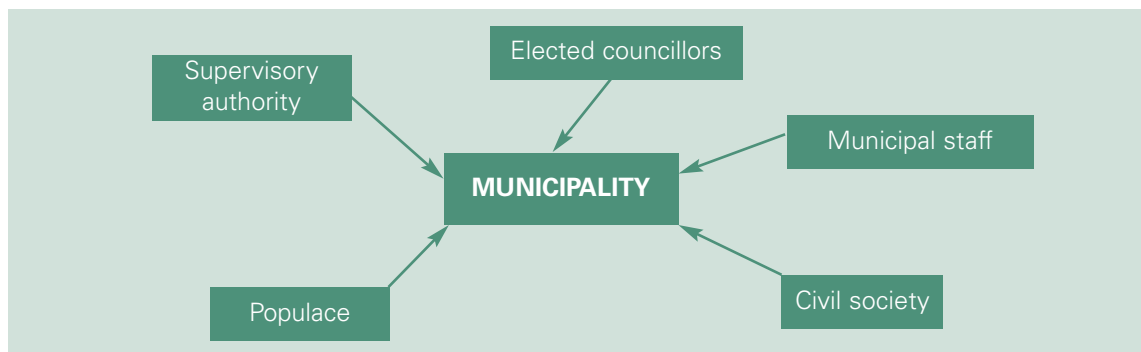
3.1.2.3. The option: self-evaluation

There were very few ways in which responsibility for a planned strategy on the part of local government in both urban and rural areas could be reconciled with the many objectives targeted by the various groups of actors. These included the following:

■ verification by all the actors of the functional nature of the municipality and its performance;
■ providing better information to the donors and development organisations and the elected councillors as a basis for better decision-making (in terms of steering);
■ providing better information to citizens in order to improve their contribution to/understanding of decisions and participation in the implementation of these decisions;
■ promoting the notion of accountability among elected councillors and of democratic control among citizens;
■ improving each actor's understanding of the role of other actors and the inter-relationships between these roles and their complementary nature;
■ building the analytical capacity of local governance, particularly with elected councillors;
■ learning about development and local governance, etc.

In theory, only two approaches were possible:

■ Evaluation: which is a valuable tool for any kind of organisation. Its main purpose is to provide a basis for decision making following critical examination of a situation and the lessons learned from previous experience. The evaluation period gives the organisation an opportunity to gain information, assess actual facts, ask questions, think about and try to project itself into the future, and to take decisions likely to improve the situation.

■ Self-evaluation: which, as experts agree, is one of the best methods of evaluating the performance of an organisation. Its particular feature is that the main actor is the organisation and its various components. In the present case, for example, this would be the elected officers of the municipality and the various actors with whom they work.

In practice, it was obviously in the interests of the various stakeholders to use a self-evaluation approach because it could, at one and the same time, be all of the following:

■ **Tool for communication and thinking:** a maximum number of actors can be made aware of the information available on the local government and take part in analysing it. They can ask each other questions and exchange views on their own experiences. This helps to flesh out individual, necessarily partial, perceptions and may well lead to a more comprehensive overview of the situation. It then becomes easier to analyse and find answers to the main concerns of the moment.

■ **Learning:** as the analysis and decision-making capacities of the municipality are gradually improved, the various actors agree to listen to and learn from other people's views, and to pool their experiences. They may then raise new questions and find new and possibly better angles of analysis. In this way, self-evaluation may also help build the municipality's capacity for negotiation with the outside world since the municipality will become capable of independently developing areas of work more in keeping with its context and of calling for more targeted support.

■Development process: greater responsibility on the part of the municipality for critical thinking, internal negotiation and concerted decision making means that the tasks of analysis, monitoring and guidance are carried out in a more collective way. This is a way of 'consolidating' the municipality from inside and encouraging periodical self-appraisal among councillors, as well as among other actors at the municipal level.

However, opting for self-evaluation required municipalities to have the capacity to steer the approach and meant that elected officials had to be willing to take firmer control of their future, if the exercise was not to be seen as being imposed from outside.

3.1.2.4. Mentoring of the self-evaluation strategy: a necessity

The methodological choice for an approach of self-evaluation meant that a critical point had to be discussed in detail with elected officials: how their self-evaluation was to be led. Did they feel that they had sufficient capacity to lead the exercise and to implement the approach in a relatively independent way?

The ability to lead the exercise plays a very important role and largely shapes the success of this kind of approach. While the context was very different in different municipalities, few councillors were educated or literate, many mayors and deputy mayors were still novices from the point of view of running meetings such as those of the executive or council. Many of those questioned nevertheless said that they were willing to carry out the exercise by mobilising those councillors and municipal staff best able to run meetings and speak in public (the 'village leaders', for instance). Initially, they also relied on the support of the CCC advisors.

This issue of leadership remained on the table for several months, which explains why, in the initial versions of the document, 'self-evaluation' long continued to be accompanied by the term 'assisted'. This term disappeared only after the test stage, when it became evident that local governments could, with practice and each at their own pace, come up with the internal resources needed to lead the exercise.

3.1.3. DESIGNING THE TOOL AND TESTING THE APPROACH

3.1.3.1. Designing the tool

A participatory approach involving the organisations mentioned above and a sample of the main users was used to develop the 'local government performance self-evaluation tool' (see Table 1).[128]

During the design and test phases, elected officers from urban and rural municipalities in different areas of the country were consulted. They took part, as did the other groups of actors, in discussions led by the CCCs and in the self-evaluation exercises[129]. In parallel, a review of what was already available was drawn up by other technical and financial partners (see CARE 2001 and USAID/ARD 2000).

The objective was to design a tool that could provide every municipality that used it regularly with the following information:

■ how its competence was developing over time;
■ the fields in which the various actors encountered problems and the nature of these problems;
■ concerted solutions that could be used with different groups of actors;
■ any external support required for major improvements, particularly in:
  ■ management and decision-making capacity;
  ■ the quality of services, products and achievements;
  ■ the democratic process and good local governance;
  ■ strategies for popular participation (by men and women) and resource mobilisation;
  ■ leadership of local development.

The entire iterative process was carried out with an ongoing concern for the tool to be:
■ as complete as possible, while remaining 'light', so that it could be readily used by municipalities at the lowest possible cost;

128- *See MATCL/DNCT-SNV-Helvetas-PACT/GTZ. 2004. Outil d'auto évaluation des performances des collectivités territoriales. Bamako: Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales, Part II.1: performance evaluation indicators and fields.*

129- *In the case of the test, in particular, this included municipalities I and IV of the Bamako district, the municipalities of Moribabougou, Sanankoro Djitoumou ('Cercle' of Kati); Banamba, Benkadi ('Cercle' of Banamba); Dégnékoro, Kaladougou ('Cercle' of Dioïla); Sirakorola, Doumba ('Cercle' of Koulikoro); Tiémala Banimonotié, Danou ('Cercle' of Bougouni); Gouandiaka, Séré Moussa Ani Samou ('Cercle' of Yanfolila); Kébila, Ména ('Cercle' of Kolondiéba); Ménaka et Inékar ('Cercle' of Ménaka).*

■ **as targeted as possible,** which made it necessary to choose a small number of simple and precise indicators, even if this meant that changes in laws and decrees would make some fine-tuning necessary at later stages;

■ **as standard as possible,** so that each municipality could readily master the tool and compare its results from one year to the next or even compare its results with those of other municipalities;

■ **as comprehensible as possible,** in order to minimise incorrect interpretations of its content and any sources of bias; it was decided, for this reason, to include a section devoted to explaining its various components.[130]

Fields: In terms of performance, the tool was structured around **five main fields**, which were well documented (MATCL/DNCT 2003): 'internal organisation', 'administrative and financial management', 'resources mobilisation (financial and human)', 'local development planning and programming' and 'local government services, products and investments'.

Deciding on the indicators for each of the fields of competence to be evaluated and the assessment levels for each of these indicators led to more lively exchanges between the various stakeholders. A number of factors played a part in this:

■ the sensibilities (indicators) and ambitions (assessment levels) of each stakeholder;
■ changes in topical themes and concerns, over time;
■ at the beginning of the process, the lack of regular attendance of some stakeholders' representatives from one meeting to the next, which often meant that discussions were re-opened on points on which consensus had previously been reached.

The moderators of the discussion were always able to settle discussions by referring to the basic principles that had been adopted in a consensual way and to the texts of existing laws and regulations. Nevertheless, this situation helps explain why some people lost motivation during the process, as well as why the length of time it would take was underestimated and how many draft versions would be drawn up at the end of the various meetings.

Indicators: Each of the five fields was ultimately defined by **an average of six indicators** (tangible, verifiable elements highlighting any changes that might take place), based on the main obligations legally incumbent on municipalities and on some aspects of the operation of an 'ideal' municipality.

The tool contains a total of **33 indicators,** which can be evaluated and monitored from one year to the next. They were drawn up in keeping with various criteria so as to be

■ **circumscribed in time,** even if the reference period might vary: the previous year, the current year or a specific time (for instance: *the municipality has actively collected taxes and duties from the previous year; the municipality's administrative accounts clearly and correctly describe all the accounting transactions during the year);*

■ **sensitive** to change over time, from one reference period to the next;

■ **measurable,** in quantitative terms, referring to figures or rates (for instance: *mean attendance rate of elected officers at sessions in the last year, number of ordinary sessions held during the last year);* in qualitative terms, they were made easy to measure by devising **four assessment levels** based on an increasing scale of values and on standards (reference values) specified in the active legislation (for instance: *the municipality has not mobilised any additional resources/the municipality has mobilised less than 25% of its investment budget from donors and the population/… between 25% and 50%…/…over 50%…).* To facilitate reviews for each field, each assessment level was allocated a **score** whose method of calculation is explained in detail in Part III of the guide on the self-evaluation tool;[131]

■ **reliable,** in that the data are objectively verifiable;[132]

■ **user-friendly,** because they have to be meaningful and understandable for the various **groups of actors involved.**
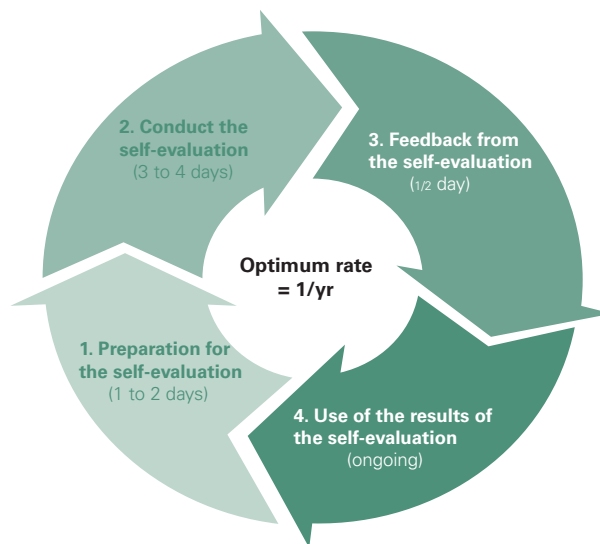

130- See MATCL/DNCT-SNV-Helvetas-PACT/GTZ. 2004. Part II.2: explanation of fields.
131- See MATCL/DNCT-SNV-Helvetas-PACT/GTZ (2004).
132- Possible sources of verification are listed in Part II.2 of the guide (MATCL/DNCT-SNV-Helvetas-PACT/GTZ. 2004).

3.1.3.2. Designing a method of use

In order to act as a reference framework, the main stages of the approach were developed as an outline when the approach was being designed.

Following the test phase, the content of each stage was refined in order to provide 'methods' in keeping with different contexts and to highlight some points requiring the specific attention of mayors and the people instructed by mayors to carry out the process.[133]

The methods were intended to be educational and appropriate for a target group of different levels working in different contexts. The aim was to explain, propose and present alternatives that municipalities could use from the outset or during the process without altering the approach or losing its comparative element (changes in performance from one year to the next).

3.1.3.3. Testing and finalisation of the approach

> If you don't fight, you've fought well.
> (Bwa proverb)

The test phase, scheduled for a period of three months (see Table 1), was run by the CCCs with a sample of volunteer local governments (3% of the municipalities of Mali), assisted by advisors from the partner organisations.

The test phase brought various considerations to light and these were analysed at a workshop. At this stage, a moderator who had not taken part in the drafting process was selected to help the partner organisations to stand back sufficiently and make the most of any lessons.

Salient points emerging from the test were related to the tool and, in particular, to methods that had intentionally been only slightly formalised in the test version, so as not to curb any initiatives by the leaders of the self-evaluation exercise and their mentors.

133- See MATCL/DNCT-SNV-Helvetas-PACT/GTZ. 2004. Part III: methods for the use of the local government performance self-evaluation tool.

MUNICIPALITY "X": EVALUATION OF THE PERFORMANCE FIELDS
BY THE DIFFERENT GROUPS OF ACTORS

Source: Le Bay, S.
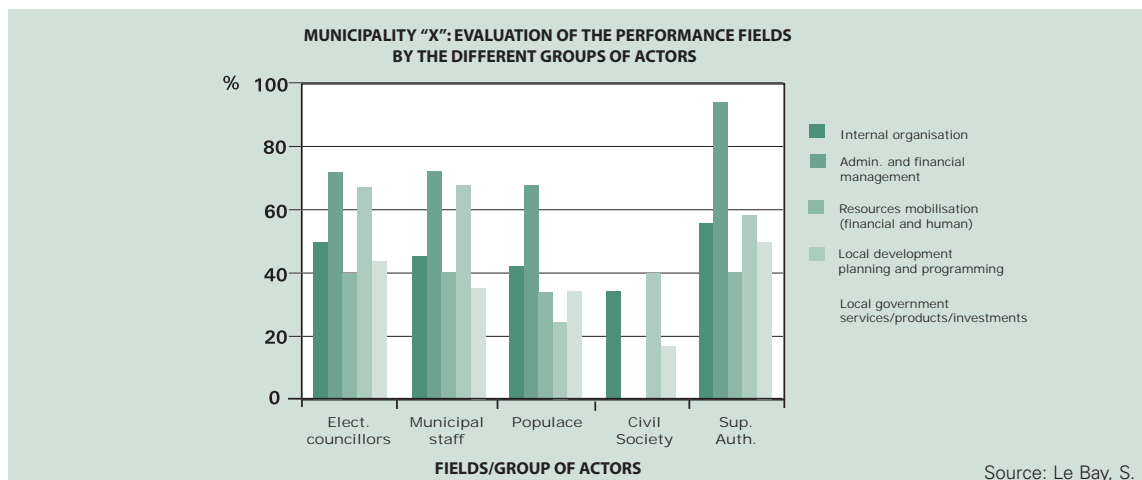
With regard to the tool, the following main adjustments were proposed:

■ reformulating indicators and definitions of indicators and adjusting some assessment levels to avoid any ambiguity or reluctance on the part of users;
■ specifying the timescale of some indicators in a more precise way;
■ modifying the list of indicators by group of actors, depending on their pertinence in terms of their theoretical access to information.

With regard to the methodology, the main proposals were related to the moderation and organisation of the exercise, which largely shape its success.

In respect to moderation, it was proposed that people instructed by the mayor should take the following steps:

■ ensure that everyone is aware of his/her role in each stage of the exercise, for instance: moderator, co-moderator, note-taker or even process support and counselling (role played initially by the CCC advisors and the other technical and financial partners involved);
■ study the possibility of involving civil society, or even staff from deconcentrated State services, in the leadership team alongside municipal staff or members of the municipal executive;
■ translate some key words or concepts into the local language ahead of time, or even translate the whole tool, depending on the public involved;

■ introduce indicators related to gender issues with reference to the surrounding culture;
■ work in parallel with several groups of actors in order to shorten the time needed for the exercise;
■ draw up a summary after interviews with each group of actors so that the data can be verified and then analysed and fed back;
■ in rural municipalities, present the tool and the results from each group of actors in a visual way in order to facilitate feedback and proposals for action;
■ use the reference documents only as a last resort for verification (of a score for an indicator) and discuss reasoned answers rather than the scores themselves (the score is the very last stage);
■ develop strategies to cope with people monopolising the floor and having a strong influence on discussions;
■ prepare the feedback workshop well: present a summary of the various views of municipal performance, and analyse it without calling into question the answers given or seeking consensus at any cost;
■ help the actors to devise concrete proposals for action and to share responsibility for carrying them out.

For organising the exercise, the mayor should:

■ issue advance invitations to take part in the self-evaluation and feedback to the various groups; ensure that these groups are properly represented (in both quantitative and qualitative terms) and that the same participants take part throughout the self-evaluation process;

■ respect the availability of the different groups of actors, while not leaving more than a week between the various self-evaluation and feedback sessions;

■ submit the 'questionnaire' to the supervisory authority in advance, so that any responses from the supervisory authority (which might not be available to take part in the exercise in the municipality) can be taken into account in the feedback;

■ in the short term, set up an archiving system to facilitate information searches (MATCL/DNCT-DNAM-AFVP-SNV-PACT/GTZ. 2004);

■ include the costs[134] incurred by the exercise in the municipal budget and ensure that all the actors are aware of the ways in which they are supported;

■ for the future, plan for any costs incurred in mentoring the exercise, with a view to regular use of the approach, bearing in mind that subsidised CCC services are likely to come to an end.

All these points were taken into account when the tool was being finalised. This stage proved to be rather long (see Table 1). Although testing did not call the work carried out up to then into question, having to make some final adjustments, after drafting several provisional versions, led to a degree of 'exhaustion'. In keeping with the deadlines required by the tendering procedure coordinated by the DNCT, the publication was not available until April 2004-more than two and a half years after the launch of the process.

3.1.4. Use and relevance of the approach

While the test bore out most of the hypotheses connected with the self-evaluation approach, its effects became more evident after 2005 when it was used on a larger scale. In June 2006, 17% of the municipalities had carried out the exercise at least once.

If camels spent the day gossiping about their calluses, they wouldn't get round to eating.

(Tamashek proverb)

3.1.4.1. Publication and dissemination of the self-evaluation tool

The publication, with a preface by the Minister for Territorial Administration and Local Government, symbolised a common endeavour. It reflected the completion of a participatory design process. At the same time, it meant that some of the people who had worked on the tool up this point chose to stand down.

However, in the view of the initiators of the process, it was more necessary than ever to take a fresh look at new challenges over and above those overcome since August 2001. A new 'building site' was facing them: designing a support system for the use of the tool. The aim was to present it to users nationally and, depending on demand, to support municipal actors as they carried out their first self-evaluation exercises.

As municipal elections were scheduled for June 2004, just after publication of the tool, the MATCL decided to postpone distribution until the new teams were in office. The DNCT sent each municipality a 'mayor's toolkit' that contained all the reference and guidance documents that councillors and municipal staff would need in order to perform their duties properly. The CCCs and other potential mentors for the exercise also received several copies of the publication.

This tool was only one of the many instruments in the toolkit, so it was necessary to raise awareness of the tool among people other than the CCC advisors and municipalities that had played a part in its design and testing, especially as some municipal teams had not been re-elected.

3.1.4.2. The main effects of the approach

Over time, there has been a perceptible improvement in municipal competencies. While some effects were predicted and expected, others were not.

Participants in the exercise learned more from the discussions of the indicators than from the choice of a level and the ultimate score. Even though some people's initial instinct, at the outset, was to try to set a level, they found it difficult to persuade the others if they could not

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134- *This depends largely on the number of villages/fractions of nomadic tribes making up the municipality, its area, the level of participation that the mayor wants and the length of the exercise. The cost varies on average from XOF 50,000 to 500,000 (EUR 1 = XOF 656). The main costs are elected officers' fees, transport, participants' meals, and communication costs in connection with the exercise. Travel by the supervisory authority may entail additional costs.*

come up with any cogent arguments. Building an argument together and comparing points of view was a way for participants to come to a better understanding of their own role and the roles of other participants within the municipality.

As a result of a number of problems that my association has encountered, I now know that I can negotiate some matters with the mayor.

(Statement in 02/2006 by the chairwoman of an association of shea butter producers, 'Cercle' of Kati, Koulikoro Region, Mali)

As everyone has an opportunity to voice his or her opinion on various issues, the exercise helps to develop a sense of constructive criticism and self-criticism. Everyone needs to understand the difference between being critical and 'attacking' someone. While mayors are used to comeback from political opponents, they are less willing to take criticism from municipal staff. In practice, they are not used to employees speaking out on such issues, particularly in front of third parties. It is therefore very important for the moderators to manage exchanges during the exercise and to advise the various groups, encouraging them, for instance, to take their concerns to the mayor in a timely way and not just bring them up during the exercise. In order to pre-empt any negative points of which they are aware and which might be brought up, mayors are increasingly likely to bring them up themselves.

The exercise helps users identify the main strengths and weaknesses of the municipality. When feedback is being given, presenting the main performance fields in a visual way helps analysis and enables comparison with the prior situation. Users can see whether or not the municipality is carrying out its duties and providing the expected services, as well as the quality of these services.

Following the self-evaluation exercise, I was contacted by a mayor who asked me to help him to put together his ANICT plan so that nobody could say that he had not respected the procedures.

(Statement by a CCC advisor, 'Cercle' of Kati, Koulikoro Region, Mali, May 2006)

In all cases, the municipal exercises led to the drafting of institutional and organisational improvement plans. What matters, when the results are fed back, is the pooling of ideas and the quality of discussions among the actors. This shapes the relevance of the measures to be planned and the participants' commitment to implementing them. This is also the time when these actors become aware that they must all perform their duties properly if the municipality is to be run properly.

In 2006, following the test phase of the self-evaluation tool, frameworks for consultation between municipalities and civil society were being set up in the local governments of the Koulikoro region so that any lack of understanding could be permanently ironed out.

Figure 5: Comparison of performance by field for sample municipality
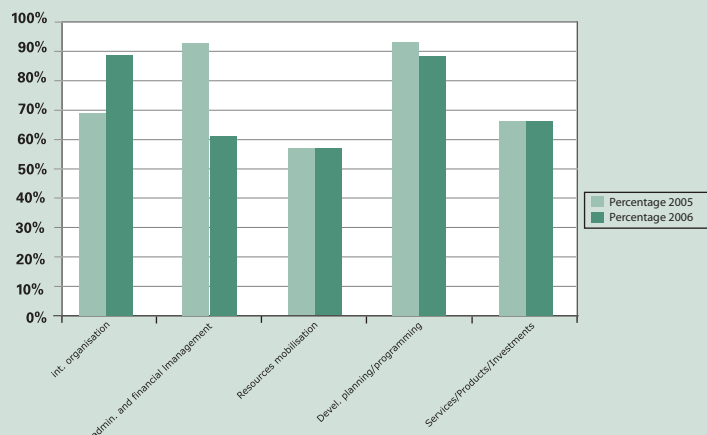
Source: Le Bay, S.

The results achieved and the outcome of discussions made it easier for mayors to take decisions. It was also easier for them to allocate responsibility for the implementation of these measures.

In municipalities in which the exercise has been repeated, it is possible to evaluate capacity-building effects by comparing the measures taken under the plan with any advances in the level of each field's indicators. This information may provide councillors with arguments on which they can base their negotiations for aid-not just from the CCCs but also from the donors and development organisations. As these exercises continue, municipalities also become better at analysis.

The information on municipal life that is available to the actors is improved because a great deal of information is provided on the operation of the municipality (town hall, executive, working committees) and its relations with other actors, even outside the municipality. Because every participant can ask questions, the elected officers are made aware that they are accountable, not just from the point of view of the supervisory authority's checks on legality, but also to the people.

3.1.5. Ownership, sustainability and replication of the approach

3.1.5.1. Signs of ownership

Given that municipalities have only recently started to use the tool, it is more realistic to talk about signs of ownership than of ownership per se. Some of the factors discussed below may help facilitate ownership and ensure that it can be sustained among the various stakeholders. It is encouraging to note that all the municipalities that carried out the exercise for the first time have so far repeated it in the following year.

Municipalities freely choose to carry out the self-evaluation exercise as there is no external 'pressure' (legislation, sanctions or incentives). It is up to the mayors to decide to run the exercise, at the time that best suits them, and to channel whatever budget they want into it. This lack of 'obligation' nevertheless makes the mentoring process rather difficult. The CCC advisors can freely decide whether to provide municipalities with initial instruction, and mentoring depends on the pace of demand, which may lead some organisations to encourage their planning to be more consistent.

In some 'cercles', municipalities are also devising ways to facilitate the self-evaluation process and follow up the decisions to which this process leads. For this purpose, the local guidance committees (CLO)[135] are setting up small monitoring units that include mayors and staff from decentralised technical services and external development partners.

Municipal leaders from various authorities in the same 'cercle' are pooling their experience and helping one another to prepare for self-evaluation exercises.

Mayors, together with the process moderators and mentors, generally tend to adapt the methods to their own context and needs (municipal financial resources have a direct effect, for instance, on method options, as was discussed in section 3.1.3.3.). Although provisions had already been made for various alternatives, the mayors have not been at all reluctant to be creative in facilitating the exercise or ensuring that its effects are more sustainable.

The tool is also being adapted in terms of its indicators. Over and above the revisions necessitated by changes in legislation, the tendency is to fine-tune the list of indicators depending on the groups of actors involved. This

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135- The CLOs (Comités Locaux d'Orientation) are responsible for implementing the decentralisation process and for defining, guiding, monitoring and evaluating the technical support offered to the local governments of 'cercles' in the context of the National Programme in Support of Local Government.

was already part and parcel of the approach because the representatives of the five groups of actors (see Figure 2) do not have to give views on all the indicators. In practice, the issue is not so much one of avoiding putting an unnecessary burden on participants or of taking account of their main centres of interest, but rather avoiding the representatives of a group having to admit that they are unable to give an opinion on an indicator because they lack information.

Generally speaking, as the approach has been published, some users are rather hesitant to change any of it. Between one exercise and the next, municipalities therefore take time for further discussion with the mentors of various indicators and the methods used in order to shape both the environment surrounding the self-evaluation exercise and the quality of the results obtained.

According to surveys among people who have taken part at least once in a self-evaluation exercise, over half are able to explain the main stages, propose improvements to the approach and also cite the measures included in their plan. There is an ongoing demand to translate the tool into the various languages spoken in Mali. Mayors and leaders see this as a necessity if all the participants are to understand the exercise and play a full part in it. The call for publication in the various languages comes from those who are not literate in French. Discussions with users at the sub-regional seminar 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning' (Foranim Consult. 2006) bore out these trends, as did subsequent discussions, during field visits, with participants from neighbouring countries and users from some municipalities close to the capital.

To a certain extent, the notion of ownership also needs to be tackled from the point of view of other local government levels, which were not initially targeted. 'Cercle' councils, for instance, have already used the approach to measure their performance. These experiments by municipal councillors show that the list of indicators needs to be specifically adapted to this level of government.

Is it also possible to speak of ownership by the donors and development organisations and the MATCL? Some trends might lead us to think that the answer is 'yes'. In early 2004, for instance, a working group was set up by the partners of the Malian government to think about a common list of indicators for measuring the effects of the financial support channelled into local government. They used 58% of the tool's indicators. Since 2005, most of the partner NGOs in the Shared Governance Programme (PGP) have been using 90% of the tool's indicators in 36% of Malian municipalities to draw up municipal baselines as a basis for capacity-building action plans. In the same year, the TFPs in the various regions of Mali forged relationships to train their staff to mentor this approach and to introduce municipalities to performance self-evaluation practices.

From the point of view of the MATCL, guidelines have been issued to CCC advisors asking them to rally round mentoring tasks for the self-evaluation exercise. During his various field visits, the Ministry's Decentralisation Advisor regularly undertakes surveys among mayors and representatives of the supervisory authority in order to monitor how the process is being used and what effects it is having in local governments. In 2006, in order to encourage a competitive spirit among municipalities, the Ministry also devised a national competition in which their results for the period 2003 to mid-2006 were compared in three priority areas (local democratic governance, promotion of local development and resource mobilisation) with prizes for those obtaining the best results. Sixty-four percent of the tool's indicators were used for this purpose.

3.1.5.2. Sustainability

> If a fisherman sells his boat for a camel, he has made some serious decisions.
>
> (Songhai proverb)

There are still some unanswered questions as regards the sustainability of the approach; whether the value of the approach will stay the same over time is another important issue.

Monitoring of the use of the approach by the various stakeholders, and the surveys conducted, show that mentoring is extremely important during the initial exercises. In the new specifications (2006) for each CCC operator, the annual self-evaluation exercise comes under the heading 'assistance with the operation of the local government and its organs'. The winding up of the CCCs, scheduled for 2007, nevertheless raises the question of the availability and accessibility of this mentoring (particularly in regard to financing).[136] Although many councillors may be re-elected in the forthcoming elections and, therefore, there may be a number of councillors available who have already been trained to lead the exercise, most mayors believe that external counselling and advice during the exercise is valuable. Is this just a lack of confidence in their own ability to steer the process and lead the exercise? Only the future will tell.

Throughout Mali, increasing numbers of donors and development organisations are joining forces to play a technical and financial part in supporting the system for mentoring the use of the tool. Various programmes have initiated partnerships to support this, along with the measures planned by various state organisations. It nevertheless takes time to provide coverage throughout the country.

Other complementary tools for use by local governments are being developed in parallel. For instance, since 2003 the donors and development organisations, in conjunction with the National Directorate for the Archives of Mali (DNAM), have been helping the DNCT to design a practical guide for the management of local government archives (MATCL/DNCT-DNAM-AFVP-SNV-PACT/GTZ. 2004) and the introduction of a system for mentoring, monitoring and evaluating municipal performance (DNCT-DNAM-SNV-PACT/GTZ. 2005). This has helped to flesh out the initial system by making it easier for municipalities to access basic data that they can use in their analysis and decision-making work[137], not just during the exercise but also in their day-to-day operations.

Local governments that have adapted the tool during successive exercises are asking how the changes they have made are to be validated. Moreover, these changes are not being capitalised on. Most would like the State to take on this responsibility, especially in regard to indicators. Should the tool be standardised to ensure that it always mirrors existing laws and to enable municipalities to compare their results from year to year and with one another? Or should each municipality be free to develop its own tool? Both options have pros and cons that need to be discussed by users and the tool's original designers (chiefly MATCL/ DNCT).

The observation during exercises that users are in some cases very quick to introduce changes raises a number of questions. For example, there is the situation where mayors have reduced the list of indicators for the various groups of actors involved. The main consequence of all this fine-tuning will ultimately be that the results obtained from year to year are no longer comparable. Would it not be useful to ask whether, in future, the best option would be to ensure that all the groups are in a position to answer the maximum number of questions? In the case of changes to methods, a list of those elements that absolutely have to be included to ensure the quality/reliability of the results obtained should also be drawn up.

Over and above these thoughts about the use of the tool, which are likely to determine whether or not it is sustainable, the results of exercises are coming under increasing scrutiny. This not from the point of view of the action plans drawn up, but from the point of view of the scores achieved, and it is coming from actors outside the municipalities. This runs counter to the self-evaluation approach, where the results belong to those carrying out the exercise. The main issue, often raised by both the TFPs and the State, is that of connecting aid to local government performance (overall performance or performance in specific fields). Municipalities that are performing well would then have greater drawing rights.[138] Such a development would make it necessary for all Malian municipalities to carry out the exercise and publish their scores. If this were actually implemented, it might well introduce a major bias during exercises and could, in the long run, impede ownership of the approach by users.

These are developments that are not specific to Mali. They are part and parcel of an ever-growing

136- Until 2007, the task of CCC operators is to prepare, implement and monitor the operation of the Services Communs aux Collectivités Territoriales Cercles et Communes (SECOM - Common Services for Local Government in 'Cercles' and Municipalities).

137- The chance of municipalities reaching a high performance level for indicator 18 ('the municipality has a file storage and archiving system') is then greatly improved.

138- The local government financing mechanism is administered by ANICT (National Local Government Investment Agency) and is based on certain weighting criteria (in 2006, for instance, population, rate of collection of the Regional and Local Development Tax, remoteness and poverty).

trend among the donors to introduce monitoring systems for decentralisation and local governance in which the impact of financial aid is measured by a common list of performance indicators. As the amount channelled into budgetary aid increases, a number of networks and working groups are working on this issue globally and are attempting where possible to forge links with poverty-reduction strategies (Arndt and Oman. 2006; Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi. 2006). In Mali, developments of this type include, for instance, the introduction by the European Union in 2006 (Foranim Consult 2006 and http://www.snvmali.org/ actus/paradeumali. pdf) of a system that includes 12 indicators[139], with a more comprehensive set of indicators to gradually be developed so that the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) can also be taken into account. The aim is to be able to monitor the institutional reform process in greater detail, as the indicators will make it possible to assess how the government is using its policy resources and whether interim results (decided in a concerted manner) have been achieved.[140]

3.1.5.3. Examples of replication

> Listen carefully because everything speaks, everything talks, everything has something to tell us.
>
> (Dogon proverb)

While, in the development area, a standard recipe covering all situations is no more than a mirage, 're-inventing the wheel' is still very common practice. It is often due to a lack of information or a lack of confidence in the reliability of an existing tool or approach. While no strategy to promote the replication of the 'local government performance self-evaluation tool' has actually been drawn up, it would appear that the stakeholders, founders, users and supporters of the process have helped to disseminate the information widely. This has led to a proliferation effect in West Africa (see Table 1).

