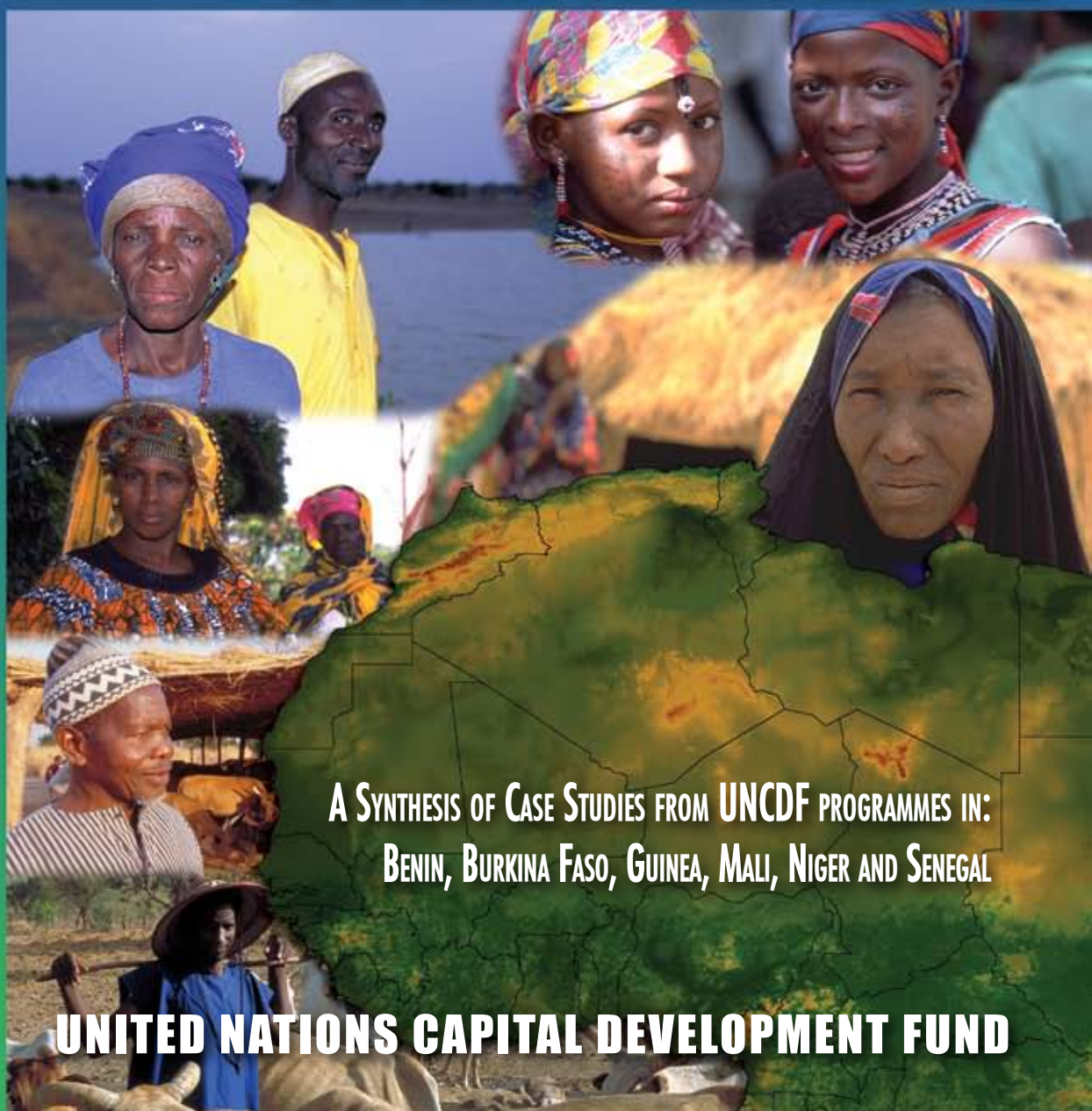


LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES AND INSTRUMENTS IN WEST AFRICA

AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS



A SYNTHESIS OF CASE STUDIES FROM UNCDF PROGRAMMES IN:
BENIN, BURKINA FASO, GUINEA, MALI, NIGER AND SENEGAL

UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

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UNCDF

UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND

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New York, NY USA 10017
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Any reference to the dollar (\$) refer to the U.S. dollar, unless otherwise specified.