Some factors have encouraged replication of the approach. Many countries, in the midst of decentralisation, are looking for practical tools that can be readily mastered and immediately put to use or which provide a starting point. Mali has much to offer as it is something of a pioneer in decentralisation and local governance. Growing numbers of exchange

visits by various groups (representatives of TFPs, State services, local government organisations, civil society, etc.) are helping to disseminate the practices currently being used. Donors and development organisations are increasingly keen to capitalise on and share experiences between the different countries. This is also encouraging them, as in the present case, to contribute to publications paving the way for the large-scale dissemination of these experiences. The staff of aid organisations are also increasingly mobile in the sub-region and are drawing on the experience acquired in order to adapt it to different contexts and types of demand.

Niger

An example of replication in Niger is discussed in the case study 'Planning and monitoring/ evaluation in municipalities, focusing on poverty reduction' (SNV-Niger 2005a, b; Republic of Niger/SNV-Niger 2005; Sadda 2006). Here, therefore, we shall discuss only some elements by way of introduction.

Following a test phase run by SNV in 2005, in conjunction with Niger's devolved services and other partners, the tool is now being used on a much wider scale. Now that alliances have been forged with other TFPs, the aim is for the system to be institutionalised by the Ministry of Territorial and Community Development (MATDC). This system is modelled on processes that have been tried out in Mali and the lessons that have been learned about participatory planning of municipal development (MDRI. 2000) and self-evaluation of local government performance. These two approaches have been combined to provide answers to the concerns of the municipal authorities elected in 2004, who are required to undertake development measures and properly perform their duties and the State's concerns to achieve the millennium development goals and poverty-reduction strategy at the local level.[141]

The self-evaluation tool takes the same form as in Mali (33 indicators and four assessment levels to which a score is allocated). Some adaptations have been made, particularly in terms of the fields (three out of five concentrate on municipal functions) and the nature of the indicators (11 have been taken up and the others have been reformulated to take account of a particular

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139- *Six indicators are connected with decentralisation, three with the interdependence between decentralisation and devolution and three with reform of the State. All come from various strategy documents providing a framework for institutional reform. There has been agreement with the Malian authorities on the final list and the associated reference values and targets, responsibility for data production and collection, verification sources, deadlines for production and possible revision mechanisms.*

140- *As the European Commission noted in its Communication 'Good governance and development' (20 October 2003) 'developing appropriate processes to identify and agree upon governance-related indicators remains a challenge', especially in Mali, where the statistical apparatus leaves much to be desired.*

141- *This aim is also part of the partnership agreement signed in October 2004 by SNV World and the UNDP.*

context, specifically to include more gender-related points). From the point of view of methods, leadership of the exercise is the task of previously trained resource persons (representatives appointed from different socio-economic strata), working within a municipal technical committee chaired by the mayor.

Benin

The example of replication in Benin is the result of a general reaction by local governments to a UNDP report evaluating their performance (UNDP 2004 and http://www.snvmali.org/actus/beinnancb.pdf). In 2005, with a view to contesting the report's findings, the local governments commissioned the National Association of Benin Municipalities (ANCB) to represent their points of view. The ANCB asked GTZ, Helvetas, SNV and UNDP to help mentor a process to design a reliable approach and a tool that could measure progress in municipal performance, nationally. In addition, they wanted further support with the ongoing process of decentralisation by building their monitoring and evaluation capacity and finding ways in which locally available resources could be transparently managed.

A steering group within the ANCB is working with the donors and development organisations and has the task of validating each stage undertaken by the departmental associations. The design process draws on the process used in Mali. Some fields have been adapted (four out of five have been included). The indicators are being devised, and training is planned for mentors, as is a system for centralising and analysing data.

The results will be disseminated at departmental and national levels so that municipalities can better negotiate the support they need. Thinking is already taking place about ways of managing possible problems (competition between municipalities, for instance) and remedying them (by introducing a control mechanism for the information collected, for instance, especially in the run-up to elections).

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is keen to steer the implementation of decentralisation in a more efficient way (see http://www.snvmali.org/actus/burkina.pdf). For this purpose, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MATD) is introducing a monitoring and evaluation system to steer the process in a more coherent way and to forge links with devolution, national policies on good governance and poverty reduction, and the development of the legislative framework. A national coordination unit, attached to the MATD General Secretariat, is responsible for management and works with a mixed committee, including State bodies, TFPs, PRSP, etc.

In addition to monitoring general indicators and introducing frameworks for concerted action, Burkina Faso plans to draw on Mali's experience to carry out self-evaluations using specific indicators. The aim of this approach is to 'force the actors to draw on the resources available to them to find the best possible solutions' by placing them in a position to ask, 'what quality of performance do we want to achieve to work towards the targeted effects?'

At present, the actors of decentralisation are drawing up criteria for quality and the desired quality levels. This is based on their own perceptions and is a first step towards improving municipal performance. Although the approach is intended to promote self-management by municipalities, it is also expected to promote the concerted inter-municipal action likely to raise awareness and facilitate decision making.

These examples of the experiments that various actors (development organisations, municipal associations, the State) are involved in, show the relevance of the monitoring and evaluation needs being put forward. They also highlight the importance of self-evaluation approaches when monitoring and evaluation systems that aim to make the stakeholders permanently responsible are introduced. There is little doubt that transparent borrowing from everyone's experience paves the way for rapid and more efficient reactions during the design and implementation of relevant approaches.

3.1.6. Prospects

The experience gained from self-evaluation of local government performance has a great deal of potential to open up prospects for those actors who are keen to improve not only their monitoring and evaluation capacity but their effectiveness in terms of local democracy and development. Over and above the replication experiments discussed here, experience in Mali has also been a source of inspiration for other actors working in similar situations.

For example, in 2006, a number of private-sector actors endeavoured to promote economic de- velopment based on promising agricultural options. They encouraged critical thinking by basic cooperatives about the operation of their organisations, the capacity they needed to build and the measures to be taken by local producers' unions, in conjunction with their umbrella organisation. The Association of Professional Rural Organisations (AOPP), with the support of their technical partners, has developed a simple tool for the self-evaluation of the management capacity of basic cooperatives, along with a set of methods (Traoré, Wenninck and Babin. 2006) enabling wide-ranging participation by the actors involved, as well as collective learning through discussions structured around five management fields[142], 18 indicators and three assessment levels.

In late 2002, drawing on the experience gained with local government, SNV, like many other technical partners providing aid and advice for civil organisations, was keen to work with these organisations to find more targeted ways of building their capacity. This led to the idea of the participatory design of a tool responding to the needs of the various kinds of civil organisations - one that could measure their progress. One of the challenges was that this strategy should meet the technical partners' concerns during the capacity-building period and also make it possible for the civil organisations themselves to monitor the progress of their performance sustainably and independently from any external actors. In early 2004, this process led to the publication of a self-evaluation guide and tool (see SNV-MALI 2004, republished in 2006), focusing on three main fields and broken down into five indicators[143], which were further broken down into five sub-indicators in the form of questions.

As these processes are designed and used, they offer an opportunity for democratic debate between groups of actors. They enable all the participants to improve their position and fine-tune their role. However, experience shows that, in addition to the critical points discussed above, each actor has to keep an eye on changes in the overall context of decentralisation. These changes, which often provide a starting point for fresh experiments, continue to have a major influence when the tools are being used. In multi-actor processes in which relationships are constantly changing, steps need to be taken to ensure that issues remain topical.

After a number of years of support, the tolerance threshold for defects in local government performance seems to be declining. The State, donors, development organisations and municipal associations are placing increasing stress on best practice, especially in regard to accountability and compliance with management procedures for public funds. Technical support is becoming more targeted and its cost will, in the near future, be directly borne by local governments, and new criteria are being developed[144] to make access to financial aid (especially additional funds) more selective. These factors, as well as the ongoing transfer of competencies from the State to local authorities, are laying firm foundations for these authorities to use tools that can help them become responsible for their own performance.

142- The five fields are (1) governance and leadership, (2) social cohesion and understanding, (3) member services, (4) internal resources (human, financial and material) and (5) external relations.

143- The three main fields were (1) internal organisation (systems, structures, staff, etc.), (2) external relations with other actors and (3) services and products offered by the organisation. The five indicators included four 'standard' indicators and a 'specific' indicator in keeping with each type of civil organisations, its fields of action and its particular target groups.

144- In 2006, for instance, ANICT's management board decided that local governments' rate of mobilisation of internal resources should be a criterion for receiving financial aid.

AOPP	Association des Organisations Professionnelles Paysannes/Association of Professional Rural Organisations
AMM	Association des Municipalités du Mali/Association of Malian Municipalities
ANCB	Association Nationale des Communes du Bénin/National Association of Benin Municipalities
ANICT	Agence Nationale des Investissements des Collectivités Territoriales/National Local Government Investment Agency
CCC	Centre de Conseil Communal/Municipal Advisory Centre
CCN	Cellule de Coordination Nationale des Appuis Techniques aux Collectivités/National Coordination Unit for Technical Support for Local Government
CLO	Comité Local d'Orientation/Local Guidance Committee
Communicances	Consultancy, communication and advertising agency
DNAM	Direction Nationale des Archives du Mali/National Directorate for the Archives of Mali
DNCT	Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales/National Directorate for Local Government
Foranim Consult	Training, leadership, consultancy office
GIS	Geographical Information System
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation Agency
Helvetas	Swiss Association for International Cooperation
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
MATCL	Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales/Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (Mali)
MATD	Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Décentralisation / Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (Burkina Faso)
MATDC	Ministère de l'Aménagement du Territoire et du Développement Communautaire/Ministry of Territorial and Community Development (Niger)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PACT	Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales de la GTZ/GTZ's Local Government Support Programme (followed on from PRODILO in 2002)
PAD	Programme d'Appui à la Décentralisation d'Helvetas/Helvetas' Decentralisation Support Programme (became PAAD in 2005: Programme d'Appui aux Acteurs de la Décentralisation/Support Programme for the Actors of Decentralisation)
PARAD	Programme d'Appui à la Réforme Administrative et à la Décentralisation/Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation (9th European Development Fund)
PDCM	Programme d'appui au Développement des Communes de Ménaka de la SNV/SNV's Support Programme for the Development of the Municipalities of Ménaka
PDRK	Programme d'Appui à la Décentralisation dans la Région de Koulikoro de la SNV/SNV's Support Programme for Decentralisation in the Koulikoro Region
PDUB	Programme de Développement Urbain de Bamako de la SNV/SNV's Programme for the Urban Development of Bamako
PGP	Programme Gouvernance Partagée/Shared Governance Programme (MSI/CARE/Save the Children consortium financed by USAID)
PRODILO	Promotion des Initiatives Locales de la GTZ/GTZ's Promotion of Local Initiatives (project closed in December 2001 and incorporated into PACT)
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
REDL	Réseau de Réflexion et d'Échanges sur le Développement Local/Local Development Reflection and Discussion Network
SECOM	Services Communs aux Collectivités Territoriales Cercles et Communes/Common Services for Local Government in 'Cercles' and Municipalities
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
TDRL	Taxe de Développement Régional et Local/Regional and Local Development Tax
TFPs	Donors and Development Organisations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Chapter 4. Strengthening citizens' control and local stakeholders' capacity to monitor the delivery of decentralised services

4.1. Mali: Towards a basic health-sector information system for municipal actors (SIEC-S)

This study, **'Towards a basic health-sector information system for municipal actors'**, has been prepared by Jurrien Toonen, Dramane Dao and Thea Hilhorst (see Annex IV).

This study capitalises on the experiences of an action-research project to test a tool for monitoring and managing basic information on public health at a decentralised level. The approach taken by this research project was to provide a basic package of information for the various key public-health actors at local government level (including elected officers, community health associations and technical departments). This project is known as the 'Système d'Information Essentielle pour la Commune dans le secteur de Santé' (SIEC-S) (Basic Health-Sector Information for Municipalities).

The authors show that joint collection, sharing and analysis of health information and indicators may help to enhance cooperation between the actors concerned and improve their understanding of public-health challenges and therefore their capacity for action. It is for this reason that this research project is also a very practical experiment that paves the way for the transfer of health-sector powers to local governments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In Mali, health indicators are still at worrying levels, and the public sector's performance in supplying basic services has to improve if poverty is to be reduced. The challenge for the various actors involved with health at the municipal level is to work effectively together in order to provide public-health services that are tailored to local needs, including those of the most vulnerable groups.

After the municipalities were established in 1999, the way in which public health was organised institutionally was completely overhauled. The municipalities are now responsible for certain basic services, which means that roles and responsibilities must be redefined, particularly between local government, the Ministry of Health and the community health associations. As municipal representatives are to be increasingly involved in health management, it is becoming essential for everyone to have access to appropriate information on priorities and to be able to monitor progress, so that they are in a position to take informed decisions.

This report describes our experience developing a minimum health-information package to enable local government and the community health associations (ASACOs) to assume their new responsibilities and to be actively involved in managing public health. Known as the 'Système d'Information Essentielle pour la Commune dans le secteur de la Santé' (SIEC-S - Basic Health-Sector Information System for Municipalities), this package is based on data collected by the Ministry of Health. It aims to provide municipalities and ASACOs with access to data from the National Health Information System (SNIS). SIEC-S is not so much about introducing a new data-collection system, as it is about building on existing health services.

The SIEC-S forms part of a programme of activities and tools developed to support the transfer of responsibilities from ministries in various sectors to local government. The whole approach is designed to improve coordination and cooperation between the various actors.

We will begin by describing the general context, the action-research project itself and the problems associated with health information. We will then look at the approach developed for the SIEC-S, the first experiences of applying it in the field and, finally, the lessons learned.

4.1.1. BACKGROUND

4.1.1.1. National decentralisation policy

The collapse of the one-party state and the military dictatorship in 1991 was a decisive turning point in Mali's political development. One consequence was that all the state institutions were called into question. At the national conference in 1991, decentralisation was regarded as a strategic priority in the construction of the future Malian state and it was therefore enshrined in the new Constitution. The process of devolving powers paved the way for a fundamental change in relations between the state and ordinary citizens and for bringing public services closer to the people.

Framework Law No 93-008 lays down the conditions for the independent administration of local government through legislative and executive bodies. It provides for the introduction of four types of local government: municipalities (703), 'cercles' (49), regions (8) and the district of Bamako. These have no hierarchical relationship and are managed by elected councils. The municipal elections in 1999 marked the start of the implementation of this institutional reform.

The various local authorities then became the appropriate statutory areas for local development and are now responsible for developing and implementing economic, social and cultural development programmes in their territory.

4.1.1.2. Health-sector policy

In 1990, the Mali government adopted a comprehensive framework for action in the health field. This new policy is mainly based on the devolution of certain responsibilities from the Ministry of Health to the ASACOs (which are legally recognised entities authorised to recruit staff, manage financial reserves and own buildings). In order to increase the area covered by the health services, the Ministry of Health adopted a policy promoting the setting up of ASACOs and giving them a greater role in mobilising resources and managing the community health centres (CSCOMs).

'Le Programme de Développement Sanitaire et Social' (PRODESS - Health and Social Development Programme) started in 1998, before the new administrative divisions were in place, so its planning system and procedures did not take the new local government responsibilities into account. Investment continued to be managed directly by the Health Ministry's administrative and financial directorate, including investments made on behalf of the municipalities, 'cercles' and regions. In 2004, the PRODESS was revised (PRODESS-II) to include the responsibilities of local government. The Ministry of Health is currently adapting the SNIS indicators to provide the information needed by PRODESS II. For instance, special emphasis is now being placed on quality of care from the users' point of view.

4.1.1.3. Transfer of powers

In June 2002, the government signed decrees transferring powers in the health, education and water sectors[145], spelling out the powers, resources, funding and assets to be transferred from the State to the local authorities. The municipalities can then delegate management to specialised bodies such as the ASACOs.

> **Box 1: Activities resulting from the transfer of powers in the health field to the municipalities**
>
> ▶ Developing and implementing the health-development plan;
> ▶ Creating and maintaining infrastructure;
> ▶ Issuing licences to set up community health centres;
> ▶ Drawing up mutual assistance agreement with ASACOs;
> ▶ Funding ASACOs;
> ▶ Recruiting staff;
> ▶ Establishing initial turnover stock of essential medicines;
> ▶ Combating the black-market trade in medicines;
> ▶ Providing health information, education and communication;
> ▶ Implementing national policies and strategies to prevent and combat disease;
> ▶ Encouraging local support for social and health objectives.

The transfer of certain powers from the Ministry of Health to local government also offers the following potential benefits:

■ National resources (financial and human) in the health field can be allocated more appropriately and fairly if planning is based on local needs and if there are specific allocation criteria;
■ Health experts can concentrate on health services once the financial and administrative tasks involved in constructing and managing the infrastructure have been transferred to local government;
■ The involvement of local government makes it easier to have an inter-sectoral approach to public health and better coordination with sectors such as drinking water supply and sewage disposal, nutrition and education, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS and other diseases;
■ The involvement and engagement of the municipalities in public health could increase the mobilisation of resources and encourage local support for prevention campaigns in the health field;
■ If local government and the ASACOs are more actively involved in public-health decision-making, it could strengthen the idea of 'accountability' between users and health services and thus bring about an improvement in the quality of care.

145- The transfer of powers was automatic in the case of public records, among other things. Preparations for transferring powers related to the management of natural resources and state-owned property are not yet very advanced.

Progress is slow, however. During this phase, a degree of mistrust has arisen between the technical staff and the municipal authorities. Moves towards a more concrete transfer of powers are being held back by the negative views held by some of the staff already 'decentralised' by the Ministry of Health, stemming largely from bad experiences of this staff with this reform process and working with the ASACOs.

The Ministry departments in question also have a number of reservations, mainly about the fact that local government does not have the human resources and technical capacity to cope with the responsibilities that are to be transferred. However, as far as financial management is concerned, a number of local authorities have proved themselves capable of managing the funding earmarked for infrastructure (ANICT, 2004).

Nevertheless, the Ministry of Health is increasingly coming to realise the opportunity that decentralisation offers for implementing its policies and strategies more effectively by involving new actors, and it is trying to harmonise them with decentralisation policy. The decentralisation support unit in the Ministry has been working on this since 2006.

4.1.2. APPROACH USED IN THE ACTION-RESEARCH PROJECT

The legislation on the transfer of powers does not make it clear how the various actors are to work together. Furthermore, if local government is to participate effectively, tools will be needed to allow non-specialists to take part in policy discussions and to monitor the health system's performance.

This is why, since 2004, SNV-Mali and the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) have been working with the actors involved to develop approaches and practices that will make it easier to establish effective local partnerships in the public-health field, which will improve the actors' performance and increase their empowerment (Hilhorst et al., 2005). This has involved a series of discussions and exchanges of opinion and experience between the key actors, linked to practical, functional proposals to ensure that activities are in line with resources.

4.1.2.1. Actors

In the rural environment, the Community Health Centre, the ASACO and the municipality are the main actors involved in running public health, though some municipalities also have non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in this field. There are very few private doctors working in rural areas and often only traditional healers. Some pharmacies have been opened and itinerant salesmen sell medicines on the market. In towns, the private sector plays an important role in providing health care.

Each of the actors has a relationship with the authorities at the 'cercle', regional and central level. The community health centre has hierarchical relations with the reference centre at 'cercle' level. The ASACOs are organised as a federation at 'cercle', regional and national levels. The municipalities are represented in the 'cercle' council, even though there is no hierarchical link between the municipality and the 'cercle'.

4.1.2.2. Phases involved in building an effective partnership

The following phases are important for building effective partnerships between the Ministry of Health, local government and the civil organisations involved with the community health centres:

1. Establish a basis of trust between the various partners. This means, for instance, ensuring that all the actors are equally well informed, particularly about decentralisation and health policy.

2. Accept that certain powers are to be transferred from the Ministry of Health to local government, as required under the relevant legislation, and develop effective working relationships.

3. Design a consultation framework that encourages discussion and negotiation. This can start off informally, but should subsequently be given a formal basis.

4. Help local government to have a better understanding of public-health activities from a multi-sector point of view. The challenge is to improve skills in municipalities so that councillors and their staff can understand, monitor and, if necessary, act on performance indicators.

5. Identify activities that act as catalysts. Although establishing functional working relationships is a long-term process, it is important to begin with activities that are priorities for all actors that are achievable in the short term and that are unlikely to create conflicts of interest. In Mali this cooperation could start with the organisation of immunisation campaigns and health activities funded by the municipality, before moving on to more complex and difficult issues, such as transferring responsibility for health-sector investment and human resources to local government, which is required by law.

6. Drawing up tripartite performance contracts could prove useful since discussing the contracts could enable the partners to define what they expect from each other.

7. Encourage greater empowerment at grass-roots level so that more weight and importance is given to ordinary people, particularly the poor, thereby encouraging all actors to take account of local needs and customer satisfaction.

Our action-research project seeks to develop approaches and tools that are likely to promote effective cooperation. Relationships will be studied and analysed as they develop and conclusions drawn about the problems and opportunities presented, along with possible solutions to them.

> **Box 2: Tools produced during the action-research project**
>
> **Information and communication tools:**
> ▸ Health-policy information guide for councillors and their partners
> ▸ Information guide for local actors on decentralisation and the transfer of powers in the health field
>
> **Partnership tools:**
> ▸ Basic health-sector information system for municipalities
> ▸ Annual micro-planning guide for health measures in the municipality

4.1.3. INFORMATION AS A PREREQUISITE FOR ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

4.1.3.1. The national health-information system

The Ministry of Health runs a national health-information system in order to monitor progress on the 'minimum package of activities' defined in the PRODESS.

Data are collected regularly on the performance of community health centres as regards developments in their geographical accessibility, use of their services and their coverage. At village level, data are also collected on certain things such as latrines, coverage of iodine-enriched salt, level of membership of the ASACO, collection of contributions, monitoring of certain preventive medical consultations (immunisations, antenatal examinations) and distribution of impregnated mosquito nets. The community health centre's financial management,

management of stocks of medicine, proper holding of meetings (including keeping of minutes), action plans, fulfilment of commitments and communication of results to beneficiaries are also regularly monitored by the Ministry.

The main data-collection document is prepared at the national level. In the community health centre, the data are collected by the nurse (who keeps a copy, in theory), forwarded to the 'cercle' authorities and then on to higher levels, where they are collated and published in a regional statistical yearbook.

The 'cercle's' health technicians use these municipal data when they visit community health centres to assess progress on targets set at the start of the year. The ASACO sometimes attends these quarterly inspections. The ASACOs and the municipalities also receive a copy of the

quarterly reports, which are huge documents, containing extremely detailed information, and are very cumbersome to use.

Data in the National Health-Information System are fairly inaccessible for non-specialists in the form in which they are currently presented. Moreover, municipal councillors have many other fields to deal with, with limited staff and resources. It is therefore much more efficient to concentrate on priorities and to assemble a minimum package of basic information (the SIEC-S) that will allow them to understand and take decisions on public health.

Lastly, the SIEC-S can help the municipal council to make the results of its support more tangible and visible. Help in supplying health services could thus become just as visible as investments in build-ings and equipment.

4.1.3.2. Municipal councils' growing need for health data

It used to be the case that the ASACO had a mutual-assistance agreement with the Ministry of Health for the running of the community health centre, but since the new local authorities were set up, the ASACO now has to sign such an agreement with the mayor of its municipality. Up to now, however, councillors have generally failed to get to grips with the content of these mutual-assistance agreements, and their role often remains a passive one. Talks are currently being held about this, mainly involving the ASACO federation (FENASCOM). A system like the SIEC-S could make it easier for all actors to play a more active part, since it takes account of the challenges and substance of the commitments given and makes it easier to monitor progress.

The Ministry of Health is trying harder to be more dynamic in bringing municipal planning (in the form of Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans - PDESCs) into line with the health-sector programme at the 'cercle' level. The chairman of the 'cercle' council already chairs meetings of the reference health-centre management council. All mayors are members of this management council but their involvement is often passive because they do not have access to the relevant information.

Clearly, if the municipal council is to have effective dialogue with the Ministry of Health and if it is to have greater responsibilities, it needs regular access to reliable information on the public-health situation in its own municipality. The local authorities and the ASACOs have voiced this need at a number of meetings and workshops organised as part of the action-research project. As a result, the municipal councils and ASACOs have been increasingly involved in the supervisory visits by the 'cercle's' health technicians. This has been a huge step forward in strengthening partnership in the public-health field, showing once again just how necessary it is for reliable and comprehensible data to be circulated regularly by all actors.

4.1.3.3. Monitoring micro-planning and performance contracts

Micro-planning was introduced as part of the Accelerated Strategy for Child Survival and Development (SASDE), supported by UNICEF, in order to encourage active involvement in improving indicators within the community health centre areas. It is carried out every six months following a meeting to monitor community health centre activities attended by all the relevant actors.

Micro-planning has become a national practice, but municipalities do not feel engaged in the process because they are not involved in many of the phases, most of which involve meetings between the community health centre and the reference health centre. Some community health centres currently invite the municipal council to attend these meetings, but nothing is done to make their involvement more dynamic: councillors are not prepared in advance about the state of play and the factors involved, and there are no tools to help them to understand and therefore to participate.

One way of giving micro-planning greater weight is to follow it up by signing performance contracts. The Ministry of Health is currently developing 'standard' contracts at various levels (municipality, 'cercle', region). Two types of performance contracts are planned: one between the Ministry and local government, and the other between the Ministry and NGOs. The contracts set out expectations and responsibilities and

define the performance indicators to be used for monitoring purposes. This practice, which is a monitoring tool in itself, could also be used with the SIEC-S.

During the action-research project, discussions with the municipal actors (ASACOs, community health centres, municipal councils) produced an annual health micro-plan to be used as a reference for the commitments undertaken by all the parties involved. The commitments are to be set out in a performance contract for their implementation. Supervisory meetings will be held to monitor performance, attended by all the actors concerned, which is why the SIEC-S is important in the process.

4.1.4. THE SIEC-S: STARTING POINT AND STRUCTURE

4.1.4.1. Approach used

The purpose of the SIEC-S is to enable representatives of the municipal councils and the ASACOs to monitor the state of public health, to identify priorities for their municipality, to take an active part in discussions with the Ministry of Health and to monitor the progress of the community health centres, micro-plans, performance contracts and mutual-assistance agreements. The SIEC-S also serves as a basis for dialogue in the context of tripartite cooperation.

The SIEC-S research project aims to develop an approach that enables priority data to be selected in a given municipality and presented in a format that local actors can understand. The SIEC-S mainly uses data from the existing SNIS and does not alter either the way in which information circulates within the Ministry of Health or the monitoring and advisory system. The Ministry of Health is fully involved in developing the SIEC-S.

The data provided by the SIEC-S should provide a sound basis for identifying priorities when joint health plans are developed within the municipality. The SIEC-S should make it possible to manage the municipal resources available (financial, human and material) efficiently and effectively.

Box 3: Impact chain in a programme monitoring providing health services
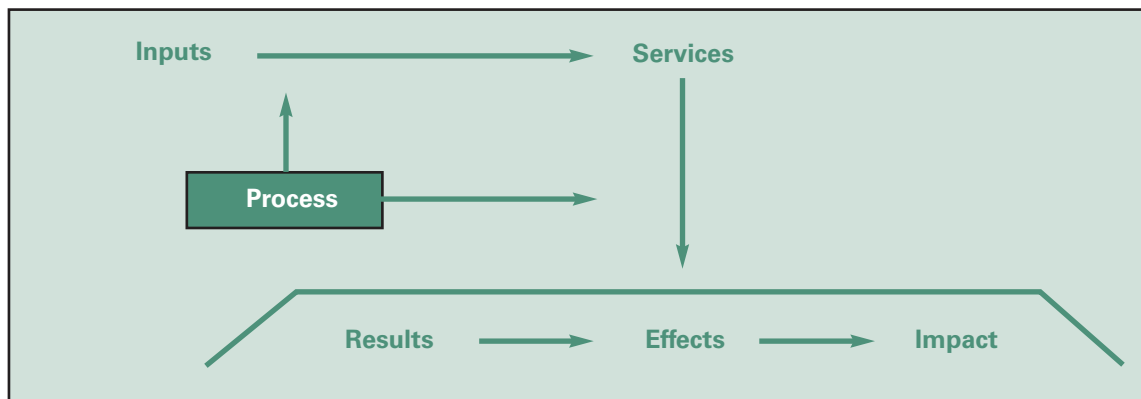
To illustrate the principle, let us take the example of a programme to monitor diarrhoeal diseases in a municipality that has decided that one of its priorities is to reduce infant mortality. A diagram can be drawn up showing how different elements interlink, and certain indicators relating to inputs or services can then be identified, which allow the performance of the system to be monitored. Of course, other diseases also contribute to infant mortality, such as malaria, acute respiratory diseases, malnutrition, etc., and identical diagrams can be drawn up for these.

Indicators	Examples
Input indicator	Resources invested in construction, information, education and communication (IEC)/training services and activities
Activity indicator (process)	Latrines, awareness-raising IEC, distribution of oral rehydration salts (ORS)
Service indicator	Number of latrines, number of trained mothers, availability of ORS
Result indicator	Incidence of diarrhoea and number of dehydrated children
Effect indicator	Proportion of children who have died of diarrhoea
Impact indicator	Infant mortality rate

4.1.4.2. Criteria for choosing SIEC-S indicators

It is essential for the SIEC-S to focus on a small number of indicators for planning and monitoring the performances of services in order to avoid overwhelming users with a mass of data and creating a system that is unwieldy in terms of workload and cost. It therefore needs to be limited to providing basic data with which to plan services and monitor their performance. A procedure is required that will first allow users to prioritise their information needs and then allow indicators to be selected on an informed basis.

The data provided by the SIEC-S must do the following:

■ satisfy municipalities' information needs;
inform municipalities about performances and results in the health sector (quality and productivity);
■ cover aspects of the sector that the municipality can influence, and encourage it to take action;
■ enable the municipality to take decisions about the joint management of the health sector on the basis of reliable data;
■ be flexible in order to be able to fulfil the specific needs of different municipalities.

In 2005 a meeting was held with representatives of the municipalities and the ASACOs to define their information needs. The SNV/KIT technical team then used this as a basis for proposing indicators (see Annex IV for a full list), which were adopted by the representatives after modification. Each pilot municipality and its ASACO, working with the health services, then selected the indicators that corresponded to their specific information needs from this list.[146]

A form for identifying and analysing the chosen indicators was then drawn up as a reference and the following details were requested:

■ information user;
■ type of indicator;
■ significance and use;
■ frequency of indicator;
■ method of calculating indicator;
■ classification (green, orange, red [see section 4.1.4.5]).

146- A municipality may have priorities that are not covered by the Ministry's regular monitoring system. Where that is the case, new indicators must be developed, together with a system for collecting and analysing the data.

Classification	Field of interest	Examples of indicators
Productivity and quality of care	Principal diseases	Use of curative services Expanded programme on immunisation (EPI) Malaria
	Coverage of preventive services	Immunisation coverage Antenatal checks Assisted births
	Health promotion	Accelerated Strategy for Child Survival and Development (SASDE) Drinking water and latrines Vitamin A coverage Financial coverage for AIDS sufferers
	Perception of quality of services	Reception given and respect shown by staff
Management	Management of financial and human resources and medicines	Community health centre operating accounts Average cost per case Average cost per prescription Staff availability
Consultation	Operation of bodies involved	Membership rate Proportion of women in ASACO decision-making bodies
	Involvement of villages in activities of community health centre	Proportion of villages having benefited from immunisation campaigns

4.1.4.3. Local actors' understanding of indicators

The first challenge was to check whether all the actors involved understood the indicators, so we tested the SIEC-S in two municipalities in the 'cercle' of Dioïla (Wacoro and Nangola).

In January 2006, we analysed to what extent local actors in the municipality of Wacoro understood certain SNIS indicators. Representatives from the Ministry of Health also attended these meetings. Our discussions with the municipal council and the ASACO covered what the indicators meant, how to analyse them and how they could be useful for the measures to be taken. The test showed that they understood the indicators very well, and once we had overcome a few problems, some even wanted to go into them in more detail. Representatives from the Ministry of Health also attended these meetings.

The first indicator considered was that for antenatal examinations (ANE), which play an important role in reducing maternal mortality. Pregnant women are recommended to have three ANEs. The indicator was presented in a descriptive form rather than as a percentage: 'Out of 100 women, 90 attended the community health centre once for an antenatal check and 37 attended the community health centre three times for antenatal checks.' The corresponding results were ANE-1: 90% and ANE-3: 37%. The local actors clearly understood this indicator.

The ANE-trend chart drawn up during the supervisory visits is already up on the wall of one of the community health centre offices. It was presented to the local actors, but although they understood the meaning of the ANE indicator and the rates in their municipality, they were initially unable to interpret the chart. However, once the principles behind the graph and the chart were explained, it seemed that a whole new world opened up before their eyes. One person said:

'We thought the pictures on the wall were meant to make the community health centre look nicer. We didn't realise they were technical figures that we could understand.'

We immediately started a discussion about the graph, the target for the municipality and the results obtained. The participants concluded that the ANE-3 rate was too low. In analysing why this was the case, general explanations (not always correct) were first put forward, such as 'the women are ashamed to let people see they are pregnant.' In the end, more detailed explanations added substance to the debate. One of the municipal councillors suggested that one problem might be that husbands refused to let their wives attend the examination. In that case, the participants themselves concluded, rather than focusing awareness-raising solely on women, men also needed to be made more aware, in order to overcome the economic and social problems preventing women from deciding for themselves. Clearly, only detailed analysis will generate relevant comments and suggestions.

The second indicator discussed with the municipal actors was the rate of use of curative care, which was 0.25% for Wacoro. This indicator was explained as 'if everyone attends the centre just once, the figure is 1, but a person may visit the centre more than once.' The participants agreed that almost everyone in the municipality would fall ill at least once a year. So a figure of less than one would mean that some patients did not come to the community health centre, either because they sought treatment elsewhere or because they just stayed at home. A further discussion was then held about why this should be: 'Why not all villages are covered?' 'Who are the other health-care providers?' and 'What should be done to change this?'

The third indicator chosen was coverage of impregnated mosquito nets. In the municipality of Wacoro, 35% of the population have an impregnated net. This indicator was clear and the participants asked for more details: 'Impregnated mosquito nets for women or children?'

The municipal actors genuinely welcomed this working meeting. Because relevant indicators were presented in a comprehensible form, they were able to analyse them on the basis of results. This gave them a better understanding of the problem and made it easier for them to identify appropriate and feasible measures. The chairman of the mayors' association said: 'This is great. It's just what we needed. Now we can get a better idea of the state of health in our municipality. Before, we thought we were making good progress because we weren't analysing the figures properly, but now we can also find out where the problems lie.'

The Ministry of Health representatives also welcomed the discussions and realised that even unspecialised and sometimes illiterate actors can follow data provided by the SNIS. This should get municipalities more involved in tackling health problems — if the indicators are clearly explained and presented in an appropriate way. They thus realised the importance of the SIEC-S and its usefulness for the Ministry.

4.1.4.4. Presentation and analysis of information

The second challenge was to develop a way of presenting the data to make them accessible and comprehensible to local actors (municipalities and ASACOs), who were not health specialists.

It is important to take account of the municipal councils' objectives and the way they communicate with local people. First of all, the language used must not be technical. Since councillors are elected for five years and usually seek re-election, a five-yearly presentation usually suits them best, particularly if it means that, at election time, they can show local people what has been done and what results have been achieved. They are primarily interested in the results, not how the value of the indicators has been calculated. In addition, since many of them are illiterate, it is vital to present the information in visual form.

In order to be able to estimate the value of an indicator, it is important to compare it with figures from previous years for the community health centre concerned and/or the results for neighbouring centres (see Figure 1). Such a comparison allows the municipal council and the ASACO to judge the results for their community health centre. The actors can choose from three options for comparing the data collected in their municipality:

■ compare indicators for the municipality with the average for the 'cercle';
■ compare indicators for the municipality with the national or regional norm;
■ compare indicators for the municipality with a target set when the SIEC-S started.

Figure 1: Sample graphs comparing data on antenatal checks
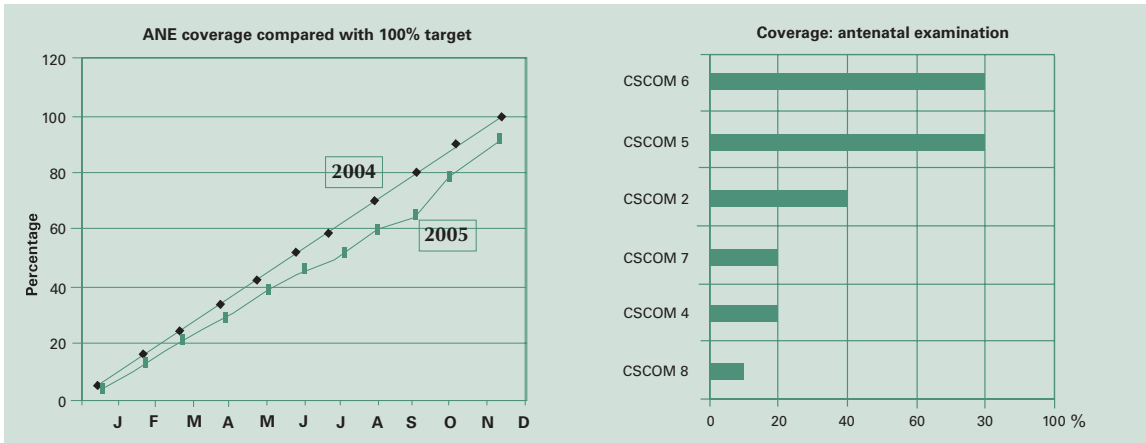
4.1.4.5. Stages involved in the SIEC-S

The starting point for the SIEC-S is a tripartite agreement between the municipal council, the ASACO and the Ministry of Health in which they identify priorities, choose indicators and determine the 'standards for comparison'.

Before beginning to put together the SIEC-S, an information and training meeting in the local language is held with all the participants and with representatives of the other local associations working in the public-health field. The participants must first understand the objectives and principles of the monitoring system and the meaning of the list of indicators. They need to know how to measure and interpret the graphs.

Special forms have been developed for the SIEC-S (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Sample SIEC-S form for a municipality

Field of interest	Indicator	Year			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
principal diseases	use of curative services				
	percentage of cases referred: → from the village to the community health centre				
	→ from the community health centre to the reference health centref				
	exacerbation of an EPI-preventable disease				
	proportion of sick children - acute respiratory infections				
	- diarrhoeal syndromes				

The indicator form must be filled in every three months by representatives of the municipal council and the ASACO on the basis of the information supplied by the community health centre's technical team. It is filled in colour, either green, orange or red, depending on the target set when the SIEC-S starts. These colours or 'traffic lights' mean the following:

■ **green:** when the results are as desired;
■ **orange:** when the results suggest less progress than anticipated;
■ **red:** when the results are declining or negative.

The data needed for the indicators chosen are supplied by the community health centre's technical team and are among the data already collected for the SNIS. With the ASACO's help they are calculated and recorded on special forms and given to the mayor. The municipal and ASACO representatives then analyse the data and decide which colour to give for each indicator. Then, before the 'cercle' team arrives for its inspection, they fill in the tables with the appropriate colours. The indicators are also presented in graph form by the munic-ipality's medical officer, helped (if necessary) by the 'cercle's' health-information system (SIS) officer.[147]

The results of the SIEC-S and the graphs are presented and discussed during the Ministry of Health supervisory visit[148]. It is important for the 'cercle' officials to check, by asking detailed questions, that the municipal actors have understood the significance of the results. They can only take appropriate measures once they have understood the source of the problems. At the end of this joint analysis, an action plan is drawn up, including how responsibilities are divided, and progress is checked at the next visit.

The results of the SIEC-S are also used at munic-ipal planning meetings. With the SIEC-S, it is possible to evaluate work carried out in the public-health field and the results obtained. It provides a basis for the municipality's annual planning. The council can also use the SIEC-S to show local people what the municipality is doing about public health and what it has achieved.

147- During the action-research project we worked with some SIS officers to make this information easier to read rather than merely providing a table full of figures. Their first reaction was usually to be doubtful and unenthusiastic. However, when they saw at the meetings how much their work was appreciated and the effect it had on the quality of the discussions, they recognised the importance of this type of presentation.

148- As we said earlier, quarterly inspections of the community health centres form a regular part of the monitoring system.

4.1.5. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

The approach for drawing up the SIEC-S is now fixed, and parts of it have been tested in two municipalities. Training in using the guide is to be provided during 2006. Although the provision of funding to complete the testing is behind schedule, it will be applied in other municipalities in order to validate the approach.

To their great surprise, the municipal representatives have proved quite skilful in understanding and analysing the indicators, discussing their significance with the devolved departments and identifying priority measures to be taken. They have shown enthusiasm for taking part in these activities. This shows that municipal councils have little involvement in public health not because they are not interested, but because they have not known how to talk about it.

The great strength of the SIEC-S is that it does not involve setting up a new data-collection system, since it uses only information already collected and available from the community health centre. What is new is the way in which information is made accessible to local people and officers in the municipality, and the SIS officer can play an important part in supervising the community health centre's technical team and local actors.

The SIEC-S allows non-specialists, including those who are illiterate, to take part in discussions on health-system results, progress and the reasons for failures or successes. Local actors and the Ministry of Health have welcomed the practical approach of the SIEC-S and recognised its importance for bolstering public health in municipalities. Setting up a basic information system for municipalities in this field could make it easier to create similar systems in other sectors, such as education, for instance.

One effect of the SIEC-S is that discussions between municipalities, ASACOs and the decentralised Ministry of Health departments are no longer limited to health funding, as they used to be. Now, they also look at 'public health'. The SIEC-S makes it easier to analyse and talk about the current situation, priorities, progress made and work to be done in the health field, and it thus encourages the various stakeholders to discuss and work together. The joint analysis encourages the actors to pool ideas in seeking solutions and discussing how tasks should be distributed.

The SIEC-S thus helps to improve consultation and increase mutual trust, because each partner is better informed. Experience has shown that actively involving local actors in monitoring can be an important way of improving cooperation in the health sector and system performance at the local level.

To be continued...

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

ANE	Antenatal Examination
ANICT	Agence Nationale d'Investissements des Collectivités Territoriales/National Agency for Local Government Investment
ASACO	Association de Santé Communautaire/Community Health Association
CSCOM	Centre de Santé Communautaire/Community Health Centre
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunisation
FENASCOM	Fédération Nationale des Associations de Santé Communautaire/National Federation of Community Health Associations
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ORS	Oral Rehydration Salts
PDESC	Plan de Développement Social, Économique et Culturel/Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan
PRODESS	Programme de Développement Sanitaire et Social/Health and Social Development Programme
SASDE	Accelerated Strategy for Child Survival and Development
SIEC-S	Système d'Information Essentielle pour la Commune dans le secteur de la Santé/Basic Health-Sector Information System for Municipalities
SIS	Système d'Information Sanitaire/Health-Information System
SNIS	Système National d'Information Sanitaire/National Health-Information System
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation

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Annex III: Resource persons, online documents and useful addresses

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Documents and links for consultation:

Hilhorst, T., D. Bagayoko, D. Dao, E. Lodenstein and J. Toonen. 2005

> Building effective partnership for improved basic social services delivery in Mali. Bamako: Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) and Royal Tropical Institute (KIT). 30p. Available on-line
> *(http://www.snvmali.org/publications/brochuresant_eng.pdf)*

Online resources:

www.kit.nl
www.snvmali.org

Useful addresses:

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Classification	Field of interest	Indicators	Quarterly monitoring	Annual monitoring
Productivity and quality of care	Principal diseases	Use of curative services	x	
		% of cases referred	x	
		Priority diseases	x	
		Number HIV-positive (prevalence)		x
	Coverage of preventive services	Immunisation coverage (<1 year fully immunised)	x	
		Antenatal examination	x	
		Family planning	x	
		Proportion of children malnourished	x	
	Health promotion	Integrated advanced immunisation strategy carried out in X% of villages in the area		x
		Coverage: drinking water		x
		Coverage: latrines		x
		Coverage: impregnated mosquito nets		x
	Perception of quality of services	Reception given and respect shown by staff		
Management	Management of financial, material and human resources	Operating account: medical treatment	x	
		Operating account: essential generic medicines		x
		Average cost per prescription	x	
		Staff availability for treatment	x	
		Condition of buildings, equipment and transport		x
Consultation	Operation of bodies involved	Involvement of bodies in consultation meetings		x
		Compliance with regulations and internal rules		x
	Villages' participation in activities of community health centre	Proportion of villages that took part in immunisation campaigns	x	
		Proportion of villages regularly represented in community health centre management		x

4.2. Benin: Public control in the education sector, pilot phase of the participatory local impact monitoring methodology (SILP)

This study, **'Public control in the education sector: the pilot phase of the participatory local monitoring methodology (SILP)'**, has been prepared by a team of three authors: Anne Floquet, Roch Mongbo and Silke Woltermann (see Annex IV).

The authors describe their experience of the test phase of a pilot SILP scheme for the primary-education sector. This scheme involved 15 schools in three municipalities of the department of Atakora where development indicators are at very low levels.

This trial is part and parcel of the poverty reduction strategy (PRS) and decentralisation in Benin. It came about because, using quantitative evaluations of the implementation of policies to alleviate poverty, it is not always possible to identify all the barriers that block the proper operation of decentralised public services. The SILP is intended therefore to provide supplementary information on factors that might cause problems, and on appropriate corrective measures.

For this purpose, the SILP follows an iterative process of consultation and exchange, involving sector actors at a number of levels (municipal, departmental, national) and various groups of actors (citizens, local government representatives, state services, parents' associations, central institutions, development partners, etc.). The stress is on two aspects of the public spending cycle: tracing the resources allocated and evaluating service quality, which are jointly reviewed by public and community service users and suppliers, using their own criteria.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives of decentralisation is to enable the state and its departments to meet the needs of the population better, while at the same time, respecting the principle of 'subsidiarity', i.e., delegating responsibilities and the performance of tasks to the lowest possible level. However, even the level closest to citizens has to ensure that the services it offers are of high quality and in keeping with users' needs.

Most West African countries have a poverty reduction strategy (PRS) in which policy programmes are set out for priority sectors, particularly social sectors.

Most social services in the areas of basic education, drinking-water supplies and public health are offered at a municipal level. Decentralisation means that the powers related to these services are, in principle, transferred to municipalities. It is therefore essential for decentralisation to function properly if poverty-reduction strategies are to be implemented.

Assessments of the implementation of PRS and the degree of decentralisation of social sectors often take a quantitative approach. They are based on household surveys and statistics on the new social infrastructure for the various services (schools, water points, health centres), but do not examine whether this infrastructure is actually functional. Often, local populations make only low-level use of the new infrastructure or they refuse to use it. The data provided by these assessments do not make it possible to ascertain why this should be the case. Generally, circumstances or factors that financing bodies have failed to take into account have prevented the proper use of the resources that have already been allocated in these sectors. As a result, these assessments often mean that resources are shifted to sectors that appear more promising.

In this context, a participatory local impact monitoring methodology (SILP) *(suivi d'impact local participatif)* makes it possible to obtain further information that can help to pinpoint the causes of good or bad public-service performance. It is hoped that this case study will provide a model for municipalities that want to find out more about the performance and quality of their services - and whether the local populace consider them to be useful. The monitoring and evaluation departments of the ministries concerned could also use this model to adapt and improve their sector strategies, including, of course, their plans for decentralisation and devolution of the services offered. Over and above these sector ministries, the bodies responsible for PRS monitoring and evaluation could obtain information to improve and supplement their analyses. Finally, development partners could draw on this strategy to underpin or strengthen an approach of this kind in their areas of support and advice.

The pilot SILP approach was tested in the area of primary education, since this is one of the priority sectors in Benin's PRS. This sector can draw on resources from the Initiative for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), a debt-relief initiative. Expenditures in this sector were analysed for 15 schools. SILP workshops were held, during which participants evaluated the quality of the services provided by their schools and drew up action plans. The SILP team led these workshops and monitored the action plans as they were put into practice.

4.2.1. METHODOLOGY

The SILP is a multi-level approach: it involves the municipal and national level. Activities take place with school stakeholders at both levels. At the community level data on school services is produced in an interactive way. Statistics are collected, information is shared and analysed and feedback provided at the municipal, departmental and national level.

It also involves different structures at various levels, the bodies responsible for monitoring and evaluating the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the schools. At the national level, there is a SILP Steering Committee answerable to the *Observatoire de Changement Social* (OCS) (Observatory of Social Change). The OCS is one of the two bodies responsible for PRSP monitoring and evaluation, alongside the Permanent Secretariat of the *Commission Nationale pour le Développement et la Lutte contre la Pauvreté* (CNDLP) (National Development and Poverty Reduction Commission). The Commission's members include representatives of the CNDLP's Permanent Secretariat, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MEPS), the technical and financial partners (TFPs) involved in the common fund for building the capacity for PRSP monitoring and evaluation, *the Fédération Nationale des Associations de Parents d'Élèves* (FNAPE) (National Federation of Parents of Schoolchildren) and civil society (including World Education, a non-governmental organisation). The FIDESPRA Institute (*Forum International pour le Développement et l'Échange de Savoir et de Savoir-faire au Service d'une Promotion Rurale Auto Entretenue*/International Forum for Development and Exchanges of Knowledge and Expertise promoting Self-Sustaining Rural Development), which undertook the SILP pilot phase, is also a member.

The strategy has been piloted in 15 schools of the Atakora department in the north of Benin. This department was chosen because it was lagging behind in terms of school attendance rates, something that the various actors in the education sector are attempting to rectify. The schools selected reflect a wide range of educational performance in the department, ranging from schools that are very well off, accessible and performing well to disadvantaged schools that are isolated and not performing well. These characterisations were validated at departmental level at a workshop bringing together representatives of the various school stakeholders, where the choice of pilot schools was decided by consensus.

Each of the school communities chosen in this way was analysed to evaluate the performance of its schools. At the outset, the SILP strategy facilitators identified the various types of actors using the school, concerned about the school and/or having an opinion on its services. This inevitably led to three groups: 'pupils', 'teachers' and 'parents'. Distinctions were made within each of these groups, including 'permanent teachers', 'supply teachers' or 'community teachers'. Moreover, students dropping out of school or not attending school, parents who were not members of the parents' association (APE) (Association des Parents d'Élèves) and women selling foodstuffs close to schools were also taken into account. Open or semi-structured interviews conducted with a number of people from each group enabled the team to draw up an initial picture of these various actors' perceptions of the schools and of existing problems and opinions.

'Interface workshops' were then organised. Initially, the SILP strategy facilitators encouraged the different stakeholders of the community to evaluate their school by conducting interviews in homogeneous groups. The groups then shared their conclusions with the other groups using scoring grids for school performance. The open question that provided a starting point for this evaluation was 'what do you like or dislike about your school?' A number of aspects were evaluated: infrastructure, teaching staff, parents, school performance in relation to criteria other than children's educational results, quality and availability of teaching materials, etc. It was very difficult to explain these assessments to all the participants as there was a risk of conflict when people became aware that others were criticising them and felt that these criticisms were unjustified or exaggerated.

However, this is only one aspect of the SILP strategy, in which group evaluation is combined with concerted planning of remedial measures, with local actors in the areas of action for which they are responsible. In this instance, mayors released school grounds or provided support for the construction of school buildings, the head of the school district improved the allocation of teaching materials within the limits of what was available, parents' associations undertook to perform their advisory and consultative role in the area of school management, pupils improved their attitudes toward their work, teachers undertook to be more assiduous and parents worked with teachers and undertook better supervision of their children at home.

Some time after this, a further collective assessment workshop made it possible to measure the progress that had been made and to plan new measures, since a lack of supervision often meant that some of these undertakings had come to nothing. This was the role of the facilitators.

In parallel with its work with communities, the SILP team analysed the public resources allocated to schools (teachers, infrastructure, furnishings, teaching materials, operating subsidies, etc.) from the source to the beneficiaries. This made it possible to evaluate allocation and planning methods, as well as the routes through which these resources passed.

Various documents were produced as the SILP process took place, in particular, workshop reports, a brochure on the SILP strategy (Floquet and Mongbo 2006), and an article. A final report on the testing of this monitoring strategy, and a training manual is being prepared. The trial of this new strategy was covered by the media through broadcasts on local radio stations and articles in the press. The various documents produced before and during the trial of the SILP strategy have all been validated at a municipal-level seminar, by representatives of the various groups of actors. A national validation workshop has also been organised with representatives of MEPS, the Prefect of Atakora, mayors and representatives of civil society.

Put together by consultants from FIDESPRA and the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) expert responsible for the SILP, this study draws on these various documents. Bearing in mind time constraints and the geographical dispersion of the actors, it has not been possible for everyone involved to participate in its production; however, this study contains only information that has already been validated by all those involved.

4.2.2. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE APPROACH

4.2.2.1. The SILP in the context of decentralisation

Much of the power for delivering and managing social services has been transferred from ministries to local government as part of the decentralisation process in Benin.

Basic education is a service where power is shared: some tasks continue to be the responsibility of MEPS, while others have been transferred to the municipalities. The construction of primary schools is now the task of municipalities, for instance, while teachers' pay and supervision is the task of the Ministry. Locally, the parents' organisations co-manage the schools, together with the school board, which is a devolved service of the Ministry. The SILP is able to provide a picture of the quality of decentralisation in a municipality, creating at the same time a space in which democracy can be effectively exercised, at least in the educational field.

The information produced locally through the SILP is then forwarded nationally. This makes it possible to adapt national policies and programmes to the needs of municipalities and local users. In parallel, the SILP strategy encourages better transfer of information from the national and departmental levels to municipalities. For instance, publishing planned transfers of resources from the national or departmental level to municipalities and schools makes it possible for the information to circulate properly and ensures greater transparency in what resources are available. The SILP can then be used to monitor how the provisions on decentralisation are being implemented and to make any adjustments that may be needed.

4.2.2.2. Reasons, objectives and demand for the SILP approach

Why launch a SILP pilot programme? The following reasons should help readers to understand the overall rationale.

A first PRSP for the period 2003-2005 was drawn up for Benin. A second PRSP is currently being prepared. In parallel, budgetary reforms have been implemented in priority sectors: social sectors (such as health, water, education) and others such as agriculture. These reforms have made it possible to strengthen medium-term budgetary planning and to introduce planned budgets. These are helping to consolidate the link between the budgetary procedure and development planning geared towards poverty reduction.

Benin's PRSP includes a number of monitoring and evaluation instruments such as the impact monitoring system. The involvement of civil actors is one of the requirements of the PRSP design, implementation and M&E process. However, no instrument to ensure this was proposed in the PRSP and monitoring and the M&E bodies lack appropriate methods.

The development of result indicators is an important advance from the point of view of monitoring the performance of sector strategies. The impact on poverty is measured by surveys of household living standards and by monitoring various poverty indicators. However, on its own, this system is obviously not enough to provide policymakers with information and to explain why an increase in resources does not always bring about positive changes in the indicators of results, effects and impact. Even though the resources allocated to social sectors have been increased, some poverty indicators (such as standards of living in rural environments, maternal and infant mortality and the number of children reaching the required level at the end of primary education) have not improved.

The central ministries that decide on finance and development policies and the development partners were therefore keen to set up a participatory system to monitor public action in the key sectors of the fight against poverty. The OCS, responsible for coordinating PRSP monitoring operations on behalf of the CNDLP, is supervising the development and institutional consolidation of this kind of system.

The various civil actors in Benin have often pointed out that the participatory element of the PRSP process exists only on paper; however, there had been no direct demand from school communities for an M&E instrument such as the SILP, largely because they were unaware that such a strategy existed. Municipal authorities were not just unaware of its existence, but were endeavouring to find out how the powers transferred to them by decentralisation could actually be exercised. Once they had been informed, some schools took an interest in this approach and decided to take part in the exercise.

It is in this context of strengthening PRSP monitoring and evaluation that GTZ, the Permanent Secretariat of the CNDLP and the OCS started to devise a participatory strategy to monitor local impact in order to help PRSP monitoring and eval-uation. The World Bank helped to design the strategy and financed the pilot phase. In developing the strategy, GTZ drew on its experience of strategies that had been developed and tested outside of Benin, particularly 'Kenya Participatory Impact Monitoring' (KePIM) and 'Qualitative Impact Monitoring in Malawi' (QIM).

Although the SILP was initially intended to provide information for PRSP monitoring bodies, it also provides interesting information on the implementation and effects of decentralisation. By evaluating users' perceptions of school operation and performance, it provides an overall snapshot of this sector of decentralisation. These data can also be made available to all the actors in the public service in question, with the result that local governance in this sector becomes more transparent.

4.2.2.3. The choice of the education sector

A strategy enabling the measurement of a public sector's performance and the monitoring of allocated resources was presented at a seminar in 2004. The primary-education sector was chosen for an experimental trial since its budget was at that time being increased from less than 3% of

Benin's gross domestic product (GDP) to over 4%, and it was also receiving additional resources from Benin's external debt relief (HIPC)[149].

In Benin's PRS, primary education is a priority sector, the aim being to achieve 'primary education for all by 2015'. It therefore seemed a particularly good time to find out whether the additional resources being channelled into this sector were improving school performance. With the agreement of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, GTZ and the World Bank decided to invest in this SILP pilot project.

A team of researchers developed and tested the SILP method in 15 schools in three municipalities the Atakora department, where development indicators are poor. The team came from FIDESPRA, a research and action institute of the University of Abomey-Calavi, and was assisted by a local consultancy office (CARP International) based in the department. The researchers presented their findin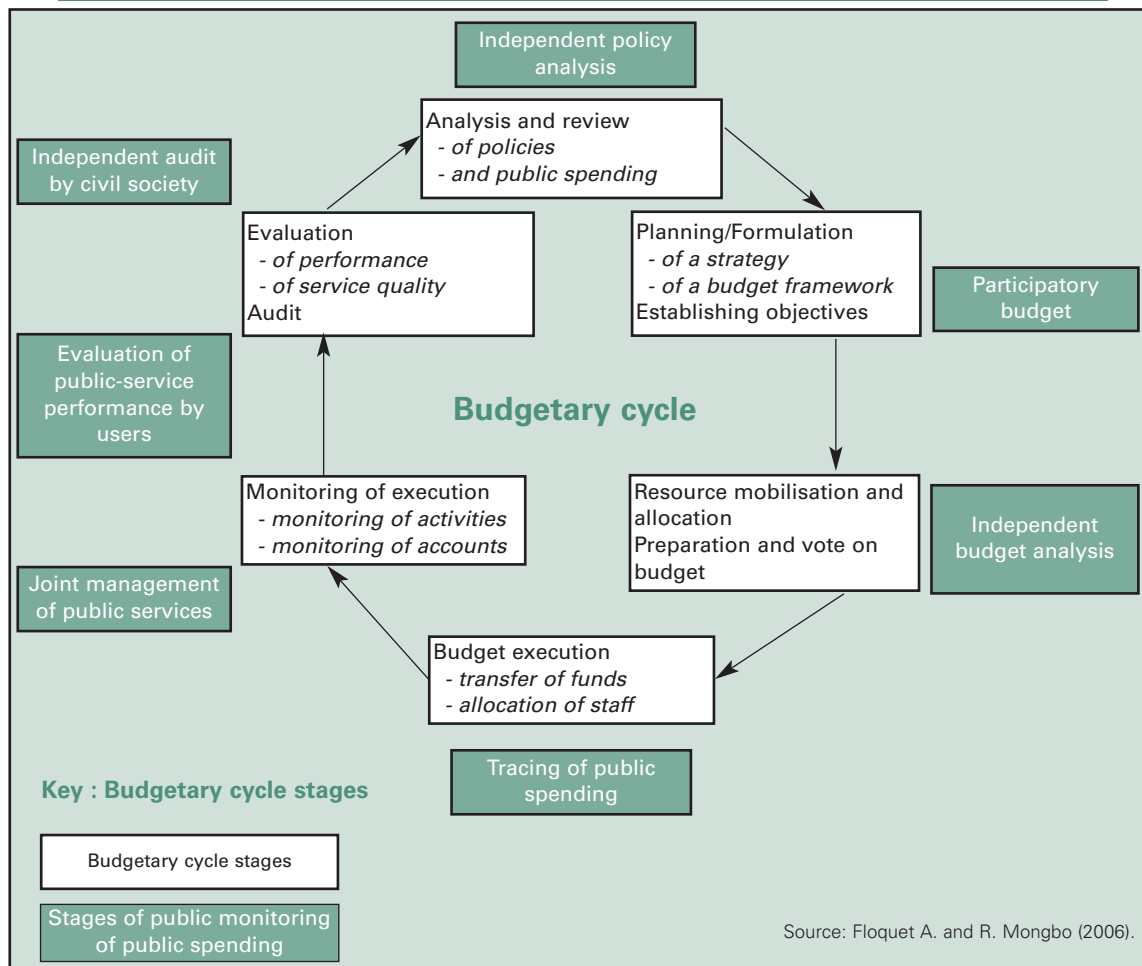gs to a steering committee, chaired by the OCS and made up of various representatives from the education sector, the development partners and the institutions responsible for drawing up, implementing and monitoring the PRSP.

4.2.2.4. The main principles of Participatory Local Impact Monitoring

There are various ways in which citizens can monitor public spending: through independent analyses of the national budget by groups of civil-society actors at the beginning of the budgetary cycle, for instance, with an independent review of public spending at the end of the cycle (Diagram 1). Another option is to involve citizens (especially the users of a public service such as a school or health centre) directly in drawing up the budgets of public bodies, at municipal level, for instance. The SILP focuses on two aspects of the public spending cycle: tracing the resources allocated and evaluating quality of service.

149- Actions financed by HIPC resources are generally known as 'social measures'.

Independent policy analysis

Analysis and review
- of policies
- and public spending

Independent audit by civil society

Evaluation
- of performance
- of service quality
Audit

Planning/Formulation
- of a strategy
- of a budget framework
Establishing objectives

Participatory budget

Evaluation of public-service performance by users

Budgetary cycle

Monitoring of execution
- monitoring of activities
- monitoring of accounts

Resource mobilisation and allocation
Preparation and vote on budget

Independent budget analysis

Joint management of public services

Budget execution
- transfer of funds
- allocation of staff

Key : Budgetary cycle stages

Tracing of public spending

Budgetary cycle stages

Stages of public monitoring of public spending

Source: Floquet A. and R. Mongbo (2006).

Tracing public spending

The SILP monitors how the public and community resources earmarked for the service in question are being allocated in order to ascertain whether they are reaching their beneficiaries and are being properly used. This kind of tracking makes it possible to locate any problems and to decide on corrective measures. The kinds of problems that arise may be due to the fact that resources are not being allocated where they should be or that resources are not in keeping with needs. They may also be due to a lack of cash forecasting and to delays in the payment of aid.

Community evaluation of public-service performance

The SILP enables public and community service users and suppliers to develop their own evaluation criteria to evaluate the quality of the services in their locality; in this case, their primary and secondary schools.

A particular feature of the SILP approach is that it is not just limited to pinpointing deficits, but also tries to correct them by helping actors to identify and plan corrective measures. In this way, the SILP is an iterative approach combining evaluation, planning, implementation and monitoring of measures (Diagrams 1 and 2).

Source: Floquet A. and R. Mongbo (2006).
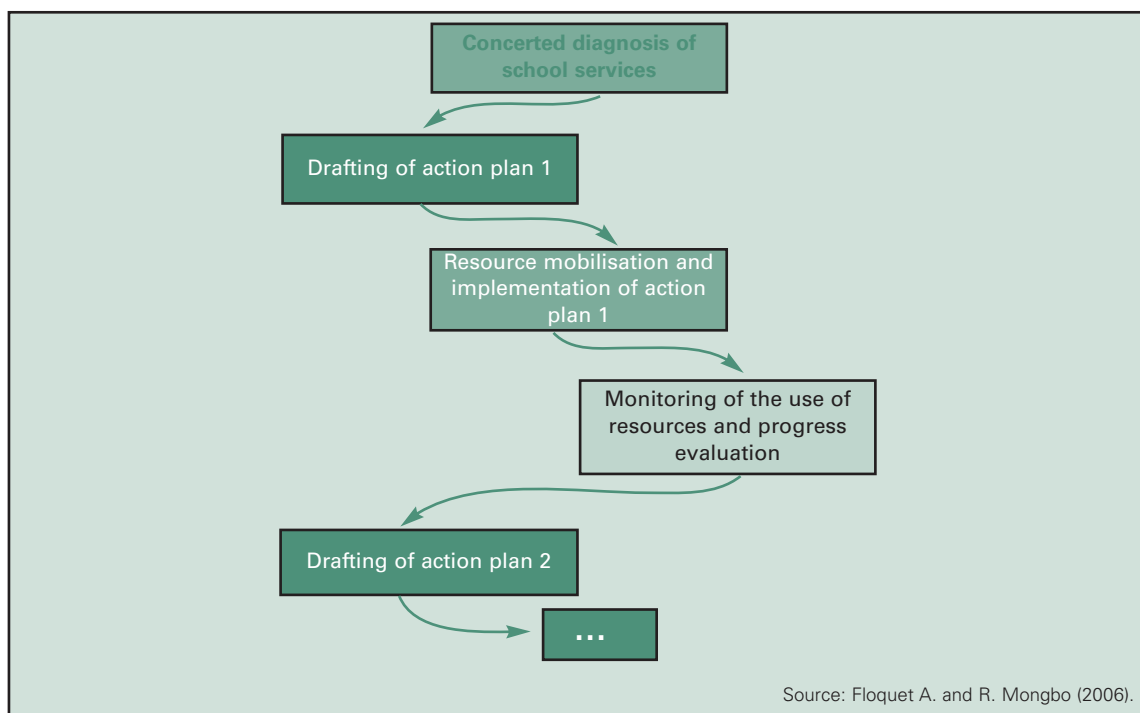
4.2.2.5. Stages of the SILP strategy pilot phase

Information workshops were held in February and June 2004 in Natitingou in the north of Benin in order to explain the objectives of the SILP to all the actors involved in the school system at departmental and municipal level. These actors included representatives of the school administration, teachers, members of parents' associations, municipal elected officers and representatives of NGOs. The purpose of these information workshops was to encourage them to support the strategy and to pinpoint schools in a range of different situations that could be used as a sample. Parents' representatives, teachers and members of the school administration then chose five schools per municipality, on the basis of various criteria: school attendance, rate of achievement of the Certificate of Primary Education (CEP), whether or not the school had all six grades, isolation, quality of infrastructure, etc.

In March 2005, at the beginning of the new academic year (which was disturbed by social unrest), the SILP team held interviews in the schools selected with each group of local actors in order to collect their opinions of their school and to identify any conflicts that might flare up during the workshops.