The projects which are the subject of the present capitalization would never have come into existence without the technical and financial partners of UNCDF, in particular UNDP, FBS, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the European Union, to which we express our sincere gratitude.

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Photos et conception : Adam ROGERS / FENU

Translation from the French: Pan International

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADECOI	Project in support of Communal Development and Local Initiative in Bourgou
AFD	French Development Agency
AFVP	French Association of Volunteers for Progress
AIP	Annual Investment Programme
ANICT	National Investment Agency for Local Authorities
APRC	Association of Presidents of Regional Councils
BSF	Belgian Survival Fund
CAD	Committee for Analysis of Dossiers
CCC	Communal Council Centre
CDD	Committee for Dialogue on Decentralization
CDP	Communal Development Plan
CFIAS	Community Financial and Institutional Analysis System
CMC	Commune Management Commission
DCDC	Departmental Council for Dialogue and Coordination
DGF	Decentralization Grant Fund
EIG	Economic Interest Group
ESCDP	Economic, Social and Cultural Development Programme
GCO	Grassroots Community Organizations
HDI	Human Development Index
IGA	Income-generating activities
IVLUC	Inter-village Land Use Commission
LACF	Local Authority Capital Fund
LAIF	Local Authority Investment Fund
LDC	Least Developed Country
LDF	Local Development Fund
LDF	Local Dialogue Framework
LDP	Local Development Plan
LDPG	Local Development Programme in Guinea
LDSP	Local Development Support Programme
LOC	Local Orientation Committee
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEF	Ministry of the Economy and Finance

LISTE DES ACRONYMES

MIP	Multi-year investment programme
NCU	National Coordination Unit
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NOC	National Orientation Committee
NOLA	National Office for Local Authorities
NRIP	National Rural Infrastructure Programme
NRM	Natural Resources Management
OTPA	Office of the Treasury and Public Accounting
PACR/TM	Support project for the rural communes of Timbuctu and Mopti
PADEL	Local Development Support Project in East Borgou and West Atacora
PAPNA	Namentenga Province Agro-pastoral resources development project
PD	Participatory diagnostic
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RCP	Rural Council President
RDA	Regional Development Agency
RDP	Rural Development Project
RDSP	Rural Decentralization Support Programme
RFP	Request for proposal
ROC	Regional Orientation Committee
SBP	Sahel Burkinabe Programme
SBP-SP	Sahel Burkinabe Programme Support Project
SFAC	Steering and Funds Allocation Committee
SPFS	Special Programme for Food Security
UALE	Union of Local Elected Officials
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
VDC	Village Development Committee
VLUC	Village Land Use Committee
WFP	World Food Programme



FOREWORD

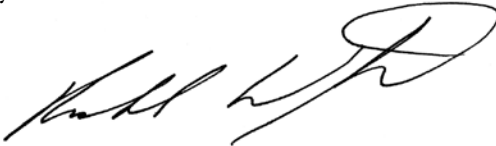
It is a pleasure and an honour for me to present this report on UNCDF's experiences with local development and decentralization in West Africa. The report represents a synthesis of studies on UNCDF work in six countries of the sub-region (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger, Mali and Senegal). Its purpose is to present new thinking and approaches to local development and also to stimulate and support an exchange of ideas among practitioners, locally-elected officials, citizens and development partners.

We do not pretend to have produced an exhaustive study of the problems and dynamics of decentralization and local development in West Africa. Rather, we wish to move the discussion in such a way as to advance decentralization and local development policies and encourage policy makers and practitioners to take the Millennium Development Goals into account in all activities at the local level.