In May and June 2005, evaluation and planning workshops were organised in each school. Community evaluation based on simple questions had led each interest group in the school community (pupils, children not attending school, parents, APE representatives, teachers, canteen workers, parents who were not APE members) to discuss the school.

This discussion was guided by a moderator in order to draw up a list of criteria for evaluating school performance. The moderator then formulated each criterion in as neutral a way as possible and the group evaluated each of these using a four-point

scoring grid, as follows:

Excellent	100
Good	75
Acceptable	50
Poor	25

These criteria and their scores were then handed out and discussed in a plenary meeting. While there was unanimous agreement about some scores, in other cases different groups gave very different scores. The average scores were then colour-coded:

Excellent	>75	Green
Good	50 - 75	Yellow
Acceptable	25 - 50	Orange
Poor	< 25	Red

All the scores were then put into a matrix in order to provide an overall view of schools and criteria at a time 't'.

In addition to evaluation criteria linked to national norms and standards (as regards infrastructure or number of teachers per school, for instance), the local actors wanted to include other indicators, which, in their view, related to factors that had a bearing on the performance of their school: for instance, reading and writing skills of pupils in the middle grade, the sociability of children attending school, the type of men and women produced (lazy or not), teachers' punctuality and social integration, the type of canteen and the quality of its management, whether or not the school was transparently managed, etc.

During the second day of the workshop, participants split into thematic groups and drew up proposals for corrective measures, along with a plan and a list of the people responsible. These proposals were amended and validated in the plenary meeting. The team of facilitators helped to convert this plan into a time schedule for each group of actors to make it easier for them to monitor its implementation. The parents' association was responsible for distributing the results to all the parents in a village or district.

The action plan was launched locally and the team of facilitators monitored it on a regular basis (between July and September). Members of the parents' association and the school administration

carried out the various measures concerning school administration or the municipality. In August 2005, actors from the 15 schools and elected municipal officers attended a mid-term evaluation workshop.

In July 2005, the results of the trial were presented to the MEPS: analysis of planning methods and resource allocation in the education sector, monitoring of the resources allocated to the 15 schools (tracing of public expenditure) and the main results of the initial evaluation workshops.

In December 2005 and January 2006, there were radio broadcasts and press reports on a number of 'successful' cases, i.e., case histories of schools that had made progress as a result of the strategy.

In January 2006, six months after the initial evaluation, a second workshop was held in each school in order to score the criteria again, analyse progress and adjust the action plan.

In April 2006, the pilot phase was evaluated and strategy discussions were held at a national validation workshop.

4.2.2.6. After the pilot phase

The pilot phase raised the question of whether a system of the SILP type could be developed on a larger scale, leading to improved performance and providing information for policy decisions whose benefits would outweigh any additional costs. To answer this question, the lessons learned from the pilot phase from the point of view of capacity building, ownership and viability of the approach had to be analysed.

The SILP strategy can be sustainable only if the actors involved actually own it. The capacity of the main actors has to be strengthened if they are to do more than simply support the strategy. Using such a strategy is in the immediate interest of the parents' associations, for instance, and they could be its institutional supporters, ensuring that it is implemented and promoting its results. If they are to play this role, however, both local andnational capacity needs to be strengthened.

It would be very beneficial to involve NGOs working in the field of basic education. They could play a major role in facilitating the SILP process; however, their capacity also needs to be strengthened if appropriate methods and instruments are to be available. Involving NGOs could also have a major impact on the costs of the strategy.

The strategy also has some weaknesses. Unless it is properly supervised, it may bring latent conflicts to a head without providing an opportunity to transform them into constructive discussion. While the SILP builds self-corrective strategies among actors at all the levels, it may also lead to more covert strategies to circumvent or exclude actors, possibly even within the APEs. External support for the process therefore has to be kept up, even though the need for this support may tail off in schools that are already working on the SILP.

Again, as regards ownership, the pilot phase showed that the SILP tends to be naturally disseminated. Schools that were not selected asked participating schools about the strategy so that they could implement it as well. It would be interesting to learn the results of this, but unfortunately, the pilot-phase team did not have the resources to monitor it.

A number of factors obviously have an impact on the costs of the strategy. The first and most obvious is the number of schools involved. Costs per school also vary and, indeed, decrease as the number of participating schools increases, since, once trained, the SILP team members can work in several schools. Other factors, such as the pace of work of the SILP (yearly, two-yearly), the rotation and location of schools, among other things, also have an impact on costs.

Mentoring and workshop organisation, which make public spending more efficient, entail costs that are not offset by additional benefits as they are in income-generating sectors, such as health. Financing therefore has to be envisaged at the highest level and included in the PRS budget. At the same time, efforts need to be made to reduce the costs of facilitation by training a core of local people who are as close as possible to the schools involved. NGOs could, for instance, recruit skills from among the Coordinations des Associations des Parents d'Élèves (CO-APE) (Coordination Units of Parents' Associations) and retired teachers.

Even though, after only a few months, it is still too early to measure the effects of the SILP in quantitative terms, it would appear that the strategy has had a direct effect on the efficiency of public spending, by improving the roles played by the most important actors (teachers and parents, as well as pupils) and by establishing self-corrective mechanisms. The SILP thus helps to mobilise local resources (whose real value is rarely appreciated and whose extent and importance are often disregarded by national planners) as well as the external resources provided by the state and the development partners, paving the way for better overall management of these resources.

It would also seem that the strategy tends to disseminate itself and bring about changes in local practices, especially if there is good media support and successful cases are well publicised. The SILP does not, therefore, have to be run every year in every school to generate self-corrective effects.

If the SILP is to make the resources channelled into basic education more efficient, the information gathered locally does not just have to be forwarded nationally (to the MEPS), but also has to be put into the system to provide a basis for decisions on national education policy. Information-forwarding mechanisms therefore need to be promoted, and the bodies involved at the national level, such as the national federation of APEs and NGOs, need to be strengthened.

In order to foster information-forwarding mechanisms, taking the system already in place as a starting point, action needs to be taken in the following areas:

■ the school hierarchy and its monitoring system;
■ the PRSP participatory monitoring system (departmental monitoring committees);
■ municipal monitoring systems;
■ the APEs and their umbrella organisations, which have a key role to play as supervisors and instigators; if they are to take up this role, they need reliable information relating to all levels.

A number of solutions have been envisaged to extend the scale of sector and poverty-reduction strategies:

■ choosing a random sample of schools from the entire country;
■ identifying municipalities from among all the country's municipalities and selecting a number of schools in each municipality (extension of the current strategy to other departments);
■ locating various contrasting situations, such as a rural department and a large town (minimalist solution).

The total size of the sample also depends on the priority objectives, i.e., whether the aim is to 'inform' the poverty-reduction strategy or to couple municipal planning with school planning and to bring about self-corrective mechanisms at all levels of the school system. In the first case, a smaller sample, reflecting differing school and economic situations, may be enough, while in the second case, all municipalities have to be covered and all the schools in a municipality have to be able to forward their action plans (with a view to equity) to be prioritised and aggregated at the municipal level. In the third case, the number of schools per municipality has to pave the way for the changes of practice that natural dissemination brings about in all the other schools throughout the country.

Finally, the OCS has decided, in conjunction with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, to extend the sample gradually. Schools taking part in the pilot phase will continue to participate to provide in-depth knowledge of the SILP. Other schools from other departments will also be chosen. The OCS is aiming to achieve a representative sample of schools for monitoring and evaluation in the context of the PRSP.

Concerning decentralisation, the SILP is important because it is both an instrument of public scrutiny and a monitoring tool that central government can use to monitor how decentralisation is progressing. Further discussion is needed in the Ministry of the Interior, Public Security and Local Government (MISPCL), which is responsible for steering the decentralisation process.

4.2.3. CONCLUSIONS

The initial results of the SILP show that an instrument of this kind can help to make public services more efficient, by improving knowledge of strong and weak points in the efficient use of financial resources on the one hand, and on the other hand, by mobilising local actors. The attractiveness of this strategy to the institutions concerned can be seen from the way in which it tends to disseminate itself.

However, if the SILP is to become an instrument serving PRSP monitoring and evaluation, as well as a valid instrument of public scrutiny, civil organisations, such as the APEs and NGOs, need to be involved as closely as possible. Capacity building is necessary for these organisations so that they can play their role effectively. The cost issue must be considered in regard to the SILP's sustainability, so various options for reducing costs (such as involving NGOs and building the capacity of parents' associations) need to be explored.

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is now in favour of this approach and no longer sees it as a method of control. Reservations of this kind are quite normal because the approach is novel and raises fears because the results that it might have are uncertain. Moreover, the change of government and the ministry team have helped to improve ownership. These are all favourable factors, but how the Ministry will use the information provided by the SILP and how civil organisations could be involved in planning to extend the process from the local to the national level and then implementing it, remains to be seen.

Annex I: acronyms

APE	Association des Parents d'Élèves / Parents' Association
CCSRAT	Cellule de Concertation et Suivi de la Réforme de l'Administration Territoriale/Consultation and Monitoring Unit for Reform of the Territorial Administration
CEP	Certificat d'Études Primaires/Certificate of Primary Education
CNDLP	Commission Nationale pour le Développement et la Lutte contre la Pauvreté/National Development and Poverty Reduction Commission
CO-APE	Coordination des Associations de Parents d'Élèves/Coordination Unit of Parents' Associations
FIDESPRA	Forum International pour le Développement et l'Échange de Savoir et de Savoir-faire au Service d'une Promotion Rurale Auto Entretenue / International Forum for Development and Exchanges of Knowledge and Expertise Promoting Self-Sustaining Rural Development
FNAPE	Fédération Nationale des Associations de Parents d'Élèves/National Federation of Parents' Associations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
KePIM	Kenya Participatory Impact Monitoring
MEPS	Ministère des Enseignements Primaire et Secondaire/Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MISPCL	Ministère de l'Intérieur, de la Sécurité Publique et des Collectivités Locales/Ministry of the Interior, Public Security and Local Government
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCS	Observatoire de Changement Social/Observatory of Social Change
PDC	Plan de Développement Communal/Municipal Development Plan
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
QIM	Qualitative Impact Monitoring (Malawi)
SILP	Suivi d'Impact Local Participatif/Participatory Local Impact Monitoring Methodology
SP	Secrétariat Permanent/Permanent Secretariat
TFP	Technical and Financial Partners

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5.1. Mali: Participatory monitoring and evaluation as a means of empowering local government in the region of Mopti

This study case, **'Participatory monitoring and evaluation as a means of empowering local government in the region of Mopti'**, describes and analyses the initial stages of design and testing of a participatory monitoring and evaluation system for the PACOB (Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations) of CARE International in Mali. This programme focuses on natural resource management and local governance in a region that, according to poverty surveys and maps, is one of the most disadvantaged in the country.

The study has been prepared by a team of four authors (Abdoul K. Coulibaly, Rokia Diarra Konaré, Mamadou Y. Keïta et Ahmed Ag Aboubacrine) working for CARE International, all of whom have been closely involved in the design and testing of this new participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation (see Annex IV).

This approach was developed and tested as a result of the process of reflection and learning taking place within CARE International, with a view to 'making the organisation more responsible to communities, particularly the most vulnerable'. The new approach has therefore been designed and tested in the context of PACOB, bringing together a wide range of different actors involved in resource management and new governance structures at various levels: village, rural municipality, subregion (or 'cercle'), region. These actors are also the protagonists of the new ascending monitoring and evaluation system intended to meet both CARE's needs and the need for better systems of information and accountability in Mali's new local governance structures.

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INTRODUCTION

For a long time now the approaches used in development have tended to keep the beneficiaries (the communities involved) at arm's length. The very term 'beneficiary' implies a passive recipient rather than an actor. For years the Western model has been imposed on the very different realities of countries in the South, with development theorists and programme designers assuming that these countries needed to go through the same stages as the West in order to 'develop'.

The limitations of such approaches soon became clear when they failed to produce the expected results: much of the infrastructure created quickly fell into disrepair through lack of maintenance, and although awareness campaigns helped to improve knowledge, they did not really change behaviour. It became apparent over time that any achievements in such a context would never produce lasting results because the communities involved could not really take ownership of the approaches used.

All of this begged the question of whether a development programme can really be effective if it does not involve the 'beneficiary' communities in every stage of its cycle (design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation). And who are development projects really for? Should the 'beneficiaries' not be placed at the heart of the project, so that they can define their own priorities and be involved in developing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation?

It was in this context that, in 2003, CARE International, as part of its process of ongoing learning, introduced six programme principles that were to guide all its future activities. The principles make CARE more responsible to communities, particularly the most vulnerable, by placing them at the heart of all its operations and giving them genuine decision-making power in programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In order to put these programme principles into practice, CARE International in Mali (CARE Mali) evaluated all its programmes for compliance with them. The study showed that communities had little involvement in monitoring and evaluation systems, mainly playing a passive role as providers of data and having no real decision-making power. Armed with these findings, CARE Mali, in its December 2004 review of its long-term strategic plan, made it a priority to implement a participatory system for monitoring and evaluation that would give genuine decision-making power to communities in designing, monitoring and evaluating its programmes.

CARE Mali's *Programme d'Appui aux Communes et Organisations de Base* (PACOB - Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations), then in its early stages, was chosen to test an integrated system of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E). This was based on the interest shown in this approach by its financial partner (CARE Norway and the Norwegian Government), local councillors, civil society and the technical departments in the region of Mopti, all of which had been heavily involved in designing the programme.

This case study describes and analyses the first steps taken in designing and testing the PACOB PM&E system. We start with a description of the methods used to design the approach and then move on to the approach itself and the problems encountered during the testing. Although it has been running for barely a year, our experience should enable other organisations working in the governance field to benefit from the early lessons learned.

5.1.1. PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION: STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Before the PACOB PM&E approach was designed and tested, CARE Mali held strategic discussions on the features of the approach, the problems it would present and its effects on the organisational structure of the programmes. The idea was first to harmonise how CARE Mali's project staff and partners understood the concept of PM&E, and then to identify strategies through which it could be put into practice in the PACOB programme and, eventually, to extend its use to all CARE Mali programmes. A discussion workshop was held from 11 to 15 April 2005, bringing together staff from the various CARE Mali projects as well as certain local[150] and international[151] partner organisations.

The main aim of the workshop was to:

■ gain a clear understanding of PM&E from CARE International's previous experience of monitoring and evaluation in various contexts;

■ operationalise the application of PM&E in projects;

■ develop a methodological approach to PM&E that would involve all actors, by defining phases of implementation within a given project.

5.1.1.1. What is participatory monitoring and evaluation?

According to Professor Deep N. Pandey (1998), 'PM&E is a *shared process* of problem-solving through the generation and use of knowledge. It is a process which leads to *collective action by involving all levels of users in shared decision-making*.'

The author thus views PM&E as an horizontal process between the project team and the 'beneficiaries', who are regarded as actors rather than just recipients.

Guijt and Gaventa (1998) consider PM&E to be based on four key principles:

■ participation, which means opening up the process to include those most directly affected by the project and agreeing to analyse data together;

■ negotiation, to reach agreement about what will be monitored and evaluated, and how and when the data will be collected and analysed;

■ learning, as the basis for subsequent improvement and corrective action;

■ flexibility, since the roles and skills of stakeholders and the external environment change over time.

Both these views are very much in line with CARE International's programme principles, with the result that systems give 'beneficiaries' genuine decision-making power. As one of CARE International's programme principles states: 'we seek to be held accountable to poor and marginalised people whose rights are denied. . . .'

There are thus a number of aspects of PM&E that are different from the traditional monitoring and evaluation previously applied by CARE Mali: the role of the beneficiaries, the measurement of results and the approach used, as shown in Table 1.

150- Cellule d'Appui aux Initiatives de Développement (CAID) (Development Initiatives Support Unit), Action Recherche pour le Développement des initiatives Locales (ARDIL) (Research Project for the Development of Local Initiatives).

151- Management Systems International (MSI) and Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC).

Field	Traditional monitoring and evaluation	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
Who plans and directs the process?	The directors responsible for the project and/or outside experts	Local people, project staff, project directors and other partners with the help of a facilitator
Role of the main beneficiaries?	Solely to provide information	Formulating and adapting methods, collecting and analysing data, sharing results and translating them into action
How are the results measured?	Using quantitative indicators, often defined externally	Using indicators, many of them qualitative, defined by the actors themselves
Approach	Predefined, rigid	Flexible

Source: Guijt and Gaventa (1998).

It should be stressed that this was not CARE Mali's first experiment with PM&E, but previous attempts had had certain limitations when it came to actually involving communities throughout the process. The idea then had been to encourage communities to implement their own monitoring and evaluation system separate from the project system, which did not put them at the heart of the decision making. There were also no real links between their system and the project system for recording results, effects and impact.

The present experiment is particularly important because the process of decentralisation in Mali, under which local government has powers of independent management, offers an opportunity to institutionalise an integrated PM&E approach involving all the actors.

5.1.1.2. How can PM&E be implemented in projects?

The workshop laid the foundation for a new approach to PM&E for CARE Mali. The approach aimed first to make project staff aware of how their practices and attitudes affected 'beneficiaries'. The second stage was to identify problems in implementing PM&E, to define their ideal PM&E and, depending on that, to examine the roles that each of the stakeholders in the process wanted to play.

Introspection exercise focusing on practices and attitudes

At the workshop the participants considered certain questions (see Box 1), which made them realise that their own attitudes (internal barriers) tended to restrict PM&E. The discussions often showed that there was a tendency to take decisions on behalf of communities in order to obtain instant results, and to underestimate the abilities of the communities.

Box 1: Introspection exercise

1. How do I regard my opinion or conviction compared with those of other people?
2. Do I communicate my thoughts to others? Do I listen to other people? Or do I assume that I know what is best for other people?
3. Do I consider other people's ideas and opinions to be as important as my own?
4. Do I acknowledge that when I have to take a decision or action, another stakeholder could do it instead?
5. Am I aware that I tend to forget to involve other people, simply because I am in a hurry?

Source: CARE Mali (2005a).

Identifying problems with PM&E

Those taking part in the workshop then identified various problems with PM&E at all stages of a project cycle. Prejudices about communities' abilities, the desire for instant results and the financial partners' demands were all factors which emerged as limiting the effective participation of 'beneficiaries' (see Table 2).

Table 2: Problems with PM&E in a project cycle

Level	Problems with PM&E		
	Design	**Monitoring and implementation**	**Evaluation**
Financial partners	▪ Short submission deadlines of calls for tender ▪ Predefined objectives and target/fields of calls for tender ▪ Limited amount of money ▪ Monitoring/evaluation systems predefined and non-participatory ▪ Targets and areas already defined ▪ Short project duration imposed	▪ Limited financial envelope for monitoring and evaluation	▪ Limited time: instant results wanted ▪ Sophisticated methods required for reliable results ▪ Participation involves high costs
Communities	▪ Difficulty of representing all target groups ▪ Illiteracy ▪ Self-exclusion ▪ Lack of project design skills ▪ Not enough money to contribute to project budget	▪ Not available during project schedule ▪ Time taken up with involvement ▪ Not much involvement in development of tools ▪ Inability to use monitoring tools	▪ Illiteracy ▪ Unavailability ▪ No self-critical ability
Project staff	▪ Skills of 'beneficiaries' underestimated ▪ Feeling of knowing more about 'beneficiaries' problems than they do themselves ▪ Limited time to reply to calls for tender ▪ Always seeking to keep the financial partner happy, to the detriment of the 'beneficiaries'	▪ Staff focus on achieving project results in a short time (project duration) ▪ Perception of PM&E (not supported by actors involved) ▪ Unilateral financial management	▪ Overwork leading to stress ▪ Not enough capacity to direct the approach ▪ Resistance to change of approach ▪ Prejudices about communities
Other types of constraints	▪ Baseline: national policies and strategies not always designed to be participatory ▪ Councillors' political allegiances lead to differences of opinion that are not always constructive	▪ External actors do not support validity of PM&E ▪ Other actors involved do not apply PM&E	

Source: CARE Mali (2005a).

Finding a solution to these problems is a challenge for the PACOB programme, which, as we said earlier, is testing the integrated approach to participatory monitoring and evaluation.

5.1.2. DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PM&E SYSTEM BY PACOB

Three months after the discussion workshop, work started on designing a PM&E system for PACOB on the basis of the workshop recommendations.

5.1.2.1. PACOB (Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations)

PACOB is funded jointly by the Norwegian Government (NORAD) and CARE Norway, and was devised with the involvement of local councillors, technical departments and civil society representatives in the region of Mopti. It is based on the experiences and lessons learned between 2000 and 2004 from an earlier programme of governance and support for municipalities in the 'cercles' of Koro and Bankass (the Koro and Bankass Municipalities Support Programme - PACKOB).

Objectives

The overall aim of PACOB is as follows: 'by December 2009, the elected municipal representatives and natural resources user organisations from twelve municipalities will introduce sustainable systems for the management of natural resources, thus helping to improve living conditions, particularly for the most vulnerable people, in the 'cercles' of Koro, Bankass, Bandiagara and Djenné, in the region of Mopti.'

PACOB thus responds to four priorities in the Mali Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP):
■ good governance;
■ promoting broad public involvement;
■ human development and access to basic social services;
■ helping to develop production sectors and infrastructure.

Area covered

PACOB, which was launched in January 2005, is primarily concerned with issues related to the decentralised management of natural resources in the region of Mopti, and, more specifically, in 12 rural municipalities in the 'cercles' of Koro, Bankass, Bandiagara and Djenné.

The Mopti region, in central Mali, covers an area of 79,017 km^2 and is one of the most densely populated areas of the country, with an estimated 1,720,918 inhabitants in 2004[152]. The main ethnic groups are the Peulh, Dogon, Songhai, Bambara, Bozo and Somono. According to the PRSP, the Mopti region has one of the highest poverty indexes in the country, with more than three-quarters of its population living below the poverty line.

Theory

PACOB is based on the idea that involving communities in planning, implementing and designing the system for project monitoring and evaluation will give them real decision-making power and achieve more sustainable results. There is every indication that local governance will only become efficient if the grassroots development actors become genuine partners in any operations affecting them.

Actors and stakeholders

PACOB is being carried out by CARE Mali in partnership with three local NGOs. Each of these is responsible for implementing the programme in one of the 'cercles' in the area covered: Association malienne d'Initiatives et d'actions pour le Développement (AID-Mali) in the 'cercles' of Bankass and Koro, Yama Giribolo Tumo (Yag-Tu) in the 'cercle' of Bandiagara, and Association pour l'Appui au Développement Intégré (AADI) in Djenné.

152- *Projection by the Direction Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Informatique (DNSI, National Statistics and Informatics Directorate) based on data from the 1998 General Population and Housing Census.*

5.1.2.2. Participatory planning as the foundation of the PM&E system

The approach for carrying out PACOB involved selecting three municipalities in each 'cercle', giving a total of 12 partner municipalities. These were selected in cooperation with the Comité Local d'Orientation (CLO), the local steering committee, which includes all the mayors of the municipalities in a 'cercle', the president of the 'cercle' council and representatives of the Chambers of Agriculture and Trade. It is chaired by the 'préfet'[153] and meets every three months. The various municipalities in the four target 'cercles' competed with each other in a tendering procedure in which they had to demonstrate a genuine desire to establish natural resources management (NRM) as a priority.

Once the partner municipalities had been selected, a workshop to validate the logical framework was organised in July 2005 with elected officers. The aim was to involve local actors in all phases of the implementation of the project. A total of 34 people attended, including 20 municipal councillors[154]. At the workshop, the actors were given training in how to develop a logical framework, along with outcome, effect and impact indicators. They then, themselves, defined indicators for each objective in the logical framework.

Finally, during the first week of August 2005, the PACOB steering team (made up of staff from CARE Mali and the three local NGOs) met to capitalise on the lessons learned from this first training session, finalise the logical framework and, last, develop a method for drawing up the PM&E plan.

5.1.2.3. Joint development of a PM&E plan

A monitoring and evaluation plan is a tool that fleshes out the logical framework by defining methods, coherent planning and responsibilities in the monitoring and evaluation of a project. It answers the following questions for each indicator: What tools should be used to collect the data? What will the collection method be? Who will be responsible for collection and how often? Who will analyse the data and how will the information be used?

Following validation of the programme's logical framework, it was decided to organise workshops in each participating 'cercle' in order to define the PM&E plans. These workshops brought together municipal councillors, the natural resources user organisations (NRUO), the Mousow ka Jiguiya Ton (MJT)[155], i.e. women's savings-and-loan groups, and the technical departments and State administration from the PACOB target villages and municipalities (see Table 3). The meetings were held in the local languages by staff of the local NGOs.

Table 3: Number and categories of workshop participants

'Cercle'	TYPE OF PARTICIPANT			Total participants	Total female participants
	Councillors/ municipal staff	Civil society (NRUO, MJT)	Administration and technical departments		
Bandiagara	5	11	7	23	6
Bankass	10	12	6	28	6
Koro	11	9	8	28	7
Djenné	8	21	7	36	4
Total	34	53	28	115	23

Source: CARE Mali (2005b).

153- The 'préfet' is an appointed government officer who represents the central administration at the level of the 'cercle'.

154- It should be pointed out that the project's target organisations were not involved in this phase of reviewing the logical framework because the project had not yet finalised the process for selecting partner organisations.

155- MJT or 'hope for women' is an empowering savings-and-loan mechanism that CARE Mali has been running since 2000, based on a similar experiment in Niger.

The PM&E plans that were developed place the communities at the heart of the monitoring and evaluation process. Responsibility for collecting and analysing data, which used to lie with CARE and the local NGOs, has now been transferred to the communities (see Annex II: Extract from the PM&E plan).

After these workshops, the PACOB steering team met to harmonise the products from the four workshops and to produce a final PM&E planning document.

5.1.2.4. Design of data-collection tools

The next phase involved developing data-collection tools for each indicator in the logical framework. In order to do this, the team organised mini-workshops in each 'cercle' between December 2005 and January 2006 to get the communities themselves to develop these tools.

One of the main challenges for a successful monitoring and evaluation system is still how to ensure that the quality of the project is continually improved by the use of the data. Each stakeholder needs to see his or her interests taken into account through the data collected, which is why emphasis was placed on ensuring that the information was, first and foremost, useful for the grassroots actors, thus enabling them to take steps to make improvements. The PACOB steering team developed a guide to help those running the workshops at which the data-collection tools were designed (see Annex III: Extract from guide).

> **Box 2: Phases in the development of the PACOB PM&E system**
>
> **Phase 1: Validation of logical framework**
> 14 to 15 July 2005: workshop with elected officers to validate the logical framework, training in how to develop a logical framework and its indicators.
> 3 August 2005: final review of the logical framework.
>
> **Phase 2: Joint development of a PM&E plan**
> 5 August to 16 September 2005: workshops to develop a PM&E plan in the 'cercles' of

Bandiagara, Djenné, Bankass and Koro, with the target communities.
26 to 28 September 2005: consolidation workshop, incorporation of products from four workshops into a final PM&E plan and definition of operating methods for implementation.

> **Phase 3: Design and testing of data collection tools**
> December 2005 to January 2006: series of mini-workshops to develop data-collection tools for each indicator in the logical framework.

5.1.2.5. Ascending structure of new PM&E system and roles of actors

The partnership with the communities is pyramidal in form, rather than hierarchical, going from the village to the region via the municipalities and 'cercles'.

The actors at the village level are the leaders of the MJT, the village agents, the NRUO and the community relays.

At the municipal level, they are the environment committee and the 'sous-préfet'.[156]

At the level of each of the four 'cercles', an ad hoc committee was set up comprising one councillor from each municipality, the 'cercle' technical departments, the 'préfet', the 'cercle' council, the Chamber of Agriculture and representatives of the women's NRUOs and the MJT groups.

At the regional level, there is a committee comprising a development advisor, members of the *Réseau Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles en 5ème région* (GDRN5 - Natural Resources Sustainable Management Network, Region 5), the *Direction Régionale de la Conservation de la Nature* (DRCN - Regional Nature Conservation Directorate), the four 'cercle préfets', the 'cercle' council presidents, the regional assembly president, the regional monitoring officer and the 12 mayors from the programme area.

Box 3 and Figure 1 explain the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the system.

156- The 'sous-préfet' is a local representative of the government.

VILLAGE LEVEL

Group leaders and village agents:
- collect data from MJT groups and forward them to relays;
- analyse data with the help of the Community Development Assistant (CDA);
- attend six-monthly general 'programme assessment' meetings with relays and NRUOs;
- share data collected with MJT groups.

Natural Resources User Organisations:
- NRUO chairpersons/secretaries are responsible for collecting data and forwarding them to relays;
- analyse data with the help of the CDA;
- attend six-monthly general 'programme assessment' meetings with relays and NRUOs;
- share data collected with NRUOs in the village.

Relays:
- centralise and analyse data from NRUOs and MJT groups in each village;
- fill in village monitoring/evaluation sheets;
- organise six-monthly 'programme assessment' meetings with MJT and NRUO leaders to evaluate indicator levels;
- share monitoring/evaluation data with MJTs and NRUOs to encourage them to emulate NRM activities;
- pass monitoring/evaluation data (indicator levels, monitoring of project activities, lessons learned, recommendations) on to the municipality's Environment Committee.

MUNICIPAL LEVEL

Environment Committee:
- compile data supplied by the various relays;
- fill in municipality's monitoring/evaluation sheets;
- organise six-monthly 'programme assessment' workshops involving relays from each village, the municipal technical departments, the 'sous-préfet' and representatives of the NRUOs and MJTs;
- pass monitoring/evaluation data on to 'cercle' level.

'Sous-préfet':
- attend six-monthly 'programme assessment' workshops.

'CERCLE' LEVEL

Ad Hoc PM&E Committee:
This comprises one councillor for each municipality, the 'cercle' technical departments, the 'préfet', the 'cercle' council, the Chamber of Agriculture and representatives of the NRUOs and MJTs. The Committee is appointed by the CLO to give it credibility. Its role is to:
- centralise data from the 'cercle's' three partner municipalities;
- organise the 'programme assessment' workshops for the 'cercle';
- pass monitoring/evaluation data (indicator levels, monitoring of project activities, lessons learned, recommendations) on to the regional level;
- take part in defining the methods and developing the research tools for the project;
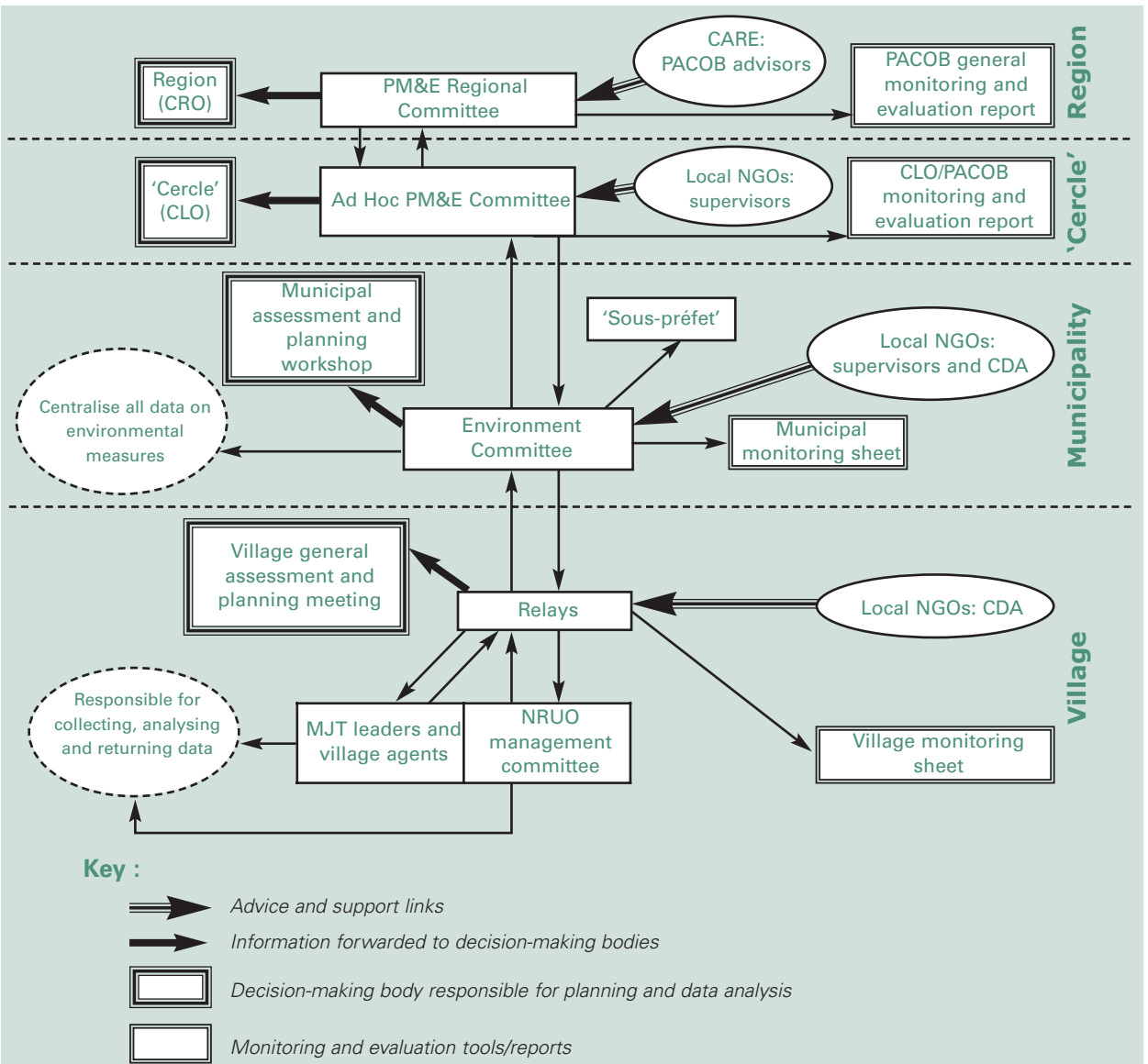- return monitoring/evaluation reports to the CLO.

Figure 1: Circulation of information among PACOB stakeholders in the PM&E system

5.1.3. EARLY EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The process of implementing PM&E was not entirely problem-free. Each time a problem arose, the steering team tried to come up with appropriate solutions.

The main problem had to do with the many different languages and dialects spoken in the areas covered which did not always make it easy for participants to interact and required time for translation. As a solution to this, all of the documentation was translated into three main languages (Dogon, Peulh and Bambara), and at meetings, the participants were divided into groups according to the language spoken.

Another problem stemmed from the different levels of education among the participants, which meant that some tended to be 'leaders' and others 'followers'. The solution here was to divide the participants into groups on the same level, so that everyone's point of view could be heard.

A further problem was that the various bodies were not always represented by the same people at different meetings, and the people attending generally did not report back to their grassroots group. Given that there was no effective reporting system anyway, this was an obstacle to the development of the process. The team emphasised the need to report back to the grassroots, systematically encouraging participants to do this when they returned to their villages.

Finally, the number of women taking part remained low, which meant that one of the most disadvantaged groups was underrepresented.

The following lessons may be learned from all this:

■ PM&E is an effective way of transferring skills, but time and patience are required to put it into practice;

■ participants need to be given plenty of time to absorb the information they receive;

■ it is vital to choose able participants from among the 'beneficiaries' if the process is to be successful;

■ illiteracy is an obstacle to the participants taking ownership of the different monitoring/evaluation tools;

■ translating the tools (logical framework, monitoring and evaluation plan, facilitation guide, etc.) into local languages leads to greater community involvement and encourages more rapid ownership;

■ the participants linguistic diversity means that more time is needed because multiple translations are required;

■ the commitment of the steering team is a key factor in the successful operation of PM&E. The team has to take the PM&E philosophy on board and apply it in practice in everything it does. PM&E needs to be clearly separated from earlier, less participatory, methods of managing projects.

5.1.4. CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

The approach is currently still being tested, but from the very first phases, it was clear that the communities involved wholeheartedly supported the process. The next step will be to carry out the grassroots survey and analyse the results. One of the main challenges is still how to put the plan for circulating information into practice, involving 'beneficiaries' in collecting and analysing the data.

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

AADI	Association pour l'Appui au Développement Intégré/Association for Supporting Integrated Development
AID-Mali	Association malienne d'Initiatives et d'actions pour le Développement au Mali/Malian Association of Initiatives and Action for the Development of Mali
ARDIL	Action Recherche pour le Développement des Initiatives Locales/Research Project for the Development of Local Initiatives
CAID	Cellule d'Appui aux Initiatives de Développement/Development Initiatives Support Unit
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CLO	Comité Local d'Orientation/Local Steering Committee
CRO	Comité Régional d'Orientation/Regional Policy Committee
CRWRC	Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
DNSI	Direction Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Informatique/National Statistics and Informatics Directorate
DRCN	Direction Régionale de la Conservation de la Nature/Regional Nature Conservation Directorate
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
GDRN5	Réseau Gestion Durable des Ressources Naturelles en 5ème région/Natural Resources Sustainable Management Network, Region 5
ISD	Institute of Development Studies
ME	Monitoring and Evaluation
MJT	Mousow ka Jiguiya Ton (women's savings-and-loan groups)
MSI	Management Systems International
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NRM	Natural Resources Management
NRUO	Natural Resources User Organisation
PACKOB	Programme d'Accompagnement des Communes et Organisations de Base dans le cercle de Koro et Bankass/Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations in the 'Cercle' of Koro and Bankass
PACOB	Programme d'Accompagnement des Communes et Organisations de Base/Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations
PM&E	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RGPH	Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat/General Population and Housing Census
Yap-Tu	Yama Giribolo Tumo

Indicators	Source of data	Data collection			Data analysis		
		Data-collection method	Collection frequency	Person responsible	Type of analysis	Frequency	Person responsible
% of municipalities in which a sustainable system for managing natural resources is in place	Council: advisors, municipal agents (records, archives)	Municipal survey of NRM	Annual	Mayor	Analysis of strengths and weaknesses for each criterion at general meeting/ consolidation workshop for each municipality	Annual	Chairman of Environment Committee
% of municipalities in which there are fewer conflicts linked to natural resources	Village heads, traditional chiefs, councillors, NRUOs and administration	Qualitative survey of conflicts in municipalities	Annual	Mayor	Discussion and assessment of results at general meeting of village heads in each municipality	Annual	'Préfet'
% of households receiving basic social services	Households	Monitoring of a panel of households	Annual	Mayor	Discussion and assessment of quantitative and qualitative data at general meeting	Annual (after each survey)	Mayor

ANNEX III: EXTRACT FROM GUIDE FOR DEVELOPING PARTICIPATORY COLLECTION TOOLS

Information required	Name of tool	Key questions (*)	Collection method	Analysis of usefulness of data for grassroots actors
Number of women carrying out income-generating activities in environmental protection	Natural resources management sheet for women	1. How many women in your organisation are carrying out income-generating activities? 2. List the different income-generating activities carried out by members of your organisation. 3. How do these income-generating activities protect the environment?	Interviewer: MJT leader Interviewees: members of MJT groups. Frequency: six-monthly	Have data for taking decisions on how to correct income-generating activities

(*) These key questions will be included in a better-structured collection tool at a later stage.

ANNEX IV: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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ANNEX V: RESOURCE PERSONS, ONLINE DOCUMENTS AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

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5.2. Mali: Public perceptions as a barometer of local governance

This case study **'Public perceptions as a barometer of local governance'** has been prepared by a team coordinated by Fatou Cissé from the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) (see Annex IV).

The study describes an experiment to analyse public perceptions of local governance in northern Mali. As well as being an institutional, organisational and operational audit of the implementation of decentralisation and participation by civil society in local governance, this analysis helped NCA to plan activities for vulnerable social groups more strategically, by highlighting their perceptions of local governance.

Bearing in mind the very few surveys on local governance themes that have been conducted among electors in West Africa and current thinking about barometers of governance, the experiment described in the study makes an interesting contribution to the debate.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Following the crisis in public administration and the traditional models of service provision, Mali has moved from an administrative and political system based on centralised power and run by government actors (who plan and implement development policies and strategies) to a system that encourages responsible governance. In this highly participatory system, society is managed on the basis of growing interaction, negotiation and partnership between all the relevant public and private actors and civil society.

The future of the democratic process in Mali now depends on sustainable development and the acquisition of governance skills at the local level.

In terms of monitoring/evaluation, local governance can be analysed by looking at developments in the system itself and in the decision-making, policy-making and resource distribution mechanisms. Similarly, local people's access to basic services is an indicator of the ability of elected officers to manage their municipalities.

The ability of people to stimulate government action to satisfy their interests and needs, which is the very cornerstone of 'people power', can be assessed at the most decentralised level from the perceptions that individuals have as users of public services.

Figure 1: The concept of people power or empowerment

People power is the ability of people to stimulate government action to satisfy their practical needs and strategic interests.

People's practical needs:

In terms of satisfaction, practical needs are analysed and may be satisfied in the short term. They vary, depending on the individual, and tend to be day-to-day needs: food, water, housing, income, health, etc. They can be satisfied by specific measures: help with production, water supply, health infrastructure, etc. They are expressed in terms of 'access to resources and services'.

Satisfying basic needs can improve living conditions and does not usually involve changes in existing roles and social relationships. It is a condition for taking strategic interests into account.

People's strategic interests:

In terms of determining policy, strategic interests are long-term. They have to do with the fact that people are subject to vulnerability, poverty, a lack of resources and education, etc. They can be satisfied by a strategy of creating capacities, raising awareness, training, greater self-confidence, strengthening organisations. They are expressed in terms of 'access to and controlling resources and benefits'.

Satisfying strategic interests enables the beneficiary individuals/organisations to become development actors, and can improve the overall social situation. It leads to greater involvement in public life and fairer involvement in decision-making bodies. It is a condition for fair and sustainable development.

The indicators most commonly used for monitoring/evaluating decentralisation in Mali are designed to inform stakeholders about the outcomes of current policies, strategies, projects and programmes. As a result, the systems and mechanisms used pay little attention to:
- whether people are exercising their fundamental role of 'stimulating government action';
- people's perception of the extent to which their needs and interests are being taken into account by the bodies steering, coordinating and implementing government action and social, economic and cultural development locally;
- how people assess the protection, defence and effectiveness of their rights to be involved in local governance and development activities;
- people's opinion of the relevance, viability and sustainability of the governance and development approaches applied locally by public and private actors.

The indicators commonly used are suitable for analysing people's understanding of the process but need to be fleshed out to give a better picture of the development of people power.

Box1: Examples of the most commonly used indicators in Mali in the field of local governance and decentralisation[157]

The monitoring and evaluation system of the Programme in Support for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation (PARAD) financed by the European Union (EU), relates only to the following type of indicators: the quantitative measurement of public services and products, compliance with the regulations for government action (both local and central government), the degree to which the local government apparatus has been strengthened, the rate of transfer of resources from the State to local government and, last, the establishment of structures that could help to improve the mobilisation of internal resources in local government.

The indicators used in the Self-Assessment Tool for Local Government Performance, developed by the National Local Government Directorate (DNCT), with the help of SNV (Netherlands Development Organisation), PACT/GTZ (Local Government Support Programme/German Technical Cooperation Agency) and Helvetas (Swiss Association for International Cooperation), to assess measures to make decentralisation in Mali more effective, are designed to measure the impact of strengthening the capacities of elected councillors and municipal personnel and the way in which municipalities operate (tasks, services to be provided for local people, development challenges). Measurements are taken in five performance fields: 1) internal organisation; 2) administrative and financial management; 3) mobilisation of resources; 4) local development planning and programming; and 5) local government services, products and developments.

The Computerised Monitoring and Evaluation Tool (OISE) of the National Programme in Support of Local Government provides information on technical support for local government, maps and key statistics (population, availability of basic social services). It identifies local government developments, partners and service providers, as well as offering a series of products for operational research in this field: reports/studies, programming, planning, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of local governance and decentralisation activities, and local government planning, management and development documents.

157- The tools referred to here were presented at the 'Sub-regional seminar on building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning', Bamako, 17-18 May 2006.

A pilot study of users' perceptions of decentralisation carried out by the Norwegian Church Aid (AEN) and its partners provides an opportunity to enhance the monitoring/evaluation of local governance, in that:

■ it creates the conditions for correctly identifying the measures and instruments adopted by local government in response to the aspirations of all local people;

■ it offers a better understanding of the effects and impact of the approaches adopted;

■ it could allow the development of 'comprehensive' approaches incorporating all the stakeholders and subjects to be covered by the monitoring/evaluation.

In the following description of this pilot study, we will begin by explaining the context and background to the research, before moving on to describe the methods used and analysing the relevance, ownership, viability, suitability and replication of the approach. This will be followed by the main results of the research. The case study will end with the researchers' conclusions and the prospects for other government actors in Mali and elsewhere to capitalise on the experience.

5.2.1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

For over 20 years, AEN and its partners have been providing general support for the empowerment of vulnerable social groups (VSGs) in the northern regions of Mali. The aim has always been the following: 'Vulnerable social groups should devise and implement sustainable local measures in order to improve their quality of life. Exploiting community potential is both useful and equitable here.'

When it comes to local governance, AEN and its partners talk about the idea of 'empowering'[158] the VSGs. In other words, this involves giving poor and vulnerable men and women the power to secure and enjoy their basic social, economic and cultural rights, both as individuals and also taking the 'social and community perspective' into account. In this way empowerment contributes to the development of the community through the following:

■ attitudes and values (linked to individuals' 'community-mindedness');

■ capacities (including the knowledge and skills of members of the community);

■ organisational structures (referring to the development of local organisations);

■ leadership (for individuals and organisations, 'leadership' is the opportunity to use their initiative at the community level).

Community empowerment becomes a process as soon as synergy, cooperation, transparency and the circulation of information, based on potential assets, start to develop. It is the product of collective participation in political actions and requires people to be actively involved in order to ensure that the redistribution of resources helps all elements of the community. It is vital here to consolidate strengths and assets that are often unrecognised and unused, particularly those of the VSGs (e.g., their position as majority voters, their ability to innovate and adapt, the relevance of their needs for development partners, and so on).

Under the current legislation in Mali, the stakeholders in local governance range from ordinary people to the highest political authorities and include bodies and structures for design, policy-making, coordination and implementation at all levels, as well as technical and financial partners, both international agencies (multilateral, bilateral and organisations involved in decentralised international cooperation) and national agencies. These stakeholders fall into a number of categories: public, private and/or civil society. They have sectoral and/or cross-sector responsibilities, particularly in the areas of the national poverty-reduction strategy, gender and development, HIV/AIDS and environmental protection.

With the establishment of the decentralisation policies and strategies, AEN and its traditional partners (community-based NGOs) realised that there were opportunities to add to their portfolio of programmes. Wishing to remain faithful to its target group while still taking on the sort of multi- and inter-sectoral projects and activities provided for in the legislation, the 'AEN family' conducted

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158- For a definition of the concept of 'empowerment' and the process of 'community empowerment', see Hawley E. and E. McWhirter, 1991, and Lackey, A.S., Burke. R, and M. Peterson, 1987.

an exhaustive review of its mission, vision and strategies. The result was a general policy framework for activities for the period 2005-2009, whose main objective was 'to open up scope for actors who can create the conditions for giving VSGs an important role, full participation and meaningful involvement in the design, coordination, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of policies, strategies and projects/programmes for local governance and sustainable social, economic and cultural development at local and sub-local levels'.

Having resolved on this, AEN and its partners began strategic planning for the projects and activities to be carried out with elected officers and local government staff, state supervisory and technical departments, and service providers at the local (municipal) and sub-local (neighbourhood,

village and fraction of nomadic tribes) level, in cooperation with and for the benefit of VSGs and their organisations and groups.

AEN wanted to base its participatory planning on a body of information that would ensure that the approaches adopted were sustainable and that the appropriate partners were chosen, so it commissioned a study on C*ivil society for responsible governance in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal*[159]. The general aim of the study, which was put out to tender among the national research institutes and consultancy agencies was 'to carry out a diagnostic study of the implementation of decentralisation and the state of governance in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal, and to put forward proposed measures for the establishment of a multi-annual civil society programme for responsible governance'.
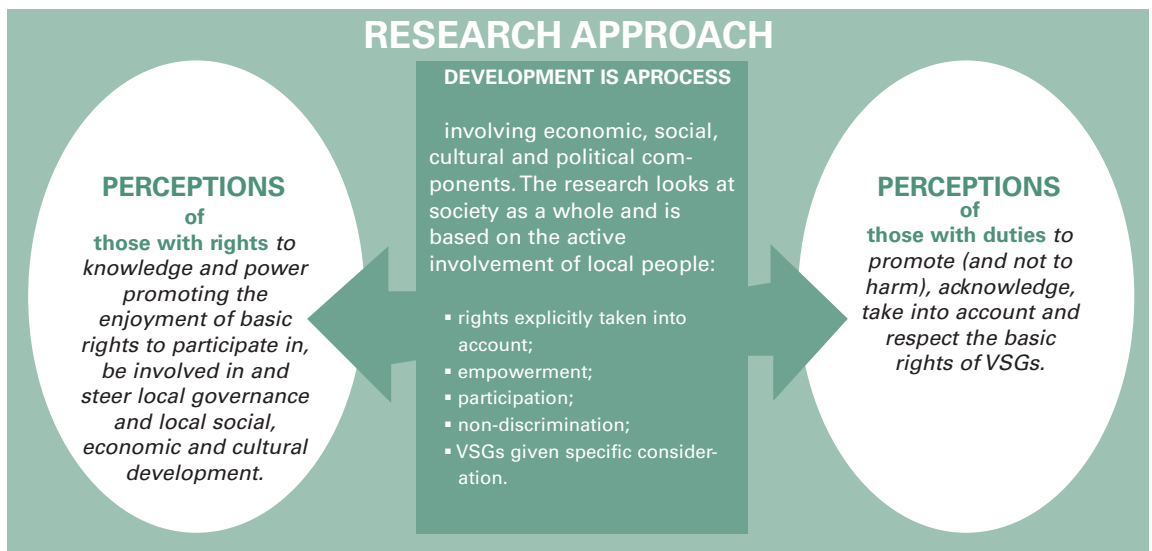
5.2.2. RESEARCH APPROACH

Of the five proposals received in response to the call for proposals, two were selected. The first proposed an institutional, organisational and operational audit of the implementation of decentralisation and an analytical study of the involvement of civil society. The second focused on studying the VSGs' perceptions of government action and analysing the strengths, weaknesses,

advantages and disadvantages of having the VSGs and their organisations fully involved in local governance and social, economic and cultural development.

Realising that the two proposals overlapped, the sponsors negotiated an approach that combined both.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

RESEARCH APPROACH

DEVELOPMENT IS A PROCESS

involving economic, social, cultural and political components. The research looks at society as a whole and is based on the active involvement of local people:

- rights explicitly taken into account;
- empowerment;
- participation;
- non-discrimination;
- VSGs given specific consideration.

PERCEPTIONS
of
those with rights *to knowledge and power promoting the enjoyment of basic rights to participate in, be involved in and steer local governance and local social, economic and cultural development.*

PERCEPTIONS
of
those with duties *to promote (and not to harm), acknowledge, take into account and respect the basic rights of VSGs.*

159- CEDREF-Koni Expertise, 2005.

In accordance with AEN's guiding principles that a general, human-rights-based approach should be taken to development globally, the team of researchers, working with members of AEN, focused on two basic ideas:

■ Women and girls, marginalised young people, children, those suffering from and affected by HIV/AIDS and the organisations that these groups set up are right-holders. Their practical and strategic needs should be given greater consideration by local governance stakeholders. If they are to be fully involved in local governance, they need to be put in a stronger position, but this has been ignored up to now by the other decentralisation actors and their technical and financial partners.

■ Local councillors, traditional chiefs, supervisory and technical departments and organisations involved in local development are duty-holders. They need to encourage the VSGs to be more involved in local governance. The institutionalisation of their behaviour very much depends on their ownership and promotion of the strengths and potential assets of the VSGs and their organisations. The current systems and mechanisms take little account of the fact that the latter need to be put in a stronger position.

5.2.3. EXISTING DOCUMENTATION

For the research to be successful, the team felt it necessary to begin by exploring the existing documentation on the monitoring and evaluation of governance. As with the country's other development sectors, this documentation is widely dispersed and largely unexploited. It is uncommon for the results of monitoring/evaluation projects and activities to be formally distributed, which made the task very difficult.

The legislation and regulations covering the framework, system and mechanisms of local governance were collected and analysed in order to establish the statutory framework for local governance. Data and documents on the implementation of decentralisation were used to flesh out this assessment and to serve as a baseline for planning and preparing the in situ investigations.

The data in the OISE database (see figure on the most commonly used indicators) offer an opportunity to monitor/evaluate and research governance, but delays in inputting data and the limitations of the user applications made this database difficult to exploit.

In order to overcome these problems, the team called on the services of documentation and data-processing experts, who were instructed to identify, collect and exploit the sources available. The experts found numerous paradoxes and contradictions in the data from the different documentary sources, so they carried out triangulations and checks on key data for the aids and tools used in the in situ investigations.

The resources and time needed for this work affected the timetable and scale of the research: the operations took longer and were more expensive than planned.

5.2.4. DEVELOPMENT OF IN SITU RESEARCH TOOLS

A set of 14 tools, including questionnaires (with closed and open questions), interview guides and discussion topics suitable for all the target groups, was prepared for the field surveys. Table 1 below summarises the survey target groups and the topics discussed with each of them.

Targets	Perceptions of interviewees
Local people	- roles and responsibilities of stakeholders: councillors, supervisory and technical departments, traditional chiefs, civil society organisations (CSOs), local people; - impact of decentralisation on quality of life; - relevance, availability and accessibility of services and products depending on local people's personal and professional needs; - quality of consultation and information provided by councillors for local people; - degree to which councillors take local people's opinions into account; - degree to which councillors find out about local people's interests; - level of political activism of men/women/young people/traditional chiefs/CSOs; - effects/impact of decentralisation on quantity and quality of services; - evolution of information given to people on their rights and duties; - identification of structures/persons able to solve local people's problems; - local government's capacity to provide a sustainable local response in the field of social, economic and cultural development; - local people's access to education, health, water and public records; - accessibility and relevance of local people's means of redress if dissatisfied; - change in cost of living since decentralisation; - relevance and applicability of tax policies; - change in income-generating opportunities since decentralisation; - equal opportunities for men and women to be involved in local governance; - degree of involvement of young people in managing local government; - measures and steps to be taken to promote the greater involvement of vulnerable social groups in local governance.
Officers from civil society organisations	- roles and responsibilities of stakeholders: councillors, supervisory and technical departments, traditional chiefs, CSOs, local people; - review of instruments and documents governing the operation of the organisation, its activities and its relations with the other local governance actors; - assessment of the organisation's involvement in consultation bodies; - self-evaluation of the organisation's institutional, organisational and operational capacities; - organisation's assessment of governance.
Target actors who are members of civil society organisations	- roles and responsibilities of stakeholders: councillors, supervisory and technical departments, traditional chiefs, CSOs, local people; - democracy of organisation's governance; - organisation's institutional, organisational and operational capacities; - organisation's ability to respond to members'/local people's practical and strategic needs (depending on the organisation's mission); - members' assessment of decision-making process and members' involvement; - expectations of organisation's members.
Mayors and key personnel **Presidents of the councils at the level of 'cercles' and key personnel** **Presidents of the regional assemblies and key personnel** **Prefects and key personnel** **Sub-prefects and key personnel** **Tax collectors** **Technical departments at 'cercle' level** **Devolved departments at regional level**	- roles and responsibilities of stakeholders: councillors, supervisory and technical departments, traditional chiefs, CSOs, local people; - review of instruments and documents governing the operation of the organisation, its activities and its relations with the other local governance actors; - assessment of stakeholders' involvement in local governance; - self-evaluation of the structure's institutional, organisational and operational capacities; - greater involvement of VSGs in local governance: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems.

Municipal advisory centres (CCCs) and those responsible for monitoring	- knowledge of stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in local governance; - representativeness of local governance bodies and structures; - relevance and democratic nature of instruments of local governance bodies and structures; - greater involvement of local people and their organisations in local governance: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems.
Those in charge of projects/programmes	- knowledge of stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in local governance; - representativeness of local governance bodies and structures; - relevance and democratic nature of instruments of local governance bodies and structures; - greater involvement of local people and their organisations: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems.

5.2.5. DATA COLLECTION IN THE FIELD

Three teams (two for the Timbuktu region alone, because of its size, and one for the regions of Gao and Kidal) were set up for the field work, each headed by a survey specialist familiar with northern Mali. All of the data were collected over a two-week period.

The research was carried out on four levels: in the three main towns of the regions, in the main towns of seven "cercles", in 18 municipalities and in 54 communities (i.e. in towns with a population of over 5,000 and of under 5,000, and in villages, hamlets and fractions of nomadic tribes) chosen at random. In order to ensure a representative sample of the various social groups, in line with the project criteria, the teams collected the perceptions of a number of groups at each of these levels, particularly from traditional chiefs, those responsible for relations with the administration[160], young men, young women, female members of farmers' organisations and female members of other CSOs.

For the survey, the CSOs were broken down into four groups in line with the European Union's approach in the mission to identify support measures for civil society[161]:

■ The first group is Class 1 CSOs: basic organisations, often fairly informal, funded from members' contributions (women's and young people's organisations, etc.).
■ The second group is Class 2 CSOs, made up of formally recognised, more structured actors.

These may have different types of missions, such as protecting and defending local people's rights and interests, seeking to secure members' interests (trade unions, trade associations) or contributing to sustainable development (service providers in the development field).
■ The third is Class 3 CSOs, known as umbrella organisations. These are made up of groups of organisations joining forces around a particular issue and/or in a geographical area. Their basic mission is to coordinate and strengthen their members.
■ The fourth group is Class 4 CSOs, known as organisations of umbrella organisations. These are designed as consultation forums in order to present a united front when dealing with shared external problems. There is almost no formal structure and relations between the actors are also often very informal.

The field teams thus met 266 members of the public (including 127 women and 156 young people), 83 CSO officers, 63 people from groups of target actors belonging to a CSO, 28 elected officers, 43 actors from devolved State departments, 8 advisors from municipal advisory centres (CCCs) or regional monitoring officers from the technical decentralisation monitoring system, and 7 people responsible for local, regional or national projects/programmes in support of decentralisation and local governance.

160- They are often the most highly educated in the locality and are appointed by local people as someone who can 'understand and make themselves understood'.
161- Floridi, Corellla et al., 2004.

Target groups	Timbuktu	Gao	Kidal	Total
Civil society	**310**	**73**	**29**	**412**
General public	181	62	23	266
CSOs	66	11	6	83
Target actors who are members of CSOs	63	0	0	63
Elected officers	**17**	**7**	**4**	**28**
Mayors	12	4	2	18
"Cercle" council chairmen	4	2	1	7
Regional assembly chairmen	1	1	1	3
Decentralised State departments	**26**	**10**	**7**	**43**
Prefects	4	2	1	7
Sub-prefects	9	2	2	13
Tax collectors	3	1	1	5
Technical departments at "cercle" level	9	3	0	12
Decentralised departments at regional level	1	1	2	4
CCC advisors and monitoring officers	**4**	**3**	**1**	**8**
Development projects and programmes	**1**	**2**	**4**	**7**
Total	**354**	**92**	**44**	**490**

The general conditions, size of area covered and distances between locations in the north of Mali presented serious logistical problems for the in situ investigations. In order to deal with this, the team identified interviewers with experience of the area. To prevent any 'familiarity' from skewing the results (particularly those of the questionnaires and open discussions), the aids and tools contained a number of repetitions, allowing the information to be cross-checked. This made the system more cumbersome, which in turn affected the timetable and scale of the research.

As well as these logistical challenges, the teams encountered problems inherent in the originality of the approach, which was not understood by the interviewees. Women, for instance, were reluctant to share their opinions, particularly with male interviewers. Some found the exercise 'too personal' and others could not see how their perceptions might be useful for devising development strategies. Some actors (elected councillors, staff of the supervisory and technical departments) were easily able to quote the statutory definitions of the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders, but when it came to sharing their thoughts on the actual level of skills and ability of the actors concerned, many were reluctant to do so, either because they were afraid of overstepping the mark, or because they feared that the research results would not be objective.

The research had a strategic objective: the results were to be used for future planning by AEN and its partners. Despite this, the researchers did not have the impression that those interviewed tried to give 'tactical' replies in order to have favourable treatment in future.

5.2.6. DATA PROCESSING AND DRAFTING
OF PROJECT REPORT

With the help of data-processing and statistics specialists, the documentary data and field surveys were processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Excel software. The following subject classifications and cross-checks were applied:
■ stakeholders' knowledge of the statutory framework;
■ stakeholders' actions and perceptions and duty-holders' skills and abilities, taking account of the general situation and specific regional factors in local governance;
■ participation and cooperation between local governance actors (generally and by region);
■ general results, effects and impact of decentralisation (generally and by region);
■ presentation of civil society, local people and organisations (generally and by region);
■ participation and involvement of civil society in local governance (generally and by region);

■ perceptions, capacities and political, institutional, organisational and operational skills of those holding rights in local governance;
■ strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and problems of civil society for empowering VSGs in local governance.

Two analysts (one in governance and the other in institutional and organisational development) drew up the project report on the basis of all the results obtained. The report contains an assessment of progress in decentralisation in the northern regions, a study of the actors' perceptions, together with general strategic recommendations for improving the work done by AEN's partners, and a logical framework for strategies designed to empower vulnerable social groups, particularly women and young people.

5.2.7. LESSONS LEARNED

Special skills and measures are needed to collect perceptions that fall outside the usual statistical field.

Interviewers needed additional training because of the innovative work involved in measuring actors' perceptions, opinions and assessments.

The interviewees, particularly women and those in government departments, were accustomed to 'standard' data being collected on governance and decentralisation and were reluctant to reveal their own personal perceptions. In order to reduce this bias, the field team leaders organised preparatory meetings with senior figures from the survey locations before the interviewers arrived. In this way, they were able to ask for their help in ensuring that the research went smoothly. The interviewers were also given documents guaranteeing the confidentiality of the information obtained. If there were major problems, they could ask their team leader for help.

As with the other problems encountered, these measures, though helpful, generated additional delays and costs.

The final product is complex and difficult to summarise because of the wide range of subjects covered.

The terms of reference of the study cover 15 specific objectives and eight expected outcomes linked to three main products: an assessment of the current state of local governance, a study of the perceptions of the actors involved, and recommendations and proposals for planning activities. The final product is thus highly complex and difficult to use, both for those who commissioned it and for the actors and stakeholders.

In order to make the results easier to understand and summarise, the sponsors organised a 'handover' workshop bringing together the actors and stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in

the research. These included national and local representatives of government departments, organisations working in development (international, national and local) and CSOs (international, national and local). A delegation of right-holders and duty-holders from each of the areas where AEN operates also attended the workshop.

There are three ways in which the outcomes of the study could usefully have been distributed:
- by developing tools to promote and disseminate the methods used, in order to encourage the inclusion of the perceptions, opinions and assessments of governance actors in the overall monitoring/ evaluation mechanism;
- by summarising the main conclusions of the study to make them accessible to the actors and stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the research;
- by producing a general summary and specific summaries (by region, type of actor, etc.), thus making the information accessible to the various local actors and stakeholders for them to exploit.

The study shows that decentralisation is now established in northern Mali, but...

Generally speaking, the results of the audit show that decentralisation is becoming established in northern Mali; however, it is regrettable that the poor level of skills and capacities of the duty-holders and the strong influence of socio-cultural traditions restrict the full involvement of all the actors, particularly in the region of Kidal.

In terms of representation, local government in the area barely reflects the social breakdown of the electorate, since women occupy very few of the decision-making posts.

As in other regions of the country, the local authorities in the north have poor levels of institutional, organisational and operational skills and capacities.

Meetings are not held regularly. There are inconsistencies in planning and budgeting. The implementation rate is usually low, and the overall rate of mobilisation of internal resources is among the lowest in the country. The transfer of powers and resources from the State to local government is proving problematic in the area, particularly in the region of Kidal. The rate of devolution of government departments is low, particularly in the same region.

The technical support provided by the Municipal Advisory Centres (CCC), responsible for strengthening local government capacity has brought improvements, but also imbalances.

The technical support provided by these centres has been focused on improving the operating skills and capacities of the decision-making bodies and structures and their staff.

There have been some improvements in the three regions as regards the drafting of the administrative account, the award of contracts, operating as contracting authorities and administrative correspondence. This has also led to improved relations between the supervisory departments, elected officers and their staff.

However, these improvements have had a major impact on the overall governance dynamic, with technical service providers and civil society now out of step with the capacities of the elected officers. Support is therefore needed to bring these actors up to speed.

The arrival of the Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation is encouraging a more integrated, fairer and more balanced approach in strengthening technical and financial capacities. This programme is designed to help all actors, both duty-holders and right-holders, to be better able to assume their roles and responsibilities in decentralisation.

The work done by the National Agency for Local Government Investment (ANICT) and the other technical and financial partners is important in many ways.

A significant amount of infrastructure has been constructed thanks to outside technical and financial support. Local people see this infrastructure as a concrete expression of the idea of 'decentralisation'.

More than 60% of the people interviewed said that, in their eyes, this investment was evidence of change. They felt that investment in buildings (whether functional or not) was a guarantee that, sooner or later, the services they were supposed to house would be provided. They also felt that these buildings were an important step towards giving people general access to the services they need.

For the other actors, the relevance, viability and sustainability of these investments were a cause for concern, particularly in view of the number of buildings that were barely functional or not functional because there were not enough staff and/or material and financial resources to run them.

It is vitally important that the services advocated should actually be provided as soon as possible.

The traditional chiefs' dissatisfaction and local people's customs are a source of risk.

Apart from the traditional chiefs, all of the actors are moving towards responsible local governance. So, while all the other actors are seeking to enjoy their statutory prerogatives, the traditional chiefs, unhappy with the role they have been given under the legislation, are trying to find ways to exercise greater influence.

This dissatisfaction and people's current behaviour are a threat to peace and stability in the area, particularly in the region of Kidal, where the traditional chiefs are most noticeably dissatisfied and local people are most likely to turn to them to resolve their problems. These findings need to be discussed in greater detail to consider what measures should be taken.

Over 52% of the people surveyed turned first to their traditional chiefs for problems to do with citizenship. Only 3% would seek a legal remedy from the supervisory authorities, which are responsible for compliance with the law under the current legislation.

Some CSOs have ethical leanings that undermine their legitimate contribution.