This report presents an analysis of the political and legal contexts in which local development projects take place and explains how this environment influences their implementation. It also highlights the difficulties UNCDF and its development partners face in implementing decentralization policies and programmes in the region. Furthermore, the report describes the instruments and tools commonly used in UNCDF's decentralization and local development projects and focuses on the development results obtained. Finally, the report pays a great deal of attention to partnership in all its forms. On a broader note, the report seeks to link decentralization and local development in local communities in rural areas with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

We believe this study fills an important gap among practitioners worldwide concerning decentralization and local development in West Africa. It also makes a valuable and unique contribution to knowledge about community development experiences in rural areas. This region of Africa is a constantly evolving testing ground for experimentation. New approaches and tools are tried while others are improved so that governments and development partners can make use of them to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is in this context that we are pleased to present our experiences and to show how governments, local authorities and citizens can work together to solve the problems they are facing.

I would like to express my appreciation to our UNCDF colleagues in the countries concerned, our development partners and collaborators and to our closest and most important partner, the UN Development Programme, with whom we worked closely in every country and without whom this study would not have been possible. Lastly, I would like to express my special and deep appreciation to Christian Fournier, UNCDF's Regional Technical Advisor in West Africa, who was the leader and driving force behind this important study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Weingarten', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Weingarten
Executive Secretary, UNCDF
September 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) is to reduce poverty and strengthen local governance in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). The reason for this targeting is the breadth and depth of poverty in these countries. The Human Development Index (HDI) of the six countries covered in this report reveals that poverty in these countries is very low, ranking them among the poorest countries in the world: Senegal (157th), Guinea (160th), Benin (161st), Mali (174th), Burkina Faso (175th), Niger (176th). The strategy developed by UNCDF to reduce poverty in the LDCs rests on two mechanisms: inclusive finance and local development programmes.

The documented experience of projects co-financed by UNCDF in the six countries of West Africa involve pilot projects for support to decentralization and local development (especially in rural areas). They are part of national poverty reduction strategies, which result from the international commitments of these countries, and refer to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The following lessons have emerged from the descriptive and analytical synthesis developed in this document:

1. Institutional context and political-administrative architecture

The legal framework for decentralization and local development in the sub-region have its foundation in national constitutions, resolutions from national conferences and programme narratives (as in the case for Guinea). All the Constitutions have established the principle of free administration of local authorities by elected councils and affirm that these communities constitute the institutional framework for the exercise of grassroots democracy. This principle was reaffirmed in the legal arsenal specific to decentralization in these countries.

The institutional architecture of local government organization reveals four levels of devolution for Senegal, three for Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger, compared to one level in Benin. It includes four levels of decentralization for Senegal, three for Mali and Niger, two for Burkina Faso and Guinea and one for Benin.

Local and regional elections in these countries are mainly controlled by

political parties and the leadership of local public life is strongly influenced by the political class in power and becomes a monopoly of one class to the detriment of others. However, different frameworks for dialogue have been established to foster dialogue among various local actors. Also, with a few exceptions such as Mali, candidacies independent of political parties are authorized in local and even national elections.

The domains that have been transferred to local authorities fall among the domains retained in combating poverty and promoting local development. They include civil status, administrative police, management of local development projects, land use planning (bidding for public services: water, health, education, trade equipment....) environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources, coordination of investments and development activities, promotion of local economic development, inter-community affairs and decentralized cooperation. However, in the case of Senegal, some essential domains such as the production sectors (agriculture, cattle, fisheries, etc.) rural water supply, sanitation and transport have not yet been transferred to local authorities.

Decentralization gave rise to many fears and questions among the population. Today, interest in its expansion can be noted everywhere. While the domains transferred are justified by the failure of State centralism and difficult living conditions among the communities, on the other hand the political will to support implementation of decentralization should be expressed in a stronger way to reverse the trends of the past. Indeed, the existence of a legal framework and a variety of instruments to make decentralization concrete is certainly essential, but it is not sufficient to promote sustainable local development. This fact indicates an insufficient phasing of interventions by various public and private actors as part of a coherent policy linking decentralization (the advent of elected local government) with other forms of devolution, mainly sectoral decentralization and tasks sharing between local government and central government line agencies' local outposts. In that regard, the transfer of resources is in bad shape in all the countries concerned, but the prospects are optimistic.

2. Zones of intervention

The zones of intervention for the projects have the following geographical characteristics: i) very far from the capitals (up to 1500 km in the case of N'guigmi in Niger), ii) located in zones with low rainfall or right next to the Sahel and subject to recurring ecological and food crises; iii) very high agricultural potential but isolated and not considered for improvement, like the zones of intervention in Benin and Guinea.

All the projects are linked with decentralization and are in support of local authorities and grassroots organizations.

It can be seen from the set of examined characteristics and problems that the choices of zones of intervention was determined by their serious level of poverty: i) famine and malnutrition, ii) monetary poverty, iii) degradation of natural resources serving as the production base in rural areas, iv) adult illiteracy and low school enrolment rates for children, v) difficulty in access to drinking water and health care, vi) low level of social-community investments and deplorable hygiene and sanitation from a low standard of living, vii) lack of institutional and organizational capacity to promote local development.

These characteristics of the zones of intervention show the importance of decentralization to give responsibility to local actors in the management of local affairs. Especially, they demonstrate the usefulness of land use planning so that each local community can become part of the country's development process, whatever its geographical situation. In the final analysis, decentralization offers new possibilities for reducing inequalities in access to basic collective services among the various parts of the same country and also allows the specific conditions of each area to be taken into account on a basis of national solidarity.

3. Principal instruments

The local planning exercise generates three documents in the UNCDF partner communes:

- the *communal development plan* (CDP) which is a long-term orientation and framework tool covering a period of five to six years;
- the *multi-year investment programme* (MIP) which operationalizes the CDP by programming the investment needs and investment resources to be mobilized over the next three years;
- the *annual investment programme* (AIP) that takes the place of a programme budget for the year and allows the implementation of the CDP from a results-based approach. This approach assumes an annual evaluation of communal performance to measure the level of achievement of local development objectives.

These local planning documents are elaborated in a participatory manner. The MIP is supported by the Local Development Fund (LDF).

The financial mechanism is centred around the LDF and is part of a system of budget support to local communities. Communal project management and the principle of budget support ensure that all procurement and contracting procedures take place at the commune level. In contrast to classic

interventions where work, delivery of equipment and provision of services are centralized in the project management unit, in the present case, each commune undertakes the procedures to realize its investments. In countries where the communes are not yet active, the inter-village land use commissions (IVLUC) have jurisdiction, with the limitation that they are not legally authorized to mobilize local resources through taxation.

Eligibility for LDF leads to the determination of financial grants to communes, evaluation of the performance of communes at the end of each year, the principle of budgetary support to strengthen traceability, transparency and co-financing. In addition to these intervention modalities, the UNCDF advisory and support mechanism made up of the project team and the service providers has led to better formatting of services expected by partner communities. In particular, a toolbox is created for each project to i) develop planning and budgeting instruments, ii) formulate and defend micro-projects, iii) master the management procedures for the various LDF windows, iv) manage equipment.

The LDF is a financial tool with many merits: i) integration into the public finance circuit of each country to familiarize the communes with financial and accounting procedures required by the laws on decentralization; ii) a lever effect on the financing system, iii) stimulates mobilization of local financial resources, iv) a multi-purpose LDF focusing on social-community services, the local economy, natural resource management (NRM), food security, relieving women's burdens, capacity-building among actors (public and private) involved in local development....

The implementation of a system of planning and promotion of local governance and the LDF has had *social* impact (participation of marginalized groups and impoverished communities in the decision-making process, access to community services) *financial and economic* impact (professionalization of local workers, creation of income-generating activities, increased tax and non-tax revenues in the commune) *environmental* impact through reforestation activities, soil protection and restoration, *land use* impact through an equitable distribution of investments on the basis of objective and agreed criteria (educational and health maps and networks of water points) limiting the influence of favouritism or political-partisan clientelism.

Nevertheless, it can be noted that because many locally-elected officials and agents of local communities have much to learn, the use of these various tools remains to be perfected. Progress made is still due to major reliance on offices and structures. This situation is understandable, considering that very few communes have qualified technical services. In all cases, most communes are just getting underway and assistance will be necessary for several years to

come. The duration of the planning process should be noted, which for the populations concerned often represents a constraint on starting up the projects because of the time required to complete that process.

4. MDGs

The approaches to assistance used by UNCDF projects has led to the promotion of an open process that includes the poor and marginalized groups, which allows the interests of all actors to be taken into account in local planning in the presence of all social classes.