An analysis of the perceptions of representatives of Class 2 and 3 organisations suggests that these organisations are easily diverted from their role of helping civil society to be more involved in local governance, in order to focus on the socio-economic objectives of their promoters and members.

According to the results of the surveys, officers from these organisations classify their roles as follows:
- creating income-generating activities for their members and the organisation;

- mobilising funding for projects/programmes to be carried out by their members;
- and only thirdly providing technical support and advice for elected officers and traditional chiefs.

None of the 60 or more officers interviewed regarded themselves as having a role in promoting the involvement of civil society in local governance. Fewer than 10% of the CSO governing bodies interviewed felt that they had a role in promoting, protecting or defending local people's rights and interests, even if that was theoretically one of their tasks.

Over 75% of the members from Class 2 and 3 organisation interviewed (whose mission included protecting, defending or promoting local people or participating in sustainable development) focused instead on satisfying the needs of their members, who made their membership and payment of their contributions conditional on having their needs met.

These responses from the structured civil society organisations, whose stated mission is to defend, promote and/or protect local people's needs and interests, indicate a risk that their legitimate role is being compromised. Conflicts of interest could delay the strengthening of local people's capacity to stimulate government action in response to their real aspirations and needs.

Perceptions of equal opportunities for men and women in governance are worrying.

Overall, people think that women are involved in politics.

Over 90% of the sample thought that women were politically active simply because they took part in elections.

However, an analysis of the composition of municipal councils indicates that there are almost no women in political posts.

Women account for fewer than 3% of all municipal councillors in the area. More than 75% of municipal councils do not have a single female councillor.

> Curiously, 73% of the women surveyed said that they have the same opportunities as men and as much chance as men of being elected in northern Mali.

The heads of the decision-making bodies did not see this paradox, and felt that women were well represented.

> More than 80% of the heads of the decision-making bodies thought that their respective bodies were a 'good' or 'perfect' reflection of the society they represented.

These findings raise some worrying questions. First, what will the stakeholders have to do to contribute more to the national 'gender and development' objectives? Next, do the stakeholders' statements reflect the internalisation of certain inequalities? Last, do the women in question have a different concept of equal opportunities from that used in 'gender and development', or are they hiding their real perceptions for fear of socio-cultural, socio-economic or other reprisals?

5.2.8. CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS

The methods used and the results obtained in this study on civil society for responsible governance in the regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal provide an overview of the dynamics between the various actors.

The methods used measured the following:
■ the extent to which governance is being implemented in the area, by evaluating the development of the institutional, organisational and operational capacities of the duty-holders;
■ the extent to which local people are taking ownership of and effectively pursuing their role of encouraging local governance to meet their needs and interests, by analysing the perceptions, opinions and assessments of local governance actors.

Including an analysis of perceptions could potentially improve the current system for monitoring/evaluating local governance. If the tools and aids used (particularly indicators) took account of the perceptions, opinions and assessments of the actors involved, the duty-holders would be better equipped to ensure that the approaches adopted for governance and development were relevant, viable and sustainable. Local people would thus be making a greater contribution to national construction.

The project report has been widely disseminated since the national 'handover' workshop. AEN is preparing local workshops to deliver the results, and is to publish a version for a wider readership.

AEN has opted to strengthen the capacities of right-holders and duty-holders and is holding talks on how to make governance a cross-sector theme in its main areas of intervention.

Initially the emphasis will be on getting women more involved in public life. Work has started on a project designed to increase the rate of women voting and standing as candidates in the three regions of northern Mali. AEN and its partners have begun a process with Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF), which is already carrying out a similar programme in the south of the country, funded by the European Union. In parallel with this, AEN is a stakeholder in an initiative by SNV-Mali to develop a joint action programme between development organisations and State structures in order to encourage women to take part in the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections and the 2009 municipal elections.

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

AEN	Aide de l'Église Norvégienne/Norwegian Church Aid
ANICT	Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales/National Agency for Local Government Investment
CCC	Centre de Conseil Communal/Municipal Advisory Centre
CEDREF	Centre d'Études, de Documentation, de Recherches Et de Formation/Study, Documentation, Research and Training Centre
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DNCT	Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales/National Local Government Directorate
EU	European Union
Helvetas	Swiss Association for International Cooperation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OISE	Outil Informatisé de Suivi Évaluation/Computerised Monitoring and Evaluation Tool
PACT/GTZ	Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales (Local Government Support Programme)/Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Technical Cooperation Agency)
PARAD	Programme d'Appui à la Réforme Administrative et à la Décentralisation/Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation
SNV	Organisation Néerlandaise de Développement/Netherlands Development Organisation
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSG	Vulnerable Social Group
WILDAF	Women In Law and Development in Africa

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Loi n° 0044 du 07/07/2000 déterminant les ressources fiscales des communes, des cercles et des régions.

Loi n° 00-042 du 07/07/2000 et décret 00-386/P-RM du 10/08/2000 portant création de l'Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales (ANICT) et fixant son organisation et son fonctionnement.

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5.3. Mali: Evaluating the impact of decentralisation

This study, **'Evaluating the impact of decentralisation'**, has been prepared by Djoumé Sylla and Hamidou Ongoïba on behalf of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) (see Annex IV).

The authors describe UNCDF work analysing the impact of the decentralisation process in the Timbuktu region of northern Mali. The UNCDF has been working to support decentralisation and local governance in this area since the 1990s, with very specific objectives of poverty reduction. It was within the framework of the project and a broader UNCDF initiative that the UNCDF and its partners in northern Mali decided to design a conceptual framework for and then to analyse the impact of decentralisation on various dimensions of poverty.

As the study shows, methods were a real challenge, bearing in mind the scarcity of statistical data on local development and the lack of any reference situation.

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INTRODUCTION

Alleviating poverty is a priority of the Malian government, according to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), a reference document on Mali's development policy for the period 2002-2006. The PRSP goal is to reduce poverty from 63.8% to 47.5% by maintaining the growth of the gross domestic product at an average rate of 6.7% between 2002 and 2006 and by implementing a coherent set of measures.

These measures are to be implemented in the areas of institutional development, improved governance and participation by all stakeholders[162] in the areas of sustainable human development, as well as better access to basic socio-economic services, infrastructure development and support for production sectors.

According to the PRSP, poverty is a widespread phenomenon that, while afflicting rural areas in particular, is increasingly to be found in larger towns as a result of a deteriorating labour market and migratory movement.

In the area of institutional development, a key aim is, among other things, to build institutional capacity so that public affairs are better managed. This is to be done by implementing decentralisation, strengthening the rule of law and reforming public service.

Against this background, it is possible to assess the extent to which immediate goals (effects) and development goals (impact) have been met. By monitoring and evaluating the effects and impact of decentralisation on poverty, the following can be achieved:

■ At a local level, action can be steered to help poor populations better.
■ At the national level, the country's authorities can capitalise on locally successful initiatives and replicate them on a larger scale through well-informed policies, strategies and programmes.

If the impact of decentralisation on poverty is to be monitored and evaluated, three key concepts have to be taken into account:

■ Decentralisation is an administrative system in which roles and responsibilities are shared by the state and local government, with the state (which then has a supervisory role) transferring powers and resources to local government (which has actual responsibility) with a view to local development.[163]

■ The impact of a measure can be defined as the set of changes that it may initiate or bring about - changes that would not take place without it.[164]

■ Poverty takes three forms: poverty of living conditions or mass poverty is the first. This is reflected by a situation in which people lack water and electricity, education, health, employment, housing, etc. The relative poverty levels given in the introduction refer to this dimension.[165] The second is monetary poverty, where people lack income, which is reflected by insufficient consumption. The third is a poverty of potential where people lack capital (access to land, credit, equipment, etc.) and power.

Nowadays, poverty tends to be defined less narrowly in terms of a lack of income and material deprivation, but in a more subtle, multi-dimensional and qualitative way, including access to and control of production resources, human deprivation, a lack of resources for action and power and, last, insecurity.[166]

The consensus currently emerging within development organisations is that democratic governance paves the way for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Local governments, through their institutions and the knowledge that local elected officers have of their areas, have a paramount role to play in this new

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162- *Local government, community civil organisations, devolved services.*
163- *Sylla, D. (1999).*
164- *UNDP (2003).*
165- *For further details of the concept of poverty of living conditions and the calculation of poverty thresholds, see PRSP (2002).*
166- *Bonfiglioli, A. (2004a).*

paradigm as a result of their geographical and political proximity to their populations.

This article looks at the conceptual framework of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) for local development action, the analytical model used to monitor and evaluate the impact of decentralisation on poverty and the impact achieved at various levels.

In drafting this work, it was necessary to draw on the literature produced by the UNCDF[167] on the role of local government in the fight against poverty, especially the various in-house and external evaluation reports on the Support Programme for Rural Municipalities in Timbuktu (PACR-T) and our personal experience of these issues. It is intended for specialists with an interest in the problems of supporting local rural governments, with a particular interest in monitoring and evaluation.

5.3.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE REGION OF TIMBUKTU

The UNCDF has been working in the north of Mali since 1983 in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

The region of Timbuktu has an area of 497,926 km² and accounts for 40% of the territory of Mali. It has five 'cercles': Timbuktu, Diré, Gourma Rharous, Niafounké and Goundam. It is made up of 52 municipalities (49 rural and three urban), 528 villages and 343 nomadic factions. According to

projections based on data from the 1998 national census, the region's population is around 550,000, approximately 5% of the Malian population. Approximately 80% of this population lives along the river, where there are greater economic opportunities, chiefly farming and stockbreeding in a fragile and vulnerable environment. The average number of people per household is 9.2, and poverty levels are among the highest in the country.

5.3.2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

When the local development programme was being designed, one of the main hypotheses was that there is a very close link between bad governance, along with a lack of capacity and responsibility on the part of local actors, and any form of poverty. As a multi-dimensional phenomenon (political, economic, social and cultural), poverty requires an appropriate response, and good local governance with better management of natural resources seems to be one of the ways in which access to basic infrastructure and public services can be improved in a sustainable way. This line of thinking has had a strong influence on the UNCDF programme in Mali, which works in the following areas:

■ institutional development to demonstrate how important local institutions are in improving the roles and powers of local institutional actors and, as these actors become responsible for all aspects of local development, in helping to establish standards for their individual and collective action;

■ capacity building to enable local institutional actors to take on the new responsibilities incumbent upon them as a result of decentralisation, including information, awareness raising and training initiatives for all stakeholders (local elected officers, community leaders, managers of devolved technical services, etc.);

■ financing local development to enable local governments to gain access to the financial resources that they are required to manage in accordance with the principles of good governance. Projects call upon the local development fund (LDF) through which resources can be allocated to support decentralised planning and deliver a basic socio-economic infrastructure and public services (health, education, transport, markets, etc.). The LDF may also include a component for financing activities geared towards improving natural resource management and environmental governance systems;

167- UNCDF is a multilateral international organisation and donor, set up in 1966 by Resolution 2186 of the United Nations General Assembly for small-scale investment in the poorest (least-developed) countries.

■ **delivering basic services and infrastructure**, on the grounds that improved local infrastructure and service delivery are key components of any strategy to reduce poverty and that local institutions are best placed to realise the local infrastructure. Local leaders may well be more reactive to local problems with which they are familiar and where they are, at the same time, more accountable for their actions, and where the institutions to which they belong are in principle permanent, have legal capacity and can reach local populations more readily.

In its approach to local governance, the UNCDF also emphasises the desired impact of decentralisation policies, along with the objective of pilot programme replication by governments or other donors so that the impact of such programmes is wider ranging. The conceptual framework of these projects is very much shaped by the complexity of poverty. They have been carried out in partnership with the UNDP, the Government of Mali, the Belgian Survival Fund, Luxembourg and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

As a result of the mechanisms and approaches described above, all of UNCDF's local development programmes (LDPs) are geared towards achieving the following specific results:

■ combating poverty to help achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, through social and economic infrastructure, and public and community investment in keeping with the wishes of local populations, and natural resource management;

■ involving civil society more closely in pinpointing development priorities by promoting structured dialogue with local elected officers;

■ making local investment schemes more efficient, reactive and transparent by developing participatory local planning, budgeting and implementation procedures;

■ building the capacity of local governments and community institutions in order to promote transparent local institutional mechanisms involving civil society;

■ locating and implementing innovative pilot initiatives in the field of decentralised public investment, which may subsequently be used to shape national policy or provide the basis for institutional reforms, or which may be replicated.

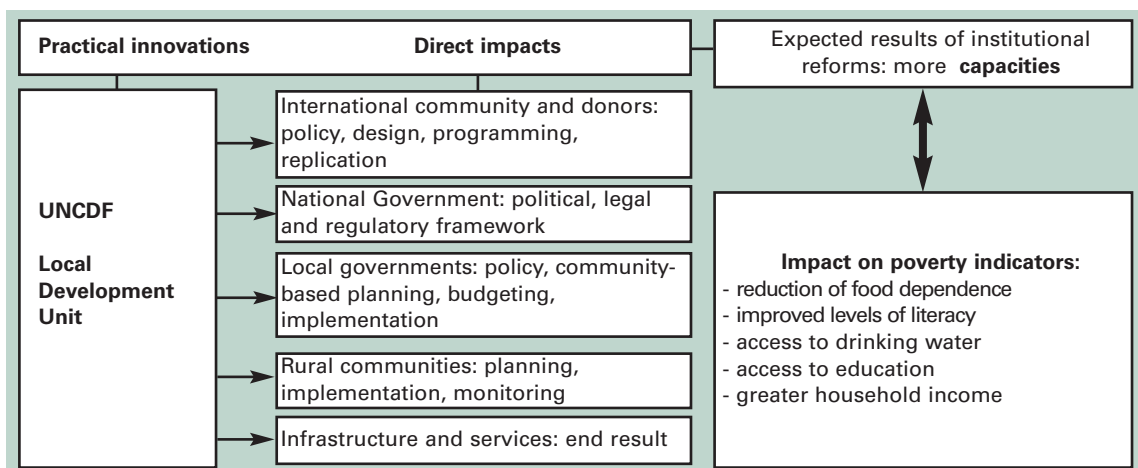## 5.3.3. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF DECENTRALISATION ON POVERTY REDUCTION

Measuring the impact of decentralisation on poverty reduction is a 'path strewn with pitfalls' because, among other things, situations with and without decentralisation have to be compared and measures connected with decentralisation have to be separated out from action in other sectors.

The PACR-T analysis model differentiates between direct and indirect impact:

■ **Direct impact** is assessed at the institutional level in the broad sense, among the international donor community, national governments, local governments and rural communities. It is reflected by the creation of an environment (local, institutional, etc.) favourable to decentralisation and local development.

■ **Indirect impact** can be seen at an individual (household) and collective (public service) level through the provision of services that meet demands.

Practical innovations	Direct impacts	Expected results of institutional reforms: more **capacities**

	International community and donors: policy, design, programming, replication	
UNCDF **Local Development Unit**	National Government: political, legal and regulatory framework	**Impact on poverty indicators:** - reduction of food dependence - improved levels of literacy - access to drinking water - access to education - greater household income
	Local governments: policy, community-based planning, budgeting, implementation	
	Rural communities: planning, implementation, monitoring	
	Infrastructure and services: end result	

5.3.4. IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC INVESTMENT ON POVERTY REDUCTION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Our focus here is on the impact of socio-economic investment because the dimension of poverty most widely experienced in the Timbuktu region is precisely one of gaining access to basic socio-economic services. In order to analyse this question, the PACR-T team conducted an internal evaluation based on the indicators of the project's logical framework; this was followed, in March 2004, by an independent impact evaluation.

The main constraint that we encountered during this exercise was the mediocre quality of the information available on the reference situation. In practice, some data were not available largely because statistical information was not broken down to the municipal level. To remedy this situation, the project team tried out a new qualitative surveying approach based on 'method consensus'[168] so that beneficiaries' perceptions of the programme's impact on poverty could be assessed in a participatory way.

The other constraint we encountered was sociological in nature. In most case studies, there is no tradition of measuring the quantities of products obtained. For instance, the volume of water supplied by a well or a borehole is not normally measured. Similarly, in types of farming for own consumption, agricultural output and (even less) yield, tend not to be estimated. In the pastoral field, products are largely for own consumption with the result that, in most cases, their quantities are not measured. Moreover, births and deaths are not systematically reported, making it difficult to draw up reliable statistics on which an impact evaluation can draw.

In order, therefore, to evaluate the impact of action in supplying drinking-water, the evaluator has to cross-reference data on the functional infrastructure of drinking water, with data on people's access to this water and data on satisfying the need for drinking water, according to the standard of 18 litres of water per day per inhabitant. If there are no reliable data on births and deaths, i.e., on population numbers, it is impossible to make a reliable assessment on the impact a measure has had in terms of meeting the standard. Most local government investment in the context of PACR-T comes under the heading of food security and access to drinking water.

168- CCP/PACR-T and PAVD/Timbuktu (2003).

5.3.4.1. Food security

A great deal of equipment and infrastructure has been installed in the villages and wards where the poorest communities are. This infrastructure is helping to improve food security. Even though this investment has not as yet brought about significant changes in beneficiaries' living conditions, these conditions nevertheless seem set to improve:

■ Controlled submersion works will ensure agricultural output for families.

■ Irrigated village-perimeter developments and motor-pump equipment have been financed by municipalities at the request of the poorest communities. These developments will place some agricultural production on a secure footing.

■ Municipalities have provided four mills and husking machines for the poorest female population. This equipment is intended to lessen the manual work involved in milling cereals and husking paddy rice. Beneficiaries have confirmed that this equipment has helped to alleviate domestic tasks.

■ The number of pastoral boreholes provided will have an impact on food security because they increase the viability of large expanses of pastureland that had not previously been possible to use. The availability of better pasture will improve reproduction conditions for livestock and therefore increase the number of animals. As these animals will be better fed, they will also produce larger quantities of higher quality meat and dairy products. This new infrastructure seems likely to have an impact on the lifestyles of nomadic stockbreeders because they will not have to travel so far to find water and pasture.

5.3.4.2. Covering drinking-water needs

Well boring accounts for a substantial proportion of the development programmes run by the UNCDF. These wells account for 47% of the 55 projects on infrastructure and equipment set in motion to help those communities considered by the people themselves (method consensus) to be the poorest. This highlights the importance of satisfying the needs for drinking water in these communities. In most cases, these wells are for both domestic and pastoral use. In 84.5% of cases (i.e., 22 out of 26 wells), they are the only source of drinking water for the beneficiary communities.

These achievements have already had a perceptible impact. The wells have made it possible to improve the state of health of the local people and to reduce the mortality rate. Consuming water from ponds and the river caused disease, in particular infant diarrhoea. In many cases, the people themselves were of the view that the decrease in water-related diseases was due to water from the recently bored wells. An aside regarding issues of safety is that boring wells in pond beds, after the surface waters had dried up, frequently led to fatal accidents. Well delivery is therefore limiting this dangerous activity.

The wells have also made it possible to reduce the distance people had to travel to find water. This means that they are expending less energy and saving time that can be used for other activities.

In the 21 villages and other areas that had no source of drinking water before the municipal wells were bored, water collection was a genuine concern for women in the Songhai villages and men in the nomadic factions. The average distance travelled to find water was 7 km.

These developments are helping to make nomadic populations more sedentary. Because a lack of pasture and water was leading to cattle losses, many nomadic factions were trying to settle on their traditional lands. Those groups considered to be the poorest - and benefiting from the initial wells - have already started to become more sedentary. In the PACR-T area, five of the poorest nomadic fractions are in the process of settling because a well has been financed by their municipalities. If they become more sedentary, they should be able to diversify their economic activities and send children (especially girls) to school, which will play an important part in reducing poverty.

The environmental impact of wells can also be seen. The increase in the number of wells has made it possible to ease the pressure around water points where over-pasturing was leading to degradation of the natural environment. Access to new, previously unused pastures is now possible. In the short term, there is every chance that natural vegetation could grow again in the old animal-transit areas.

From an environmental point of view, however, traditional extraction methods (large-diameter wells) are major consumers of wood for the production of the forks. In view of the number of such wells, this practice has an adverse impact on this already fragile ecosystem. The development of new modern hydraulic structures may therefore be a way of combating deforestation.

A large-diameter well requires about 10 large-diameter tree trunks, which are rare in this pre-desert zone.

Installing hydraulic structures has already had an impact on land disputes. There has been a remarkable drop in the number of conflicts around water points as there is less pressure on each well. However, the provision of viable new pasture zones is currently raising a problem with land ownership. Areas that had not been openly coveted in the past are now being claimed by different nomadic factions, once they have been improved by a well, and the resulting conflicts are often bloody.

5.3.4.3. Evaluation of the impact of action on poverty

An independent evaluation was conducted in March 2004 and, to some extent, bears out the effects described above. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the impact of action by the project on poverty and policies and the replication and sustainability of measures. The evaluation method combined quantitative techniques (household survey) and qualitative techniques (by target actor group, key informers). The methods used nevertheless had their limits: as the evaluators assessed the success of the project on its own merits and focused on municipalities benefiting from PACR-T action, they were unable to compare the effects on poverty between these areas and other areas outside the scope of PACR-T action.

The household survey covered a sample of 200 households, made up of 5 to 7 people. The total population of the "cercles" involved is 250,000.

Percentage of people surveyed who thought that their total household income had increased since the start of the project	62,3 %
Percentage of people surveyed who thought that the food security of their household had improved since the start of the project	72,5 %

As regards impact from empowerment, the survey findings show a high level of participation in decision making and project choices among all social strata and, in particular, among women.

Attending meetings, however, does not necessarily entail genuine participation in decision making. In almost half of the cases, households reported that decisions had been taken by traditional chiefs. Moreover, local representatives had been elected in only 20% of the cases; in most cases, they had been appointed by village chiefs or local PACR-T managers.

5.3.5. National impact of project action

Nationally, the PACR-T pilot experiment has had a positive effect on, among other things, the procedures used to implement the local government investment fund administered by the National Agency for Local Government Investment (ANICT), especially as regards control of investment by municipalities, distribution criteria for investment funds and methods of payment from the public exchequer.

Control of investment by municipalities

Among PACR-T's action procedures, an innovation from the point of view of the financing of investment was to make municipalities responsible for all stages of the work. ANICT subsequently used this same procedure nationally for all local governments.

Distribution criteria for investment funds

In an attempt to distribute its investment funds (local government [FICT] and special investment funds [FSI]) in an equitable way among the various municipalities, PACR-T used two criteria that were subsequently used by ANICT: demographic size and degree of remoteness.

Methods of payment of investment funds from the public exchequer

PACR-T successfully tested the method of paying municipal investment funds via regional payment offices and public exchequer offices. This mechanism was also taken up by ANICT to pay entrepreneurs for their services on receipt of payment orders from local government authorising officers.

5.3.6. Conclusion

The monitoring and evaluation of a programme is a key stage in any development process. For the UNCDF, the quality of monitoring and evaluation depends on a number of preliminary measures, which include a reliable reference situation when work is started, establishing a participatory framework for planning and programming, introducing participatory monitoring and evaluation tools, conducting a mid-term evaluation and evaluating impact within scheduled deadlines.

As there is not as yet any clear and convincing proof of a linear relationship between decentralisation and poverty[169], monitoring and evaluation of support programmes for decentralised authorities are crucial in order to ascertain whether there are functional links between these two processes - and what these links may be.

In our experience, three lessons are worth highlighting, i.e.:

■ However pertinent the framework and the monitoring and evaluation tools of a project, measuring its impact on poverty depends on the availability and quality of locally generated basic information (sector and multi-sector) and on access to this information within a reasonable time. Failing that, a method consensus may be an alternative, although the information collected might not be completely reliable.

169- Bonfiglioli, A. (2003) p. 49.

■ Evaluation of a measure's impact on poverty should not be limited to the areas covered by that measure. If it is possible to compare the results with those of another area, the performance or limits of the measure can be analysed or, at least, bearing in mind that few areas receive no support, seen in relative terms.
■ In most cases, in a precarious and poor area such as northern Mali, there is a strong correlation between the delivery of services meeting the needs of local populations and the reduction of conflicts within and between communities.

At present, work to monitor and evaluate the impact of decentralisation on poverty reduction seems to be the concern of only researchers and donors. This kind of work nevertheless enables critical interpretation and is therefore a way of looking with hindsight at the basic hypotheses underpinning the approaches on which development work is based. If decision makers in developing countries were to make monitoring and evaluation into a systematic management practice, the living conditions of poor populations would undoubtedly benefit.

Our advice to decision makers, therefore, is that monitoring and evaluation should be used as a learning tool, paving the way for participatory and strategic management of development. Although this may be problematic for national authorities coping with the various pressures of day-to-day management, a process of this kind could be gradually introduced on a limited scale in a pilot project (one or two public services) so that its strengths and weaknesses can be assessed.

The UNCDF is in the process of forging systematic links between the lessons learned from evaluations and the design of new measures, with the participation of the national authorities of the countries being aided so that their overall control of this process can be improved.

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

ANICT	Agence Nationale d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales/National Agency for Local Government Investment
FICT	Fonds d'Investissement des Collectivités Territoriales/Local Government Investment Fund
FSI	Fonds Spécial d'Investissement/Special Investment Fund
LDF	Local Development Fund
LDP	Local Development Programme
PACR-T	Projet d'Appui aux Communes Rurales de Tombouctou/Support Programme for Rural Municipalities in Timbuktu
PAVD	Projet d'Appui des Volontaires des Nations Unies à la Décentralisation/United Nations Volunteers Decentralisation Support Programme
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNV	United Nations Volunteers

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ANNEX III: RESOURCE PERSONS, ONLINE DOCUMENTS AND USEFUL ADDRESSES

Resource persons:

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Documents and links for consultation:

Online resources:

www.uncdf.org
www.undp.org

Useful addresses:

United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)
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United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
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The case studies and exchange of experiences brought forward a **wealth of lessons learned**. The following were particularly in evidence:

Joint design and testing of tools needs time.

Designing and testing M&E tools that involve different actors in decentralisation at the national, regional and local levels takes time. When working with councillors and local civil society actors who have little or no experience with M&E tools, they need to be allowed time to learn how to identify, discuss and interpret indicators and statistics. This is a key aspect of capacity building for M&E of decentralisation and local governance. Furthermore, many cases show that trust among actors and working procedures are not built overnight. In multi-ethnic and multi-lingual contexts, time for translations is also required. Otherwise the various stakeholders involved in designing and testing a tool could feel uncomfortable interacting and articulating their viewpoints.

Identification and fine-tuning of indicators is a process.

This holds true to some extent for most M&E exercises. But it is particularly relevant for the experiences described in this brief. Decentralisation and local governance have a process dimension. It is therefore unrealistic to try to define too many indicators at the start of a test-run of a specific M&E tool. Even once formalised, it is important that a tool retain some flexibility for fine-tuning, if necessary even changing indicators to reflect the dynamic nature of reform processes. For instance, a newly established municipality may initially choose to focus performance self-evaluation on key functions, financial and resource management, running the registry office and mastering the process of development planning. Later, as more responsibilities and resources are devolved, performance self-evaluation may come to include active fields as well, such as natural resource management, promotion of local economic development and provisioning of basic services (e.g., health, education, water). New indicators would then need to be defined and tested for assessing performance in these fields.

Strategic alliances have benefits.

A number of our case studies emphasise the importance of strategic alliances between donors, development agencies, local government actors and central authorities in testing and replicating M&E tools for local governments. Undoubtedly, an approach that is jointly tested, used in a variety of local contexts and validated by the central government will be better suited for broad, nationwide dissemination and institutionalisation than a small initiative tested in just a few localities by only one actor. Strategic alliances can pay off in terms of time as well, as they allow testing a tool simultaneously in different parts of a country and pooling of financial and human resources of different agencies and institutions.

There are challenges involved in managing the dynamics of multi-stakeholder processes.

As the case study on the performance self-evaluation tool in Mali illustrates, those engaging in multi-stakeholder exercises and strategic alliances when designing and testing M&E tools should be cautioned: the path from design to widespread use may be long and fraught with problems. If an approach is to be participatory and draw on the support of a wide range of representative actors, with different views and opinions, contributions have to be carefully

managed. The assistance of an external consultant or resource person experienced in applying such an approach is a valuable, if not necessary, asset.

M&E results need to be followed up.

Most of the approaches and tools described provide participants of the M&E exercises with new insights on the performance and effects of local governance. These include not only information on positive changes and good performance, but also on things that went wrong, were only moderately productive or which need to be changed. Care has to be taken that corrective measures are firmly agreed and followed up. Otherwise, local actors' interest and incentive to engage in M&E will fade. Besides, all of the stakeholder groups will be challenged to adapt their attitudes and ways of working so as to dissolve any sources of misunderstandings or distrust identified during M&E exercises.

M&E tools for use by stakeholders of local governance and decentralisation are bound to face **many challenges**. For instance, participants might not be used to working together and might therefore lack clarity on their respective roles, rights and duties. The following are – amongst others – areas of challenges highlighted in the case studies drawn upon:

Dealing with historical experiences and administrative tradition.

After a long history of authoritarian rule, citizens of many West African countries are unused to posing questions about governance. In particular, the rural majority of the population still tends to be barely informed of their rights and duties as citizens. They are not aware of or are hesitant to make use of options for holding their elected local representatives accountable. Even those who are informed about their rights, for example, to attend council sessions which are open to the public, may not dare to attend or speak up if not explicitly encouraged to do so. This reality has to be taken into account when jointly designing M&E tools with stakeholders of local governance.

Reducing cultural barriers to constructive criticism.

The case studies illustrate that cultural barriers have to be overcome when testing M&E tools. Initially, the participants of (self-) evaluation exercises in Mali were reluctant to voice criticism directly. At public meetings in particular, open criticism was not considered culturally appropriate. The design and use of M&E tools should gradually help actors to deal with such hesitations, anchored as they are in culture and local custom. This also means that a tool successfully tested in one municipality may not be used in exactly the same way in another. In this regard, the assistance of a facilitator or experienced user can help address cultural barriers and create an atmosphere of trust.

Ensuring that design and utilisation of M&E tools is affordable.

All of the methodological approaches and tools presented in this brief have been promoted by development organisations or developed with their active support. Development organisations have provided methodological advice and (co-) financed facilitators, meetings and necessary materials. In many cases, it is difficult to get a fair idea of the cost of the design and utilisation of the proposed M&E tools, including the 'cost of participation'. From the discussions at the regional seminar it became clear that when designing a tool too little attention has generally been given to the cost of its continued utilisation by the local government and other participating actors. The challenge is therefore to devise methodologies that can help local governments to upgrade their M&E capacities and produce information at a cost commensurate to their financial capacities and the availability of local stakeholders to engage in a joint M&E process.

Achieving sustainability of capacity building efforts.

Sustainability has different dimensions in the context referred to here. One dimension is certainly the above-mentioned financial one. Another is more institutional and linked to the complexity of the proposed methodologies and tools. Simple tools that are easily understood and applied by actors with diverse educational and professional backgrounds lend themselves to more sustainable use than complex tools. This is a clear lesson from the stocktaking exercise and related discussions. Another factor to enhance the institutional sustainability of an M&E tool – apart from ownership of the methodology by local actors – is validation and efforts by central authorities to spread the use of a tool throughout a country. This can help to institutionalise an M&E approach that has proven successful and ensure that local governments set aside or receive the resources necessary for continued capacity building and use of the tool.

Avoiding instrumentalisation of local M&E tools and capacity.

After an M&E tool has been successfully used at the local level, attention must be paid to making certain that utilisation continues to strengthen the M&E capacities of local governments and contributes to local self-governance. As the case studies show, a participatory process of M&E tool design and testing enables local governments to gradually move towards conducting M&E exercises on their own in a first phase. Then, in a second phase, when local governments and other stakeholders are employing the tool successfully, the central state, donors and development organisations may become interested in standardising the information generated in locally conducted M&E exercises with a view to comparing data from different locations. Yet this can run counter to the objectives of strengthening autonomous local M&E capacity and empowering actors at the local level, even if this trend does help meet new national M&E goals.

Contributing to the sharing of experiences with capacity building for monitoring and evaluating decentralisation and local governance.

Describing and analysing the *capitalisation* process undertaken with different stakeholders in several West African countries — together with sharing the reflections and exchanges focusing on the case studies — represents merely one possible learning experience for actors committed to change. It can certainly be worthwhile to share one's experiences, to compare them with those of others, to seek other points of view and to reflect on the implications before continuing one's activities. No matter what category of actor we belong to, this process is directly related to a shared desire that leads us to improve our practices and those of others on the basis of our experiences and lessons learned. But, for a number of reasons (some of which have been discussed above), it is not easy to build knowledge that can be shared. Too often, this is still viewed as 'extra work' (as it is seldom planned or budgeted) and even as 'undermining', since – be it at the individual or group level – it requires participants to challenge themselves and call into question their practices and convictions as other stakeholders look on. Hence, the importance for all of us to consider devoting our efforts to establishing a tradition of exchange — a dynamic of sharing between actors in decentralisation and local government from a multilevel development perspective.