The structuring of the communes and the composition of the structures established transcends all traditional divisions (membership in a social and especially political group, place of residence....) and takes into account the interests of the various groups present whatever their relative strength. This inclusive process sometimes corrects the lack of representation on communal councils observed in most countries.

Finally, the nature and functioning of the investments made are indicators of the voice of the poor because they show that the needs of the population have been taken into account. The voice of the poor helps to limit the failure of development projects, that is to say that the achievement of the MDGs depends on the active role and responsibility of the poor in the decision-making process in general and in the development of their community in particular.

In that area, UNCDF projects distinguish between different levels of investment: i) investments at the grassroots level of general community interest and/or specific to an organization around an activity, ii) investments on a supra-community scale between the village and the commune, iii) investments to strengthen institutional capacity of communal institutions only involving the mayors' offices and their teams.

Although it is well established that the profiles for implementation of UNCDF projects are fully in line with the MDGs, it should be emphasized that the internal monitoring and evaluation system for these projects and the communes themselves is not yet linked with the MDGs as far as reference indicators are concerned. It would seem useful to conduct a reference study on partner communes concerning MDG criteria and indicators in order to be able to follow their evolution. When such a system should become operational at the commune level, the MDGs would need to be translated to the local level to strengthen the follow-up to planning instruments even for projects which began before the advent of the MDGs.

5. Partnership

In the implementation of support programmes for decentralized local development in West Africa, UNCDF and its project teams develop partnerships

at the local, national and international levels. UNCDF believes partnership is more than a necessity; it is a fundamental choice in the poverty reduction strategy to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

These partnerships take several forms: institutional, operational, formal or not. They have allowed UNCDF projects to have leverage both in financing of investments, sharing of know-how and in joint initiatives.

The UNCDF experience has shown that marginalization of local representatives of central government line agencies in the implementation of projects creates frustration and blockages in the field. At the same time, the modalities for involving these technical services are rarely explicit in the project formulation documents. Only flexibility in the financial structure of this component allows for the use of expertise that can be mobilized among this category of actors. But the underlying problem is found in the weakness of national devolution policies, especially at the budget level, to enable the devolved State structures to function in an optimal way.

INTRODUCTION

This document deals with a group of support projects implemented by UNCDF in West Africa over the past ten years in Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Senegal resulting from, among other things, financial partnerships concluded with other development partners¹. It provides a synthesis of the six capitalization studies concerning these countries.

The objective of this capitalization synthesis is to present the lessons learned from the experiences of UNCDF in local development in the countries of West Africa, in part through its support to decentralization, and to understand the conditions that must be established in order to obtain significant results and impact in development and improving the overall standard of living for the population of the zones of intervention.

This synthesis will allow (i) exchange and dissemination of UNCDF knowledge concerning best practices; (ii) a better understanding of the institutional and social blockages that can limit the approaches tried; (iii) to see in what way these pilot projects were able to affect the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The country-by-country capitalization studies have allowed us to document the lessons learned, obstacles and innovations of the various pilot projects. Their synthesis mainly follows this basic structure:

- Presentation of the institutional context and the political and administrative architecture into which UNCDF financed projects are introduced.
- Presentation of the zones of intervention, the elements justifying the choice of those zones, and the goals of the intervention.
- Discussion of the various instruments and approaches tested in support to decentralization and local development, drawing general and specific lessons regarding instruments and approaches, methods of operation and innovations.
- Description of the manner in which the project approaches and measu-

¹ The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Belgian Survival Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union, the Governments of the countries mentioned, local authorities in the zones of intervention and finally, the populations of those areas.

res help to achieve the MDGs in a concrete way, with regard to hearing the voice of the poor and disadvantaged in the choice of investments,

the frame of reference to measure impacts and effects and the changes to be made to systems and models of local planning in order to integrate the MDGs.

- Discussion of the reasons causing UNCDF automatically to call for collaboration of several partners for the projects it initiates and the way in which this partnership takes form, attempting to characterise its various forms at the level of results, the steps followed to its conclusion, formulas to ensure its success and the risks and pitfalls to be avoided.

The methodological approach utilized for this synthesis is essentially based on the documentation in the six basic reports produced in the countries mentioned above.

For each chapter of the basic structure of the synthesis, the approach consisted in: (i) gather and synthesize the relevant thematic information contained in the six reports to highlight the essential common elements and the specificities in the data regarding the context, instruments and approaches, links with the MDGs and partnerships; (ii) conduct a thematic and comparative analysis following the SFPO method (success/failure/potential/opportunities).

Tools files have also been created and formatted based on the instruments and analyses described in the country reports. These files provide access for users to the descriptions and operating methods of the instruments and approaches which gave good results.

Also, a synthesis of the lessons learned was produced to conclude each central theme of the report.

On the whole, this proposed structure worked well. The only difficulty encountered was a lack of harmonized statistical data or none at all on certain sub-themes, which did not permit equal treatment of data. In that case, it was decided to illustrate certain case studies or give ranges.

Finally, the structure of this document follows the outline described above.



1] CONTEXT AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1. General context of the sub-region

The history of decentralization in West Africa goes back to the colonial period, with the elevation of certain towns to local authority status in each of the six countries. But the political regimes which followed each other in these countries since their accession to national sovereignty have not always favoured the consolidation and generalization of local authorities. Nevertheless, all the political regimes in these countries have always spoken favourably of participatory management of the country and closer ties between the civil service and the population. This vision often took shape, either through promotion of territorial advisory bodies operating as forums for collaboration and social dialogue, or through promotion of community development programmes and projects focused on giving responsibility to grassroots communities.

In most of these countries, the decades from the sixties to the eighties were marked by revolutionary, military or socialist regimes that were more or less centralized, led by State Parties and partisan public administrations. The institutional failure of these States, characterized among other ways by their thoughtless debt, the spread of poverty and the inability of government to address the problems of development, led to the establishment of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) at the insistence of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These programmes were intended to correct excessive State spending, begin the modernisation and reduction of staff in the civil service and liberalization of the economy and reform of public finance. In addition to these institutional characteristics common to the sub-region, countries of the Sahel like Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso also faced recurring food crises which affected and still affect their economies and especially the living conditions of the disadvantaged communities in towns and the countryside.

For the six countries as a whole, the nineties marked a decisive political turning point on the path towards democratization, in particular the transfer

of political power. Three elements or factors are the foundation of this decentralization process.

The first factor has to do with openness to democracy coming in part from pressure from the population but also from development partners. The latter have increasingly placed conditions on their insistence involving greater democratization. This can also be understood as its expansion to several levels, from the local to the central.

The second factor which pushed for decentralization was linked to the crisis in State public finance. States no longer had the capacity to manage everything centrally and had to find new ways to manage and deliver public services. Decentralization, by the transfer of authority, could constitute an appropriate response to the search for more efficiency and effectiveness in public service.

Finally, the third factor which led to decentralization is urbanization: Africa is urbanizing or “municipalizing” and this movement is not likely to stop. Consequently, local authorities become places where the demographic and economic weight will become even greater in the future. Therefore, a response must be found to the emergence of the local entity as the appropriate place for the emergence of the new democracy as well as the provision of public services, according to the principle of subsidiarity. The other significant aspect was to ensure territorial balance and to give both rural and urban communities the means to offer necessary public services and to become catalysts for development in general.

These factors thus contributed to an acceleration and expansion of approaches preliminary to decentralization, by the incorporation of the achievements of land use programmes tried at the village or inter-village level. On that basis, rural areas will not be marginalized from the thinking on democratization, decentralization and urbanization. Many experiments based on research and action were implemented almost everywhere in Africa, West Africa in particular. In this context, village development councils or committees (VDCs) democratically elected by the population will be installed to manage community affairs. These VDCs are assisted in their role by technical commissions or working groups, which helps to expand the strategic analysis of the situation, mobilize the population and circulate information. According to the country, these VDCs have legal status covered by an administrative act or have been considered as a project component without further institutional formalities, but nevertheless have statutes, local natural resources management codes and rules for settlement of disputes.