ANNEXES

ANNEX I: ACRONYMS

ACCRM	Association of Malian 'Cercle' and Regional Authorities
AfrEA	African Evaluation Association
AFVP	Association of French Volunteers
AMM	Association of Malian Municipalities
ANCB	National Association of Benin Municipalities
ANICT	National Agency for Local Government Investment
ASACO	Community Health Association
CCC	Municipal Advisory Centre
CCN	National Coordination Unit (for Technical Support for Local Government)
CDI	Commissariat for Institutional Development
CDRA	Community Development Resource Association
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIEDEL	International Study Centre for Local Development
CLE	Country Led Evaluation
CLO	Local steering committee
DAC/CAD	Development Assistance Committee
DAF	Financial and Administrative Directorate
DEC	Delegation of the European Commission
DNCT	National Directorate for Local Government
DNSI	National Statistics and Informatics Directorate
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
FIDESPRA	International Forum for Development and Exchanges of Knowledge and Expertise Promoting Self-sustaining Rural Development
FORANIM Consult	Consultancy office 'training, moderation of workshop, expertise'
GIS	Geographical Information System
GPRD/SIF	Ghana Poverty Reduction Programme of the Social Investment Fund/Social Investment Fund
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HCC	Higher Local Government Council
Helvetas	Swiss Association for International Cooperation
HDI	Human Development Index
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IPC	Municipal Poverty Index (Indice de la Pauvreté Communale)
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
MATCL	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government
MATD	Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDSSPA	Ministry of Social Development, Solidarity and Older People
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFPRERI	Ministry of Public Service, State Reform and Institutional Relations (Ministère de la Fonction Publique, de la Réforme de l'État et des Relations avec les Institutions)
MLGRDE	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and the Environment
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission of Ghana
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
ODHD	Observatory of Sustainable Human Development
OISE	Computerised Monitoring and Evaluation Tool (database)

PAAD	Support Programme for the Actors of Decentralisation
PACR-T	Support Programme for Rural Municipalities in Timbuktu
PACT	Local Government Support Programme
PARAD	Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation
PDESC	Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan
PDI	Institutional Development Programme
PDM	Municipal Development Partnership
PGP	Shared Governance Programme
PNACT	National Support Programme for Local Government
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
REDL	Local Development Reflection and Discussion Network
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SIEC-S	Basic Health Sector Information System for Municipalities
SILP	Participatory Local Impact Monitoring Methodology
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SUCO	'Solidarité, Union, Coopération' (Canadian NGO)
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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ANNEX III: GUIDE FOR THE PREPARATION OF CASE STUDIES

Source : Loquai C., Le Bay S. (2005)

Chapter/section/issues to discuss and questions to reflect on	Max. number of pages
1. Introduction	**1**
‣ Try to attract the attention of the reader : e.g., start with a question or a strong statement. **Interest and relevance of the experience described and analysed in the case study** ‣ Why do you think that the experience / approach presented in the case study is of relevance and interest to actors of local governance in West Africa? ‣ Why do you want to share your experience? ‣ Who is the case study addressed to (target audience)? **Focus and scope of the case study** ‣ Which questions / issues are you going to elaborate on? ‣ Which questions / issues of potential interest to the target audience are you not going to deal with, because of lack of data/time/room for analysis? **Structure** Briefly explain how you are going to proceed (order of questions / issues to be dealt with in the different chapters)	
2. Methodology	**0.75**
‣ How have you documented and analysed (capitalised) the experience described in the case study? ‣ How did you proceed (methodologically)? Who/Which actors have been involved in the capitalisation exercise, i.e., in collecting information, analysing the experience with stakeholders, documenting the results of this analysis, preparing a draft and discussing it with stakeholders involved in the capitalisation process, getting their feedback? ‣ To what extent does the case study reflect the different perspectives and experiences of actors/stakeholders of decentralisation, involved in the experience you describe? How did you take account of the views and perceptions of the 'end-users' of the approach to M&E you describe in the case study? ‣ Think about illustrating different viewpoints and perceptions in boxes. ‣ Which sources of information could you draw on? (e.g.: reports, meeting documents, interviews, group discussions etc.) ‣ Which difficulties do you encounter in the process of capitalisation (e.g.: lack of documented information on specific questions, including the perspectives of different actors, mobilising stakeholders and resource persons for a capitalisation of experiences)	

Chapter/section/issues to discuss and questions to reflect on	Max. number of pages
3. Presentation and analysis of the approach	**7**
a) Notes on the context (cf. the point annex « country context below)	**1**
▸ In which decentralisation/local governance context has the approach been developed/applied? Please, limit yourself to the most important characteristics and of the decentralisation process and local, i.e., to those necessary to understand the case study *(do not elaborate on the history of decentralisation etc., more detailed information can be placed in the annex 'country context')* ▸ What other factors have had an important influence on the approach? Feel free to visualise information on the political and administrative context. More detailed information relating to the context of decentralisation should be featured in the annex of your case study or in the country overviews.	
b) Motives, objectives and demand for the approach	

▸ Why/for what purpose has the approach *originally been developed* (conception phase)?
 	
▸ On whose demand/initiative? In response to whose needs?
 	
▸ What purposes does the approach serve now?
 	
M&E approaches are designed for a specific purpose or even for several purposes, such as
 	
    ● improving decision making
    ● promoting democratic control
    ● building capacities for self-evaluation with actors of local governance
    ● facilitating learning (on specific aspects of local governance/development)
    ● tracing and assessing effects and impacts of decentralisation processes/activities of local government
    ● accounting to central government/donors/citizens for use of resources
 	
The different actors involved in the process of designing and testing an approach may have different views on purposes/objectives.
 	
The relative importance of the different purposes/functions of an M&E -approach may also change in the course of time.
 	
Moreover, an M&E approach may also generate positive side-effects that are worthwhile mentioning (e.g., strengthening collaboration and dialogue between different actors of local governance, improving local statistics, sensitising officials/citizens on specific issues of local governance/development, etc.).	

Chapter/section/issues to discuss and questions to reflect on	Max. number of pages
c) Actors, stakeholders, users and moderators	

▸ Which actors/stakeholders of local governance have been involved in:
  ● conceptualising the M&E approach?
  ● testing it?
  ● adapting or improving it?
 	
▸ What have been their respective motives for participation and roles?
 	
▸ Who is in the drivers' seat? Who controls the approach? (see also the point on ownership below)
 	
▸ Who benefits from the information and analysis generated by this M&E approach? For whom has the approach been developed? Who are the users? How have they been involved in the design and testing of the approach?
 	
▸ Does the approach rely on moderators/facilitators? What is their role?
 	
▸ What kind of knowledge and skills do local actors need in order to (a) contribute to the development of the approach; (b) to make use of the approach (its results)?	

d) Assumptions, instruments, indicators and benchmarks	
▸ Which are the *underlying assumptions* of the approach? ▸ Please, describe the main components and steps of the methodology of the approach. ▸ What kind of *indicators and benchmarks* does the approach rely on? (Which aspects of local governance do they refer to? Do they try to measure results (output/products and services), effects (outcome), or impact? ▸ Please, give examples of the different types of indicators. ▸ How and by whom have these indicators/benchmarks been defined? How (frequently) are they monitored and by whom? Who is involved in the collection, processing and analysis of data and the restitution of findings? What are the feedback-loops?	
e) Procedures, formalisation, institutionalisation and complementarities with existing M&E instruments and systems	
▸ At what level and how widely is the approach used? ▸ To what extent is the approach institutionalised? Which institutions/procedures does it rely on? What institutional innovations does the approach introduce? Please, visualise institutions, flows of information, collaboration between different actors and stakeholders! ▸ Does the approach complement existing M&E devices/systems (e.g., systems at the national level, in neighbouring districts/municipalities)? Have links have been developed?	

Chapter/section/issues to discuss and questions to reflect on	Max. number of pages
f) The process of developing and testing the approach	
▸ Has the approach been newly developed or 'just' adapted to a new context? ▸ Please, describe the different stages in developing, testing and improving the approach. What challenges and problems have been encountered? How have they addressed these challenges? ▸ What interesting insights and knowledge have the different actors/stakeholders gained in the process of developing and testing the approach? What have they learned? ▸ How have they made use of these experiences and this new knowledge in the practice of local governance? ▸ What human, financial and other resources went into developing and testing the approach? Who has provided them? ▸ What kind of external assistance have development organisations/consultants provided in the course of the conceptual and test phase? What has been their role?	
g) Capacity building, political and administrative culture (see the methodological note)	
▸ Please, discuss the objectives and effects of the M&E approach with regard to the different aspects of capacity building listed (classification of approaches). ▸ How does the approach contribute to strengthening local capacities? What are the challenges in strengthening the capacities of different actors of local governance? ▸ How and to what extent does the M&E approach you present aim to change political and administrative culture?	
h) Ownership, sustainability, adaptation and replication of the approach	
Ownership ▸ Who has the intellectual ownership of the approach? Who « controls » the related knowledge and skills? ▸ How can the users of the approach take ownership of the approach? Is the approach accessible to all those interested in using it and in what form? Are their guides/toolkits, training courses, possibilities to be trained on the job and how accessible are they to the potential users? **Sustainability** Here, the term sustainability does not refer to the « conservation » of instruments/approaches that might have proven useful at a given time. It rather refers to the capacity of adaptation, the institutional sustainability especially with regard to its resource requirements/cost. ▸ Will the users of the approach be able to adapt the approach to their changing needs and the dynamics of the process of decentralisation and local governance? ▸ Will they be able to mobilise the necessary skills, develop the required organisational capacities and take over the costs? Do they have an interest/incentive to continue using the approach? **Replication** ▸ Has the approach been designed with a view to replication? ▸ Has it already been replicated? If so, please give examples.	

Chapter/section/issues to discuss and questions to reflect on	Max. number of pages
i) The results of the approach and lessons learned	
▸ What use has been made of the information/findings generated?	
▸ What has changed due to the fact that the M&E approach has been tested/is being used?	
▸ What lessons have the different stakeholders of the approach learned in the process?	
▸ What are the strengths and weaknesses of the M&E approach you are presenting and related processes?	
▸ What advise would you give to colleagues/organisations/local governments who want to engage in a similar exercise?	
4. Conclusions and perspectives	**0,75**
▸ Summarise the most important **points, lessons learned and messages** you want to get across	
▸ Provide **recommendations** to policy makers at the national and local level and other actors of decentralisation (civil society, private sector, NGOs, development agencies, donors)	
▸ Give an **outlook** on challenges or potential of the approach, e.g., with regard to necessary adaptations or institutionalisation of the approach, replication in other locations, use of the data/insights generated etc.	
References	**1**
▸ **Bibliographic references**: Literature and other material you used for preparing the case study (documents, pedagogical material, protocols, guides, maps, legal texts, newspaper articles, radio programmes etc.). Please, quote references as proposed in the style-guide!	
▸ **List of interviews/discussions.**	
▸ **Contact details of institutions/resource persons** (facilitators, key stakeholders) who have a good knowledge of the approach and are willing to provide further information to interested readers upon request).	

In order to help the participants of the seminar and the reader of the case studies to understand the context of decentralisation and local governance in each country, we propose to group information from the same country in an overview paper. This paper should providing basic information on the process and state of art of the decentralisation process in this country. We would therefore like to ask one team per country to provide us with the following information:

Annex to the « country-chapters »	Max. Pages
1. The context of decentralisation and local government:	**2-3**
▸ 1 table with information on the sequencing of the process (e.g., featuring dates of key policy decisions, the approval of important legal texts, municipal elections etc.)	
▸ 1 scheme visualising the local government system and the relations between different actors of local governance	
2. Further reading	
▸ bibliographic references to other approaches for M&E of decentralisation and local governance than the ones described in the case studies (e.g., tools/systems for monitoring effects and impacts of decentralisation at the macro-level, approaches used by other organisations).	

ANNEX IV: BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF CASE-STUDY AUTHORS (IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

Ag Aboubacrine Ahmed is now working as monitoring and evaluation coordinator with CARE International in Burundi. He is a statistician specialising in decision-making aids. He was CARE's regional monitoring and evaluation coordinator in Mali up to 2005.

Asanga Christian has substantial experience in the area of forestry and natural resource in Cameroon. He has helped to develop a number of local governance projects (currently for Helvetas - Swiss Association for International Cooperation) and to place national decentralisation and participatory natural resource management policies on an operational footing.

Caspari Ulrich has worked for the German Development Service (DED) in Mali. Until mid 2006, he was a DED technical advisor on local planning to the Local Government Support Programme (PACT) of the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ). He is currently working for this organisation in Benin.

Cissé Fatou is currently working for the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). She has a postgraduate diploma in modern literature and works as an adviser for the NCA's National Programme with responsibility for the 'Civil Society for Responsible Governance' and 'Education in the northern regions of Mali' programmes. Since 1987, she has been highly involved in project design, monitoring and evaluation and has taken part in a number of studies conducted chiefly in the northern regions of Mali.

Coulibaly Abdoul Karim, a statistician and demographer by training, is currently the coordinator of CARE International's monitoring and evaluation unit in Mali. He has wide-ranging experience in the field of monitoring and evaluation and is the author of various publications on project evaluation and socio-demographic studies.

Dao Dramane has a degree in finance and accounting and is an adviser at the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV-Mali), responsible for the issues raised by the transfer of powers and resources to local authorities. In the past he has worked for various health organisations: as an SNV adviser to the Regional Directorates for Health and Social Development in the context of Mali's Health and Social Development Programme (PRODESS) and as a manager of a number of local and regional health programmes for government departments.

Dery Bruno B. is a Deputy Director with the National Development Planning Commission of Ghana. He currently heads the decentralised M&E Division and is directly responsible for developing the District M&E Framework. He had previously done research and development work with international organisations in several countries.

Diarra Konaré Rokia is currently head of the Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations (PACOB) of CARE International in Mali. A biologist by training, she has a wide range of experience in the development field in decentralisation, micro-finance and participatory approaches.

Dorway Audrey is a development practitioner who is employed with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) as a development planning specialist. She has experience relating to the local government system in Ghana, and was a team member responsible for the nationwide implementation of the poverty profiling, mapping and pro-poor programming exercise.

Dumont Florence is a tropical geographer (University of Rouen, France) and has been working for some years as a freelance consultant in Mali. Specialising in the creation of Geographical Information Systems and backup for their users, she is currently assisting the SNV and its partners with the design and use of a GIS for the Koulikoro region. In the Mopti region, she is also assisting the regional assembly and the team of an NGO, the New East Foundation (NEF), in this same field.

Floquet Anne, an agronomist by training, with a doctorate in agro-economics (University of Hohenheim, Germany), is a researcher. She has many years of experience in Africa. At present, she is working in Benin with FIDESPRA (International Forum for Development and Exchanges of Knowledge and Expertise Promoting Self-sustaining Rural Development). She is responsible for designing and implementing the SILP (Participatory Local Impact Monitoring Methodology) and for various research and development programmes, promoting public control and research into poverty.

Hilhorst Thea is working for the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) at the economic development section. She has specialised for a number of years in rural decentralisation and local governance. She coordinates action-research projects throughout West Africa for SNV. In particular, she initiated the project to develop tools facilitating partnership work in the area of public health, along with a potential strategy to promote synergies between projects in municipal areas.

Ischer Markus has been a Helvetas (Swiss Association for International Cooperation) team coordinator in various African countries. He is currently working in western Cameroon on a programme supporting decentralisation, build municipal capacity and managing knowledge.

Keïta Mamadou Yoro is a statistician and regional coordinator of monitoring and evaluation for CARE International in Mali. Currently working on PACOB (Support Programme for Municipalities and Grassroots Organisations), he has worked for many years in the monitoring and evaluation field.

Le Bay Sonia, a tropical geographer by training, is an adviser on local governance, planning, monitoring and evaluation at the SNV in Mali. During the twenty-odd years she has been working in West Africa, she has helped to design several participatory monitoring and evaluation systems and to implement development programmes under bilateral cooperation arrangements and for international non-governmental organisations such as the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the World Conservation Union (IUCN), CARE International, etc.

Lodenstein Elsbet is a sociologist and SNV advisor. Currently based in Ghana, she is among others responsible for documenting and assessing experiences in planning, local resource mobilisation and health service financing. From 2002 to 2005, she worked in Mali in the field of municipal planning, monitoring and evaluation, and the decentralised management of health services. She has contributed to a variety of publications examining the problems of decentralisation and the health sector.

Maïga Moussoulimoune Y. is an economist and adviser to the Support Programme for the Actors of Decentralisation (PAAD) of the Swiss Association for International Cooperation (Helvetas) in Mali. He is responsible for capacity building among the elected officers and staff of municipalities. Previously, he occupied various senior posts in the area of adult training at GTZ (German Technical Cooperation) and the Centre for Audio-visual Production Services (CESPA).

Mongbo Roch, an agronomist by training with a doctorate in socio-anthropology (University of Wageningen, Netherlands), is a researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Agronomic Sciences of the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin. In 1990, with colleagues, he set up FIDESPRA as an institution for adult education and practical research (International Forum for Development and Exchanges of Knowledge and Expertise Promoting Self-sustaining Rural Development). He is currently FIDESPRA's coordinator. He has been taking part in pilot schemes for public control of public action at both the local and national level.

Ongoïba Hamidou, an agricultural engineer and holder of a postgraduate diploma in development studies from the University of Geneva, was the coordinator of the Support Programme for Rural Municipalities in Timbuktu (PACR-T), a joint UNCDF, UNDP and Government of Mali project. At present, he is working as a UNCDF consultant and resource person in the field of local governance in West, Central and East Africa.

Ouédraogo Zeinabou, who has a business management diploma, is based in Niamey and is currently responsible for gender mainstreaming and the promotion of women's rights and women's leadership in the fields of decentralisation and local governance at the SNV.

Samaké Bakary, who holds a doctorate in agricultural engineering (Martin Luther Halle-Wittenberg and Leipzig Universities, Germany), is an agricultural computer scientist specialising in statistics and database analysis and management. Following training in cartography and GIS at the Institute of Urban and Regional Planning of the Technical University of Berlin, Germany, he has been managing the GIS of the Local Government Support Programme (PACT) of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in Mali since 2003.

Sène Gaoussou, who has a Master's degree in psycho-sociology, has been based in Zinder for the last three years and offers support for governmental, non-governmental and private-sector organisations in the fields of decentralisation and local governance. During a previous posting in Mali, he helped, on behalf of SNV and as an independent consultant, with the design of several support tools for local authorities and contributed to a number of publications.

Sylla Djoumé, a socio-economist by training, is currently local development adviser at the UNCDF regional office in Dakar. Previously in Mali, he was a programme manager at UNCDF, a director of the NGO 'Association d'Appui à l'Auto Développement Communautaire' (AADeC) and adviser to the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL).

Sylla Ibrahima, planner, manages a consultancy office in Mali specialising in administrative and financial management, evaluation, training of the actors of decentralisation and organisation of workshops. Previously, he coordinated a decentralisation support programme in southern Mali for Helvetas (Swiss Association for International Cooperation) for six years.

Tamini Jacques, agricultural engineer, is currently an adviser for Helvetas (Swiss Association for International Cooperation). Specialist of southern Mali, he is responsible for forging links between the actors of decentralisation and for supporting consistent development policies at municipal and local level. Previously, he was a research assistant and project manager for national bodies.

Tiénou Osé is an economist and has been working in local development for fifteen years in Mali. He runs a municipal advisory centre that provides advice and support for local governments. Previously, he was head of the monitoring and evaluation division of GTZ's project, Promotion of Local Initiatives (PRODILO), and has worked as a consultant for a number of organisations (the Micro-Development Programme of the Canadian International Development Agency and Plan International).

Toonen Jurrien is a doctor working for the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), in Amsterdam, coordinating a number of health-systems development projects and activities. These include institutional aspects, human resources, financing of health, monitoring and evaluation, and community participation. Since 1992, he has contributed to the development of the public-health sector in Mali, in particular when a national policy on human resources was being drawn up and the national health programme (PRODESS-I) was being evaluated.

Woltermann Silke, doctor of economic sciences, is responsible for the strands of local finance and support for the monitoring and evaluation structures of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) within the Decentralisation Support and Municipal Development Programme of German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in Benin. In this context, she is helping the Observatory of Social Change (OCS) to develop and use the SILP (Participatory Local Impact Monitoring Methodology).

ANNEX V: COUNTRY OVERVIEWS

OVERVIEW: BENIN

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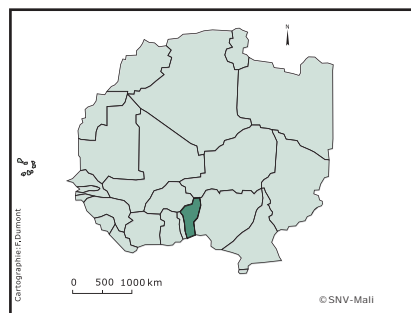
Decentralisation and local governance

As in the rest of West Africa, the first steps towards decentralisation date back to the colonial period and the *communes de plein exercice* (CPEs), i.e. municipalities with full rights[170], but financial and administrative decision-making powers continued to be vested in the authorities of the central state. From 1960 onwards, when there was national sovereignty, there was a certain willingness to break from the excessive centralism. It was however only relatively late that the decentralisation laws were actually applied, even though governments were fairly keen to break away from excessive centralism.

Shaped by Marxist-Leninist policies, the administrative divisions and the 1981 reform[171] based on democratic centralism did not enable decentralisation to make much progress. Although the State created provinces and districts, it kept control of them through the organs of the single party. However, new social and professional strata started to exercise power during this period, and local organisations were able to democratically appoint their representatives to power, from the village or city district to the Revolutionary National Assembly.

Democratic decentralisation

Starting in 1990, the National Conference opened up an era of democratic transition. The principle of administrative decentralisation as a system of territorial administration was adopted and included in the constitution.[172] The power of the executive was counter-balanced by a presidential-type system along with such institutions as the National Assembly, Constitutional Court, Supreme Court, etc. However, the draft decentralisation laws drawn up in 1993 were not enacted until January 1999[173] and March 2000.[174] Decentralisation policy was not really put into practice until the local and municipal elections of December 2002 and January 2003 and the legislative elections of March 2003, followed by the installation of municipal councils.

Local government and territorial administration

The aim of decentralisation is to make populations more responsible for managing their own local affairs, thereby consolidating grass-roots democracy and promoting sustainable development. The constitution enshrines the freedom of councils elected by universal suffrage to administer local governments and, in their turn, to elect the major and deputy mayors.[175] There is no provision within these councils for the representation of civil society or traditional leaders. Power can be exercised only by those who are democratically elected. The municipality has a legal personality and budgetary autonomy, but it is supervised by the 'préfet' (state representative at the level of departments), who has the right of prior scrutiny of the legality of the most important council measures and who can bring them in line with State measures.

170- *Law 55-1489 of 18 November 1955 on municipal reorganisation in French West Africa, covering the CPEs of Porto-Novo, Cotonou, Ouidah, Abomey and Parakou.*
171- *Law 81-009 of 10 October 1981.*
172- *Adopted on 11 December 1990.*
173- *Law 97-028 of 15 January 1999 organising the administration of the Republic of Benin; Law 97-029 of 15 January 1999 organising municipalities in the Republic of Benin; Law 98-005 of 15 January 1999 organising municipalities with special status and Law 98-007 of 15 January 1999 setting out a financial system for municipalities in the Republic of Benin.*
174- *Law 98-006 of 9 March 2000 setting out a local and municipal electoral system in the Republic of Benin.*
175- *Articles 150 and 151 of the Constitution.*

The fields in which competence is transferred to municipalities in decentralisation are economic development, planning, housing, town planning, infrastructure, equipment, transport, environment, hygiene, sanitation, nursery and primary education, literacy, adult education, health, social and cultural activities, commercial services and economic investment. Municipalities with special status are also responsible for general education, vocational training, transport and traffic, security and communications. The law also requires municipalities to take account of environmental issues in the context of local development.[176]

Administrative breakdown	Local government	Administrative division	Deliberating body	Executive body	Deconcentrated supervisory authority
12 departments[a]		X	Departmental Consultation and Coordination Committee	'Préfet'	
77 municipalities[b]	X		Municipal Council	Mayor	'Préfet'
546 districts ('arrondissements')		X	District Council	District Chief	
3,828 villages		X	Village Council	Village Chief	
neighbourhoods ('quartiers')		X	Neighbourhood Council	Neighbourhood Chief	

Source: MDP. 2004. Decentralisation in Africa. Observatory on Decentralisation. Cotonou: Municipal Development Partnership.
a. Administrative divisions without legal personality or financial autonomy (decentralised level).
b. Including three municipalities with special status replacing 'sous-préfectures' and urban circumscriptions (cities of Cotonou, Porto-Novo and Parakou).

Implementing administrative reform

In Benin, decentralisation is part and parcel of administrative reform and is steered by the Ministry of the Interior, Public Security and Local Government (MISPCL) with the assistance of three separate structures:

■ The *Mission de Décentralisation* (MD) (Decentralisation Mission)[177] has been in operation since June 1998. Answerable to the Ministry for Territorial Administration, it is a joint ministerial think-tank that makes proposals to the government on drafting the legislative and regulatory framework. These proposals have been translated into a law on local government (code des collectivités territoriales) and fed into reform policies and strategies. The MD has also designed administrative and technical working tools for the new local governments and steers joint ministerial action.

■ The *Maison des Collectivités Locales* (MCL), the Local Government Centre[178], has been in operation since December 1997. Set up to prepare the way for municipalities and to support their development, its main task is to enhance the management ability of municipalities through training, the development of decision-making aids and the steering of a municipal counselling and advisory network.

■ The *Direction Générale de l'Administration Territoriale* (DGAT) (Directorate General for Territorial Administration) is a permanent body of the MISPCL. Its traditional role is to draw up the State's general policy on territorial administration. It is now responsible for implementing the changes taking place within the central and decentralised administration. It has two technical directorates. The *Direction de l'Administration de l'État* (DAE), the State Administration Directorate, is responsible for questions relating to decentralisation and territorial administration and is also responsible for municipal supervision. The *Direction des Collectivités Locales* (DCL), the Local Government Directorate, works directly with municipalities and is responsible for questions relating to decentralised cooperation, local finance and transfers of powers to municipalities.

176- Framework Law 98-030 of 12 February 1999 on the environment in the Republic of Benin.
177- Created by Decree 97-254 of 23 May 1997.
178- Public administrative establishment created by Decree 97-272 of 9 June 1997.

All these bodies meet regularly within the *Cellule de Concertation et du Suivi de la Réforme de l'Administration Territoriale* (CCSRAT), the Territorial Administration Reform Consultation and Monitoring Unit, chaired by the head of cabinet of the MISPCL.

Achievements and challenges of decentralisation

Municipalities have had a long period of gestation as a result of the long-winded procedure to adopt the legal texts and to organise elections. With the transition from a system without local government to a system of 77 municipalities, the main issues raised by decentralisation include the following: how the sharing of power and resources between the State and the other public actors, including local governments, can be politically managed, and how the resulting administrative and financial management can be organised. As the State is the key actor in decentralisation, municipal development depends on its support.

The creation and continued work of the MCL as a 'supporter' and the MD as a 'spearhead' of decentralisation is a major asset for the process and for the new political entities at the local level. This holds also true for the *Association Nationale des Communes du Bénin* (ANCB), the National Association of Benin Municipalities, which represents the interests of the municipalities. Donors are also continuing to give priority to supporting the decentralisation process, which will undoubtedly help to achieve one of the government's four development goals: 'improving governance and supporting institutional reform'.

The existence of a legislative and regulatory framework forms a solid foundation for the whole process. New decrees are to be drawn up so that any changes in the context can be taken into account. The regulatory arsenal is to be supplemented on important issues such as inter-municipal arrangements, the local development tax, the municipal investment fund, etc.

The transfer of competencies of the central state to the municipalities and the modalities for this transfer are clearly set out in the provisions of the decentralisation laws. The powers of the new local governments are clearly defined in each particular field: own, shared, or delegated powers. It remains to be seen whether the pace of growth of municipal powers is adequate, especially in a context in which municipalities are not very stable, because they can easily become insolvent and mayors are unable to resolve internal conflicts.

Training the members of the new municipal authorities is a real challenge because human and technical capacity is lacking in most municipalities, which are finding it difficult to discharge their statutory powers and carry out their local development tasks. The sub-municipal level is not functioning satisfactorily, either, especially the district councils, which have yet to come into operation because the democratic elections of village or district councils have not been held.

Meeting twice a year, the *Conseil Départemental de Concertation et de Coordination* (CDCC) (Departmental Consultation and Coordination Council) supports consultation between the 'préfet' (as the supervisory authority), mayors and their deputies and representatives of the union of producers, the consular chamber and the federation of parents' associations at the departmental level. Consultation of the CDCC on the municipal development programmes and their coherence with national programmes is mandatory.

'Préfets' have the task of scrutinising the legality of measures taken by municipal bodies. A legality monitoring committee, made up of the 'préfet's' technical departments and deconcentrated services, studies measures taken by municipalities and submitted for approval by the 'préfet'. Although new staff have been appointed to 'préfets' to help them with assistance and advice for municipalities, problems have arisen because there is little coordination of the municipal assistance provided by decentralised State services and there are not enough appropriately skilled staff.

The *Conférence Administrative Départementale* (CAD) (Departmental Administrative Conference), a body proposing, standardising and monitoring the work and activities of decentralised State services at the departmental level, meets once a

month. Its members are the 'préfet', the Secretary General and the heads of decentralised technical services of the State (*services déconcentrés*) State companies and offices.

From the point of view of both their own resources and those transferred from the State, the resources of the municipalities are inadequate. The *Commission Nationale des Finances Locales* (CONAFIL) (National Local Finance Commission) is responsible for proposing the amount of overall operating packages, equalisation payments, compensation payments and assistance funds to the Minister. It has been set up but is not yet operational. The law setting out a financial system for municipalities provides for the creation of an inter-municipal solidarity fund, which could provide the government with an overall investment package, but this has yet to be set up.

Another challenge that needs to be taken up is the involvement of civil society as a municipal partner. The democratisation of society has fostered the gradual emergence of civil organisations, which are increasingly being asked to help with devising and implementing the general lines of development policy. There are mechanisms for dialogue in the context of national development, such as the Economic and Social Council (a body representing all components of society) or Parliament (representing the people), but civil society needs to organise if it is to show the extent of its commitment to the process that is underway.

The context in which decentralisation is taking place seems to have improved markedly since the last presidential elections in March 2006. This can be seen from several statements by the Head of State. In his view, the acceleration of the transfer of powers, institutional support for new municipalities, the genuine functioning of political and administrative bodies at village and city level, the promotion of inter-municipal systems and the establishment of the inter-municipal solidarity fund offer a measure of the improvement in administrative decentralisation. He has also said that 'the third main strand of the Government's development policy is grass-roots development, one of whose management tools is decentralisation. The Government, together with municipalities, undertakes to speed up, organise and support local development in order to create regional development poles. The State will encourage neighbouring municipalities to work together on joint socio-cultural, economic or ecological criteria to bring about shared areas of development in a context of intermunicipal work.[179]

Even though there are still some problems from an administrative point of view, opportunities exist for municipalities, as they are responsible for local development. The various actors will have to grasp these promising opportunities if progress is to be made with decentralisation in genuine partnership with the State. A move towards more collaborative forms of governance has been the recent creation of a High Commission for Concerted Governance (Haut Commissariat à la Gouvernance Concertée - HCGC). This new institution aims "to bring the government and the population closer together and deepen democracy and good governance in Benin"[180].

179- *Speech given by the Head of State on 31 July, 2006, at the occasion of the 46th anniversary of independence of Benin.*
180- *cf. Council of Ministers of 04/12/2007, Decision N°26/PR/SGG/Com/Extra on the endorsement of a decree establishing the HCGC.*
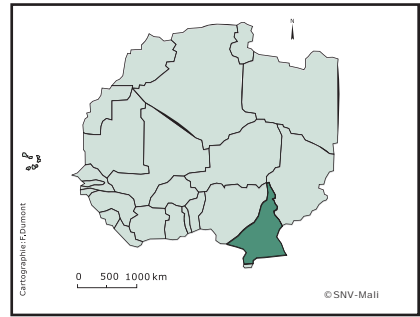
Decentralisation and local governance

Although the systems of decentralisation that they introduced differed, the French and British administrations launched the first experiments with municipalities in Cameroon. The French authorities started down the path of 'municipalisation' in 1941, leading to 71 mixed urban municipalities and mixed rural municipalities in 1955. A different kind of 'municipalisation', in the form of 'native authorities', took place in parallel in western Cameroon. Starting in 1932, 'local governments' started to take shape. There were 30 such councils in 1967.

Local government and territorial administration

The 1974 reform[181] ended this municipal dualism by establishing two types of municipality: urban municipalities (some of which are subject to special rules) and rural municipalities. The executive functions of urban municipalities are the task of a mayor elected from within the municipal council and of an authority appointed by the government in the case of special-status urban municipalities and rural municipalities. The number of municipalities is continuing to grow: from 174 in 1977 to 362 at present.

A 1987 law[182] created a new kind of urban community to cover the major conurbations of Douala and Yaoundé. Subdivided into urban boroughs, these communities are administered by a community council made up of elected members from the councils of the boroughs. The executive is appointed by the supervisory authority. In 1992 a law[183] established that mayors of rural municipalities were to be elected.

In 1996, with the reform of the constitution,[184] decentralisation moved into a new stage with the conversion of the provinces into regions. A senate was also created to ensure the parliamentary representation of local governments. These reforms have yet to come into force.

The decentralised authorities that have financial autonomy and status as legal entities are the region and the municipality. The 10 regions cover the area of the former provinces. Each has a regional council with a chairman. Regional councillors are either representatives of the divisions elected by indirect universal suffrage or representatives of traditional leaders elected by their peers, and have a term of office of five years. Municipalities are administered by municipal councils elected by direct universal suffrage. A mayor is then elected from the council.