Following the example of certain other technical and financial cooperation (UNICEF, World Bank, German Cooperation), these community-type structures have also been supported during the period from 1995 to 2002 by UNCDF projects in countries where the State had not yet created communal structures. It is important to specify that although significant progress had been made in motivating grassroots communities through the village planning process and by making the villages responsible for managing their common interests, it is still true that the level of spatial analysis at the village level is limited to their community, which does not have enough coherence with a land use planning approach that requires work and coordination at various territorial levels with the goal of promoting harmonious and sustainable local development. Therefore, once decentralization goes into effect in a country, the entry point for local development for UNCDF projects is not longer the community approach, but the communal institution, through local project management. The commune thus becomes a major decision-making centre for local development, combating poverty, resource mobilization and perpetuation of collective services to the population, through its annual investment budget.

The community approach in UNCDF projects is a transitional arrangement allowing the establishment and management of community infrastructure in the sectors of village water supply, basic education, health, (village health unit), rural roads, management and protection of natural resources. Legally, the public ownership of this equipment and their recurring costs comes under local public works. Socially, VDCs have promoted a relational dynamic which in many cases has led to real mixing of the various interest groups that make up the local communities. Furthermore, the “Venn diagram” tool, widely used in community development approaches, clearly identifies the categories of actors, their relationships and the lines of force present, in such a way that a community development approach is established the integrates rather than distances certain categories of groups.

It is clear that this approach escaped the influence of numerous political parties in the election of community leaders making up the VDCs. The VDCs have become virtual training schools in the practice of participatory democracy and community leadership development, having improved the relationships between community leaders and other categories of institutional actors (representatives of the civil service, development partners), and in protecting the public interest and maintaining basic social control. However, it must be acknowledged that this model has also given rise to some inconsistencies, because of the proliferation of committees within a single community and the lack of integration of medium-term development plans.

Today, the community-type approach is used by some donors. This causes many difficulties in effective establishment of sustainable local communities when some donors marginalize them and adopt a community approach ignoring these structures resulting from decentralization policies.

In sum, what is at stake in decentralization and local development in the UNCDF countries of intervention is the improvement of the living conditions in disadvantaged communities in towns and rural areas by offering social and community services which are available, accessible and sustainable. In order to do so, it appears essential that the development process gives responsibility to local actors, both in identifying their needs and in carrying out activities to meet them, so that the civil service and programmes supported by external partners are used as means to facilitate and make concrete appropriate solutions resting on communal project management.

From this point of view, most countries produce decentralized rural development policy letters with the goal of linking the areas of competence of local communities with the community development approach and sectoral public policy. This policy emphasizes:

- strengthening of technical and management capacity of the rural population, local communities and their basic structures so that they can better respond to priority needs for essential social and economic infrastructure;
- establishment in the short term of mechanisms for direct transfer to local communities of the financial resources necessary for their development, and, in the longer term, the establishment of mechanisms allowing them to mobilize those resources themselves;
- the establishment of operational frameworks for dialogue, decision-making and monitoring and evaluation, involving all actors in decentralized rural development;
- setting up tools for land management in order to make investments secure;
- the establishment of participatory mechanisms for increased transparency in the management of local development.

Although the relevance of governments choosing a progressive decentralization process is recognized, that progression must also have visibility according to a realistic and predictable time frame or timeline so that the political will to transfer competence and resources to local authorities will be better understood by the population. This also assumes that decentralization goes hand in hand with devolution, so that State services responsible for supervi-

sing local authorities and providing them with necessary advice and counsel are prepared to play their role efficiently and effectively. It must be acknowledged that many texts for application of decentralization laws have not yet entered into force and that in certain cases, all the levels of decentralization are not yet set up. Although there is a basic legal framework to allow progressive decentralization, despite the clarifying regulations that are missing, there are serious problems with lack of coherence between sectoral public policy and community policies advocated by States through decentralization. This means that centralism still remains rather strong in administrative culture and that the political will to realize the transfer of the power to manage national public resources to local authorities remains rather timid.

Finally, an effort to raise awareness and provide information remains to be made to ensure a better understanding of decentralization by agents of the State, for their understanding of what is at stake in this remaking of the State is key to the success of community policies, especially local development programmes. Therefore, the principle of subsidiarity must permeate the orientations and approaches of various levels of government in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programmes to combat poverty and enhance their positive impact on the daily lives of vulnerable groups.