The supervisory system in force in Cameroon is that of 'prior scrutiny'. This power is vested in the minister responsible for territorial administration and, under his supervision, in the *'gouverneurs'* (governors) and *'préfets'* (divisional officers). The supervisory authorities have a power of sanction and scrutiny over municipal organs and their actions and can approve, cancel, replace, suspend and revoke them.

181- *Law 74-23 of 23 December 1974 on municipal organisation.*
182- *Law 87-015 of 15 July 1987 creating urban communities.*
183- *Law 92-002 of 14 August 1992 setting out conditions for the election of municipal councillors.*
184- *Law 96-6 of 18 January 1996 revising the Constitution of 2 June 1972.*

Territorial division		Local government	Administrative Division	Deliberating body	Executive body	Deconcentrated supervisory authority
Name	No					
Region[a]	10	x		Regional Council	Chairman	'Gouverneur' (Governor)
Division	58		x			'Préfét'
Urban community	12	x		Community Council	Government delegate[185]	'Gouverneur'
Sub-division	268		x			'Sous-préfét'
Municipality	362	x		Municipal Council	Mayor	'Prefet'
District	58		x			District Head

Source: MDP. 2004. Decentralisation in Africa. Observatory on Decentralisation. Cotonou: Municipal Development Partnership, data updated by SNV-Cameroon.
a. Not as yet implemented. The provinces are continuing to function as administrative divisions.

Decentralisation and local representation

Under the Constitutional Law of 18 January 1996, Cameroon became a decentralised unitary state. The elected councils (composed of councillors elected by direct universal suffrage, representatives of traditional chiefs and parliamentarians elected at regional level) can freely administer local governments under the conditions laid down by the law. Cameroon is endeavouring to reconcile democratic legitimacy with historic legitimacy and to resolve the federalist challenge from the English-speaking area.

Achievements and challenges of decentralisation

The first three laws[186] setting out the general decentralisation policy and the rules applicable to regions and municipalities were adopted in July 2004, but their implementing orders have yet to be enacted.

Properly speaking, there has not as yet been any transfer of competencies and resources from the State to local government, especially to municipalities. In the meantime, municipalities have general competence over local matters through the municipal council, which decides on municipal affairs. It has *prerogatives* in the fields of planning, town planning, development, culture, sports and leisure. Its other prerogatives relate to the internal functioning of the municipal administration. These competencies are more prerogatives of the municipal council than municipal competencies, per se.

The large number of municipalities created by the government raises acute problems of viability since problems are rife. Municipalities do not have a tangible existence (as they lack premises, equipment, staff, etc.) and do not have sufficient capacity to draw up municipal development policy (municipal development plans, for instance).

The lack of any proper status for local government officers is an ongoing problem. Little progress has been made in the last few years with a draft decree that has been on the drawing board since 1974. However, today, in 2008, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation (MINATD) considers the creation of a civil service for local government a priority. In the meantime, local government officers are governed by the provisions applying to state public servants. This situation does little to make the management of staff more rational because profiles and clear–cut prerogatives are often lacking. In many cases, this is exacerbated by shortages of occupational skills, shortages that are widespread except in a few

185- At the time of writing, not all the Government delegates in urban communities had yet been appointed.
186- Laws 2004/017, 2004/018 and 2004/019 of 22 July 2004.

urban municipalities. However, the lack of administrative competence raises more problems than shortages of technical competence.

To help remedy the skills deficit in local government, the State has seconded some national civil servants, who often perform the tasks of municipal secretary general or accountant by order of the supervisory authority. However, the hierarchical links that they continue to have with their original department do little to promote municipal autonomy.

Municipal investment falls well short of needs. There are two forms of local taxation: own taxation and taxation shared with the State. While this is the main source of municipal revenue, it is far from optimum. Reforms are underway, particularly the creation of a tax register, but tangible results are slow in coming. There is no functional overall system of subsidies from the State to municipalities, only a system of cross subsidisation between municipalities, the 'Centime Additionnel Communal'. Municipalities have a relatively high capacity for saving (especially rural municipalities). This helps to cover payments and contributions to the 'Fonds Spécial d'Équipement et d'Intervention Intercommunale' (FEICOM), the Special Fund for Intermunicipal Equipment and Action.[187] This fund provides for a kind of solidarity between municipalities and acts as a municipal bank. However it is subject to increasing criticism due to constant problems of mismanagement. There are also a number of national programmes that indirectly promote local development. Examples are the National Programme for Participatory Development and the Programme in Support of the Development of Local Communities. Moreover, the State provides its deconcentrated entities with investment budgets, however, mismanagement of funds is also a recurrent problem that limits the impact of these national funds.

In practice, there are various limits of both an economic nature (municipalities are finding it difficult to finance the tasks for which they are responsible) and a political one (some opposition mayors have been replaced by government delegates). Many challenges will have to be met if regions and municipalities are to become areas whose development is well thought-out, implemented and evaluated and in which democratic practices are the norm. There is, moreover, a potential risk that the implementation of regional decentralisation may aggravate some existing problems (for instance the federalist demands).

In October 2006, a new direction was taken in the decentralisation process. A consultation committee, answerable to the MINATD, was set up. Including the three main types of actors involved in decentralisation (ministerial departments, and national and international entities), this committee should provide a functional framework within which the development partners' actions, projects and support programmes can be better coordinated and harmonised. With a view to greater efficiency and, in the long term, joint planning and pooled financing, this committee monitors and evaluates activities, ensures that information is circulated, and draws up proposals for action by the bodies involved. In 2008, this committee is also preparing to set up a national decentralisation council under the presidency of the Prime Minister (and the joint ministerial committee on local services. As provided for in the law on decentralisation policy, this national decentralisation council and the joint ministerial committee on local services look after the evaluation and the implementation of the decentralisation process. This includes the devolution of competencies and resources from the State to local government. Moreover several reforms are under way.

187- *Decree 77-85 of 22 March 1977 setting out operating and management methods for the FEICOM, as amended by Decree 96-098 of 7 May 1996.*

OVERVIEW: GHANA

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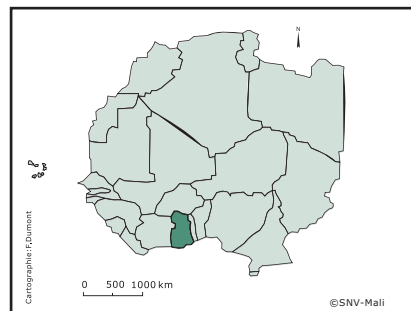
Decentralisation and local governance

The initial steps towards decentralisation in Ghana date back to the colonial period. At that time, local governments, administered by traditional chiefs, had customary law, political, administrative and legislative functions. Their co-existence with local representatives of the central government nevertheless raised problems, as did the hierarchical relations between them. Since 1950, various constitutional reforms have installed democratically elected local governments that have gradually eroded the power of the traditional chiefs.

Democratic decentralisation

These constitutional reforms have been followed by new efforts to strengthen local governments in the context of the democratisation of Ghana's political system. The adoption of a decentralisation policy by the State was reflected in 1988 by the Local Government Law,[188] which paved the way for establishing the various councils (district, urban, municipal). The 4th Constitution of the Republic in 1992 and the Local Government Act of 1993 laid the foundations for democratic decentralisation.

This reform was intended to enhance the competence, resources and capacity of local governments and to involve all citizens at a grass-roots level in governance and the development process. The first local elections were held in 1993 and were followed by further elections in 1997, 2002 and 2006.

Local government and territorial administration

There is only one level of decentralised government: the district. There are at present 138 districts. Their deliberating and legislative bodies are known as *assemblies* and are referred to as district, municipal or metropolitan assemblies, depending on the number of inhabitants and their urban or rural nature.[189] The districts are also divided into units to which powers may be transferred: *sub-districts* in rural areas and *zones* in urban areas. These bodies have councils but do not have any legislative or financial powers.

The local governance system is a compromise between direct and representative democracy: 70% of the members of district assemblies are elected by the population and 30% are appointed by the President of the Republic, in consultation with district chiefs and other local interest groups, on the basis of their competence. Half of the seats allocated to appointed members are reserved for women and 30% for traditional leaders. Women's representation in district assemblies nevertheless continues to be low (under 10%).

The district assemblies are chaired by district chief executives appointed by the President. They have two roles: to run the district in line with the decisions of the assembly and to represent central government in the assembly. The district assembly has a Presiding Member elected by the assembly. They may call upon officers seconded by the public service, such as a head of technical services ('District Coordinating Director'), a treasurer, a planning officer and a local government inspector.

188- *Local Government Law, PNDC Law 207.*
189- *District assemblies have a population of at least 75,000 inhabitants; municipal assemblies have a population of 95,000 to 250,000; metropolitan assemblies for large conurbations of more than 250,000 inhabitants (such as the capital Accra, Kumasi and Shama Ashanta East).*

Competence of the 138 districts within the 10 regions

Under the Constitution, districts have basic competence in various fields, such as civil records, brush-fire prevention and control, levying of local taxes and duties, and planning and mobilising resources for local development. The 1993 Local Government Act transferred a range of other competencies to the districts in the following areas:

- planning and promoting local development;
- promoting employment;
- supporting production activities;
- promoting protection of habitat and the environment;
- developing infrastructure;
- upholding law and order;
- promoting justice.

The law also requires district assemblies to implement the national development plan in their area, to supervise projects and programmes and to encourage all the actors to play their part in development plans and their implementation.

Above the districts, there are 10 regions, each of which is chaired by a regional minister appointed by the President, following Parliament's assent. Each region has a regional coordinating council chaired by the regional minister and including his deputies, the presiding members of the district assemblies, the district chief executives, the heads of decentralised ministerial departments in the region and traditional leaders.

Table 1: Local Governments and Territorial Administration

Territorial body	Type	Management organs
Region (10)	Administrative division	The Regional Ministry: runs State services and chairs the regional coordinating council
District (138)	Local government	The Assembly (district -124- municipal -10- or metropolitan -4-), the deliberating body: elects an executive committee from its ranks, which has administrative and executive competence for the Assembly. A district chief executive appointed for a term of two years coordinates the executive.
Sub- district	Administrative division District sub-division	Consultative bodies without their own budget, some of whose members are appointed, which carry out the tasks delegated to them by the district assembly: Sub-metropolitan councils Urban councils Zonal councils Municipal councils

Source: MDP. 2004. Decentralisation in Africa. Observatory on Decentralisation.
Cotonou: Municipal Development Partnership.

Achievements and challenges of decentralisation

The adoption of new laws and the enhanced statutory competence of districts have helped them to become a consolidated part of local government in the Ghanaian political system. However, some challenges remain.

The 2003 law setting out local government services provided the necessary legal framework, but implementation has proved more complicated than expected and technical expertise is often lacking. In the field, moreover, rivalry between sectors is substantially hampering the process.

The creation of local government services has taken place along with the creation of decentralised services for education, health and forests. These are important service providers for a large proportion of the population, but they are coming up against problems of local integration.

The capacity building that has accompanied decentralisation has largely taken the form of projects and programmes financed by donors. Although this has made it possible to carry out many activities in a short space of time, these endeavours need to be coordinated and made more complementary.

Recruiting and, more fundamentally, keeping skilled staff, especially in districts, is an acute problem. Rural districts, which lack appropriate infrastructure and basic services, have few attractions for skilled staff. Frequent turnover means that institutional memory is lost and leads to inconsistent operation. Ongoing efforts to build local governance capacity are needed here as well.

In the case of fiscal decentralisation, reasonable financial packages (bearing in mind existing capacity at the district level) have been provided for local governments. The national budget continues, however, to be drawn up for sectors. If there is no capacity to mobilise major local resources, the budget packages of a district's sectors continue to depend on national bodies.

While the districts appear to be appropriate structures for identifying local needs, local communities still feel that these management and decision-making structures are too remote. The creation of the sub-districts could enhance democracy and promote citizen participation in local governance. However, their role continues to be rather low-level, as they lack competence, financial and human resources, and legitimacy.

OVERVIEW: MALI

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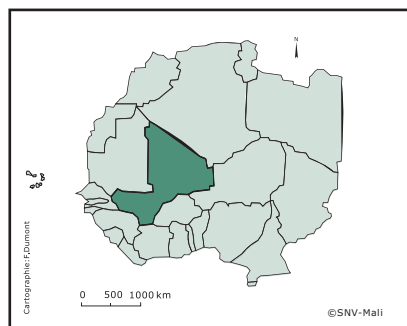
Decentralisation and local governance

The long journey towards decentralisation in Mali started in the colonial period. Mixed municipalities were created in 1918, at the end of the First World War, following territorial and administrative reorganisation in France.[190] This status gave them legal personality and the prerogatives of a fully functioning municipality. Mayoral duties continued, however, to be the task of an official from the colonial administration, assisted by a municipal council whose members were either appointed by the colonial administration or elected, depending on the level of development of the municipality. These municipalities gained full rights in 1955,[191] after which their executive and decision-making organs were elected.

At the time of independence in 1960, Mali had 13 urban municipalities in addition to its capital. Under the 2nd Republic (1968-1991), the creation of the six urban municipalities of the District of Bamako increased the number to 19. It was under the 3rd Republic, however, that the ideals of peace, democracy and development led to unprecedented levels of decentralisation.

Democratic decentralisation

Although the successive constitutions of the various Republics all affirmed decentralisation as a principle, the constitution of the 3rd Republic (enacted on 25 February 1992) made it a priority "as a fundamental reform to ensure progress and economic development, regional balance and social equity". Six guiding principles translated this priority into more concrete terms: safeguarding national unity and territorial integrity, involving the populace in the creation of municipalities, democratic management of local government, control of regional and local development by local government, progressive and concomitant transfers of powers and resources, and the freedom of local government administration.

The legal framework of decentralisation, enacted in 1993,[192] established the principle of the three levels of decentralisation (regions, 'cercles' and municipalities) and recognised that elected councils should be free to administer local government. In 1996,[193] the law setting out principles for the establishment and management of local government created rural municipalities in areas not covered by urban municipalities, in accordance with socio-cultural, demographic and geographic criteria as well as criteria of distance, accessibility and economic viability. The populations of villages and fractions of nomadic tribes were given the freedom to decide whether or not to become part of these municipalities. At present, there are 703 municipalities (684 rural municipalities and 19 urban municipalities), for which councils have been democratically elected on two occasions (1999 and 2004) for a term of five years. In 1999, administrative and territorial reorganisation was confirmed by a law[194] creating local authorities, 'cercles' and regions.

190- *General Order of 20 December 1918: mixed municipalities of Bamako and Kayes in 1919, Ségou and Mopti in 1953 and Sikasso in 1954.*

191- *Law 55-1489 of 18 November 1955 on municipal reorganisation in French West Africa.*

192- *Law 93-008 of 11 February 1993, setting out conditions for the freedom of administration of local government, amended by Law 96-056 of 16 October 1996.*

193- *Law 96-050 of 16 October 1996, setting out principles for the constitution and management of local government, and Law 96-059 of 4 November 1996, creating municipalities.*

194- *Law 99-035 of 10 April 1999.*

Local authorities and territorial administration

After municipal elections had been held, the transfer of powers from the state to the new local authorities was begun. Local elected officers were given responsibility for local development. Local government organs are responsible for providing the conditions likely to encourage basic initiatives and for ensuring equitable access to local services and resources.

Table 1: Diagram of Decentralisation

	Municipality (703)	'Cercle' (49)	Region (8)[a]
Composition	• villages, and fractions of nomadic tribes in the case of rural municipalities • neighbourhoods in the case of urban municipalities	• urban and rural municipalities	• 'cercles'
Organs	• municipal council elected by proportional representation by the municipality's citizens • municipal executive and mayor elected by the members of the municipal council (chaired by the mayor)	• 'cercle' council composed of municipal representatives elected by and from within municipal councils • 'cercle' council executive composed of a chairman and two vice-chairmen elected by the 'cercle' council	• regional assembly composed of 'cercle' representatives elected by and from within 'cercle' councils • regional executive composed of a chairman and two vice-chairmen elected by the regional assembly
Supervision	• state representative at 'cercle' level	• state representative at regional level	• minister responsible for local government
General powers[b]	• budgets and accounts: town and country planning, development programmes • creation and management of local government organs, works and supply contracts, leases and other agreements, levying of taxes and setting of their levels in accordance with the law • loans and grants of subsidies, methods of application of personnel service regulations, etc.		
Specific powers[b]	• pre-school education, literacy • 1st cycle of basic education • dispensaries, maternity and community health facilities • road and communication infrastructure for which municipalities are responsible • public transport and traffic plans • fairs and markets • rural or urban waterworks • sport, arts and culture	• 2nd cycle of basic education • health and preventive health centres • road and communication infrastructure for which 'cercles' are responsible • waterworks	• general, technical and vocational secondary education • specialist education • regional hospitals • road and communication infrastructure for which regions are responsible • tourism • energy • ensuring that development and town and country planning strategies are consistent

Source: Observatory of Sustainable Human Development and Poverty Reduction (ODHD) / United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2003. Country Report. Bamako: Ministry of Social Development, Solidarity and Older People (MDSSPA).
a. Alongside the eight regions, the District of Bamako has particular status in accordance with Law 96-025 of 21 February 1996.
b. According to Law 95-034 of 12 March 1995, establishing a local government code in the Republic of Mali, as amended by Law 98-010 of 15 June 1998 and Law 98-066 of 30 December 1998.

Introduction of the reform

The roles of all the actors[195] have had to be clarified as a result of decentralisation. At the same time, the State has had to be reformed to bring its institutions and sector policies in line with the new context and to organise the tasks of sector services within a process of devolution. While the state apparatus has focused on its conventional functions (finance, expenditure, police, foreign affairs), cooperation has been organised between devolved authorities (technical services, for instance) and decentralised authorities (such as municipalities).

The National Support Programme for Local Government (PNACT), steered by the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL[196]), was introduced in 2000. It was supported by the technical and financial partners (TFPs), which pooled their resources to enable the whole country to be covered by a single system. The financial side, formed by a local authority investment fund (FICT), is managed by the National Agency for Local Government Investment (ANICT) and is used for financing local government investment. The technical side, geared towards helping local government to take control of its own affairs, has been implemented via the municipal advisory centres (CCCs) at 'cercle' level and coordinated by the National Coordination Unit (CCN), which answers to the DNCT and is supervised by a national policy committee (CNO).

In parallel, implementation of an institutional development programme (PDI), which was drawn up by the Ministry of the Public Service, State Reform and Institutional Relations (MFPRERI) and adopted by the Government on 16 July 2003, has been ongoing since 2005. This will pave the way for administrative as well as political democracy. All state and public components have been reviewed in regard to enhancing governance through stable, permanent and credible administrative structures, against a backdrop of sustainable development. The PDI has five main principles: reorganising central government through methods and procedures for managing public affairs, stepping up devolution, consolidating decentralisation, upgrading and enhancing human resource capacity, and com-munication and relations with users.

All these policy decisions are also part and parcel of a global strategy for poverty reduction[197] whose main priority is to "ensure institutional development, improved governance and participation".

Achievements and challenges of decentralisation

There is a wide range of actors very closely involved in the success of the reforms that are taking place over the long term, as summarised in the National Decentralisation Policy Reference Document (DCPND) 2005-2014. This reference and policy framework for decentralisation and devolution provides a shared platform for the work of the government and its bilateral and multilateral partners, as well as the work of the government and its national partners (local authorities, civil organisations, the private sector, etc.). Its aim is to prevent inconsistencies between decentralisation and sector policies, between the decentralisation process and other reforms of the state and between development programmes in general. It also aims to provide a framework making it possible to regularly monitor and evaluate how decentralisation is being implemented, using clear, shared objectives and indicators.

In February 2005, the "decentralisation round table" provided an opportunity for the government and the TFPs to evaluate what stage the process had reached, to look at achievements and to assess the joint efforts to be made in order to achieve the updated objectives.

At present, the main **achievements** of the reform are the following:
- from a legal point of view, the adoption and application of the basic laws on decentralisation; the adoption of the decrees on transfers of power in the fields of education, health and water; the adoption of the laws on local government public service and syndicates of municipalities; and the review of local government code;
- from an institutional point of view, the introduction of municipalities; the inauguration of the Higher Local Government Council[198] (HCC) and the growing involvement of the Association of

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195- New actors are appearing on the political scene, including economic actors set up as a result of privatisation.

196- Since February 2000, the MATCL, via its National Directorate for Local Government (DNCT), has taken over from the Decentralisation and Institutional Reform Mission (MDRI), which (since 1993) had been responsible for drawing up the legislative and institutional system needed to implement decentralisation.

197- Government of Mali. 2002. Final Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

198- The last institution set up in 2005 in accordance with Article 25 of the Constitution, providing national representation for local authorities. It is required to give an opinion on all questions concerning local and regional development policy, protection of the environment and improvement of the quality of life of citizens within local authorities.

Malian Municipalities[199] (AMM) and the Association of Malian 'Cercle' and Regional Authorities[200] (ACCRM) in decision making;

■ the functioning of the national technical and financial support system set out in the PNACT through which local government can obtain budgeted investment resources, offering a framework for effective and pertinent harmonisation, which is gaining the support of a growing number of TFPs;

■ implementation of the PDI's operational plan (2005-2007);

■ the high turnout and improved representation of women in the municipal elections held in 2004, bearing witness to the growing involvement of citizens in the management of public affairs, the credibility that the post of local elected officer has now gained, and a national awareness of local issues in the areas of social, economic and cultural development;

■ the existence of the DCPND to which the state is committed at the highest possible level and which is a tool for dialogue between actors, offering a reference framework for steering implementation of the reform.

The main **challenges** to be faced include:
■ a lack of economic and financial viability on the part of local government as a result of the lack of both internal and external resources;

■ ongoing delays in the transfer of powers, assets and financial and human resources to local government;

■ a lack of effective devolution that would enable state services to assist local authorities in efficiently steering municipal, local and regional development, together with the private sector;

■ delays in the Joint Services' (SECOM) take-over of the CCCs (the cornerstone of the technical support system and permanent structures to be managed by local authorities);

■ the fact that implementing procedures for the various financial channels are not consistent or complementary (between sector programmes and the FICT, for instance), with sector planning taking no account of local authority planning;

■ inadequate monitoring of the impact on actual practice of the many initiatives to build the capacity of the actors involved in decentralisation (elected officers and local authority workers, supervisory services, devolved technical services, civil society, etc.), even though there are tools for monitoring and evaluating performance that could be systematically used;

■ a lack of articulation between regional and local development throughout the planning, basic data collection and analysis, and evaluation stages, which is hampering cooperation between municipalities as well as some decision-making and follow-up action;

■ a low level of support for and participation in the process by citizens, as they have not been made aware of the benefits of decentralisation, particularly through civic education and communication schemes and improved access to information;

■ shortcomings of the steering system accompanying decentralisation: new forums for consultation bringing together all the actors of decentralisation—ministries, HCC, Commissariat for Institutional Development[201] (CDI), ANICT, organisations of elected officers, civil society—and a joint ministerial committee to steer reforms need to be set up in order to take up the various challenges and to draw up a clear strategy for a gradual shift away from the PNACT prior to its expiration in 2010.

There have been some shortcomings in the areas of planning, coordination and monitoring of decentralisation during the first few years of implementation of the system. This is the main challenge for the State, which is keen to refocus its tasks on the design of public policies, steering, control and evaluation and to improve its efficiency and performance. The CCN has already been given the task of becoming more involved in monitoring the impact of the system from the point of view of the development of local government capacity, particularly by analysing data from the OISE database.[202] Studies have been conducted in order to set up an observatory of decentralisation, for which most of the data could, in theory, come from databases already being run by the various actors involved in the decentralisation process.

199- The AMM was set up on 22 November 2000, following the first national day for municipalities. It replaced the Association of Malian Mayors, which had existed since 1993 and was formed by the 19 former urban municipalities.

200- The ACCRM was set up on 21 October 2001 and is about to merge with the AMM.

201- Set up by Order 01-022/P-RM of 20 March 2001 and organised by Decree 01-374/P-RM of 21 August 2001, the CDI is the starting point for drafting the PDI. In particular, its brief is to analyse the institutional changes brought about by the democratisation process, to encourage and/or assist any institutional reform likely to help the process, to draw up reform measures likely to strengthen the institutional and organisational capacities of the state and local government and ensure that their implementation is monitored, and to provide support for implementing devolution and decentralisation policy.

202- Computerised monitoring/evaluation tool: a database receiving data from the CCCs.

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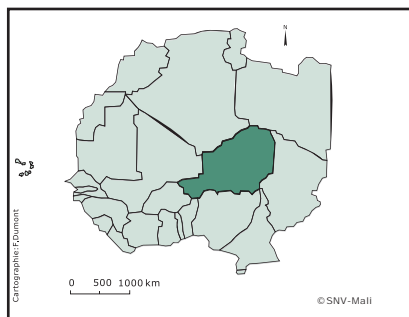
Decentralisation and local governance

The first steps towards decentralisation in Niger were taken during the colonial period. A 1957 decree, gave territorial chiefs the power to set up rural communities as legal entities and financial independence. After independence in 1960, decentralisation made very slow progress even though a law organising local government was enacted.[203] Apart from the municipality of Niamey,[204] only two further municipalities, Zinder and Maradi, were created in 1961. In 1964,[205] new administrative divisions were created: the *départements* (departments), *arrondissements* (districts) and *communes* (municipalities). The *arrondissements* and municipalities were given local government status. Deliberating bodies were set up with elected municipal councillors in the case of municipal councils and deputies in the case of district councils.

The 1974 coup d'état put decentralisation on the back burner. The councils, executive and deliberating bodies were dissolved and replaced by consultative commissions,[206] which were themselves replaced in 1983 by village, district, department and national development companies.[207]

It was only at the beginning of the 1990s, during a period of democratisation[208] and national dialogue,[209] that there were genuine moves towards decentralisation. Under a new administrative decentralisation law in 1994,[210] districts and municipalities retained their local government status and new districts and municipalities could be created. The main lines of the new decentralisation policy were maintained after 1996, despite a coup d'état, but their implementation was delayed. It was only in July 2004, after the constitutional referendum of 1999 and two presidential terms (1999 and 2004), that municipal elections, which had been postponed on a number of occasions, actually took place, bringing decentralisation into being.

Local government and territorial administration

Up to 1964, Niger's administrative divisions were administered by representatives appointed by the State. Following the adoption of two decentralisation laws,[211] changes were brought about through the endeavours of a special commission — in conjunction with the *Haut Commissariat à la Réforme Administrative et à la Décentralisation* (High Commissariat for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation) — to redefine the country's administrative divisions. The municipality (urban or rural) is the basic level of local government. The department is the intermediate level between the municipality and the region. All local governments are administered by a tripartite council, with officers elected directly by universal suffrage (who then elect an executive within the council), parliamentarians elected by the community (who are ex-officio members but do not have voting rights) and traditional leaders.

203- *Law 61-50 of 31 December 1961, organising local government.*
204- *Under Law 55-1489 of 18 November 1955, the city of Niamey became a fully independent municipality.*
205- *Law 64-023 of 17 July 1964, creating administrative divisions and local government.*
206- *Decree 74-20/PCMS/MI of 13 August 1974, organising provisional participation by the people in the management of public affairs while awaiting the re-election of councils.*
207- *Order 83-26 of 4 August 1983, organising the development company.*
208- *A new constitution, establishing a pluralist democracy, was approved by referendum on 26 December 1992.*
209- *The national conference, held from 29 July to 3 November 1991, addressed multi-party issues and the claim for independence for the north of the country.*
210- *Law 94-028 of 21 October 1994, laying down basic principles for the freedom of administration of districts and municipalities and their prerogatives and resources.*
211- *Law 96-05 of 6 February 1996, creating administrative divisions and local government, and Law 96-06 of 6 February 1996, laying down basic principles for the freedom of administration of regions, departments and municipalities and their prerogatives and resources.*

Administrative breakdown[212]	Local government	Administrative division	Deliberating body	Executive body	Decentralised supervisory authority
7 regions[a]	X	X	Regional Council	Chairman of the Council	Governor
Urban Community of Niamey (considered as a region)[b]	X	X	Urban Community Council	Chairman of the Council	Governor
Other urban communities (Zinder, Maradi, Tahoua)	X	X	Urban Community Council	Chairman of the Council	Governor
36 departments[c]	X	X	Department Council	Chairman of the Council	'Préfét'
155 districts (arrondissements)		X			'Sous-Préfet'
265 municipalities: 213 rural and 52 urban municipalities	X	X	Municipal council	Mayor	Mayor

Source: MDP. 2004. Decentralisation in Africa. Observatory on Decentralisation. Cotonou: Municipal Development Partnership.
a. Law 98-31 of 14 September 1998 established seven regions and determined their boundaries and the name of their capitals. Law 2002-012 of 11 June 2002 laid down basic principles for the freedom of administration of regions, departments and municipalities.
b. Law 98-33 of 14 September 1998, establishing the Urban Community of Niamey, on par with a region, whose territory is formed by the territories of the three municipalities of Niamey, called Niamey I, II and III; as amended by Law 2002-015 of 11 June 2002, creating the Urban Community of Niamey.
c. Law 98-30 of 14 September 1998, creating 36 departments and setting their boundaries and the names of their capitals.
d. Law 2002-14 of 11 June 2002, creating municipalities and determining the names of their capitals.
Implementing administrative reforms

Implementing administrative reforms

The key aim of decentralisation is to bring administration closer to those being administered and to ensure that decisions are taken as close as possible to their points of implementation, while making local actors more responsible. Mayors now have to work under the dual scrutiny of electors and the State, whose scrutiny is retrospective.

In February 2005, the management and executive bodies of local governments were established. Getting them up and running has now become a priority because the municipal councils of the 265 municipalities are responsible for meeting the basic needs of citizens in a way that also addresses poverty in line with the national poverty reduction programme launched in 1999 by the government. This means that they will have to manage a number of competencies that the central state has conferred on them.

Although there are differences between urban and rural communities, these competencies are largely to do with the main concerns of the population: primary health; nursery and primary education; roads and highways; social, health and sanitation infrastructure; civil records; censuses; municipal police, etc.

Achievements and challenges of decentralisation

The Constitution states that 'territorial administration shall be based on the principles of decentralisation and deconcentration. […] The law shall determine the basic principles for the freedom of administration of local governments and their competences and resources.'[213]

Municipalities are starting to function throughout the country through their municipal councils, which are the genuine nerve centres of deliberation and decision-making. Deliberating

212- Law 2001-023 of 10 August 2001, creating administrative divisions and local government.
213- Constitution of the Niger, 18 July 1999, Article 127.

and executive bodies have been set up and municipal meetings are held regularly in line with the principles laid down by law. Municipal councils have executed the municipal budgets, and some development activities are underway.

Even though full 'municipalisation'[214] has been chosen, largely to prevent a two-speed administrative system, the actual functioning of decentralisation nevertheless varies considerably from one region to another, from one department to another, and even from one municipality to another. Various factors play a part in these variations. These include, for instance, the capacity of the actors to take on their new roles and responsibilities, many of which have yet to be fully clarified. Low literacy levels are a problem among rural elected officers and there is inadequate supervisory help from the State. In parallel, development issues are rallying populations to very different degrees, and there is a lack of appropriately skilled administrative and technical staff. The presence or absence of development organisations willing to provide both technical and financial support to local government, and the ability of elected officers to attract them, may also be part of the problem.

From a technical point of view, municipalities consider that support for municipal development planning is a priority. In financial terms, the law on the local government financing system sets out various resources for municipalities and local governments in general. These include the municipality's own taxation (including various local taxes and duties) and some taxes within the overall taxation system, which are to some extent local taxes. The State pays back other taxes and duties on an annual basis under the finance laws for local governments. Municipalities may also contract loans, take up the state subsidies available to them by law and develop partnerships. However, municipalities are in different situations here as well, linked to the wealth of their (natural and other) resources and the ability to mobilise them and transform them into tangible assets able to serve development. This problem is also found at the State level as public finance is beset by liquidity problems.

The State is responsible for implementing decentralisation and getting it up and running, but it is difficult to define roles and responsibilities in such a way as to prevent problems of institutional rivalry. The legal texts, drawn up chiefly to meet the needs of effective decentralisation, do little to meet the growing concerns shaped by changes in both a national and international context.

Transfers of competencies and resources, scheduled to be progressive, are delayed, which is starting to raise some concerns among local government managers in terms of the new capacities to be developed, the financial assets to be formed or the minimum resources to be mobilised. This concern is shared by the State, which is trying to make information and training into a key strategy to strengthen municipalities so that they are able to take over the initial competencies transferred.

Nationally, institutions supporting the functioning of municipalities, such as the *Haut Conseil des Collectivités Territoriales* (High Council for Local Government), are starting to emerge. Since the general meeting of the Association of Mayors of Niger in 2003, its restructuring has breathed new life into the association: it has now become the association for municipalities in Niger. It is electing its leaders, who were previously appointed, and is trying to standardise municipal practices in order to make them more consistent nationally.

As decentralisation is being set up, alliances are starting to emerge between actors who found it difficult at the outset to see how they could work together. The public administration, responsible for leading the institutional system of support for municipalities, is trying to reposition itself. Tools backing up the process (such as the stabilisation fund and the support fund for local government) are starting to appear at the initiative of the State and support partners. Civil society is also rallying to support a process that is still very much in its initial stages.

214- *Division of the whole of the country into municipalities and incorporation of any human settlement in national territory into a municipality.*