1.2. Legal framework of decentralization and local development

The goal of decentralization is to ensure the harmonious development of all local communities on the basis of national solidarity and regional and local potential in order to combat poverty resolutely. The texts making up the legal framework for decentralization and local development in the sub-region have their foundation in national Constitutions, resolutions of national conferences and programme statements (the case of Guinea).

The legal framework (laws, ordinances and implementing decrees) of decentralization establishes decentralized local authorities, gives them legal personality and financial autonomy. All the Constitutions have stipulated the principle of the free administration of these local authorities by elected councils and affirm that local authorities constitute the institutional framework for the exercise of democracy at the basic level. This principle was reaffirmed in the legal arsenal specific to decentralization in these countries.

In addition, the legal instruments have specified the organization of the local authority, the common property, conditions of eligibility for local councillors, management bodies and their functions, budget structure and funding sources, areas of competence of the local authorities and the supervisory prerogatives as well as the mechanisms allowing the population to exercise social control over the management of those communities.

Link between decentralization and local development

The legal framework in the six countries shows that decentralization is inconceivable without local development. As part of a process of reform of local administration, decentralization creates a dynamic environment for the expression of local democracy and allows the exercise of power at the grassroots level. It should: (i) facilitate citizen participation in the management of local public property through its decentralization component, (ii) bring the citizen and the administration closer, (iii) result in citizens taking responsibility for their own affairs and (iv) help to recognize the value of the economic potential of local communities through the exercise of decision-making power by the population at the grassroots level through their elected representatives.

Each local authority has an assembly whose designation and composition depends on the number of levels of decentralization and the titles of the administrative districts. In countries that have a high number of levels of decentralization, there is a distinction between the regional council, the council of the area or department and the commune council. According to the country (Senegal and Guinea), rural communes are given the title of “rural community” or “rural development community”. All these councils are deliberating bodies whose members are elected from the community. They are responsible for defining local public policy in their respective territorial districts in accordance with the laws of the Republic and the national development guidelines as well as monitoring their implementation.

At the level of local authorities, the mayor (executive body of the commune) or the president of the rural community is the top official of the community, and as such, is the head of communal administration. At the regional level, this position is occupied by the president of the regional council. However, there is no hierarchical relationship among the various deliberating bodies. The separation of powers among them is based on the principle of subsidiarity. On the other hand, the mission of the region is to promote an operational linkage among the various levels of local authorities for the coherent and harmonious development of the region. For example in Senegal, this mission of integration is facilitated by the Regional Development Agency (RDA) and the Integrated Regional Development Plan (IRDP), which are two instruments steered by all the authorities on the basis of their respective competence.

1.3. Administrative organization of States and local authorities

1.3.1. Local organization

The organization of local administration is practically identical in the sub-region as a whole, with the exception of Benin. The institutional architecture of local organization shows four levels of devolution for Senegal, three for Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Niger, compared to one level for Benin. These are levels where the central authority is represented (supervisory power) and a range of local representatives of central government line agencies (technical support and advice and implementation of public sectoral policy). With the exception of Benin, all other countries have begun regionalization, or at least have a legal framework instituting it. In Senegal and Mali, regionalization is truly operational with regional assemblies that deliberate on local policies that they are responsible for. However, territorial divisions at the same level do not have the same title in these countries. A department in Senegal corresponds to a province in Burkina Faso, a circle in Mali and a prefecture in Guinea, while the name department in Burkina Faso refers to an *arrondissement* in Senegal, a commune in Mali and a sub-prefecture in Guinea. In contrast, the department in Benin represents the only level of devolution and is not the same as a region, but is similar to an administrative district where supervision of communes place.

At the level of local authorities, the juxtaposition of decentralization and devolution predominates. This co-territoriality is complete in Mali. It is partial in Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Niger, where local authorities share two levels of territorial division with administrative districts, compared with three. However, in Guinea, the sub-prefecture containing the rural development community does not provide supervision; this prerogative belongs to the prefecture. Co-territoriality is totally absent from the institutional architecture of Benin: the department (territorial district) and the commune (local community) are not at the same territorial level.

The architecture of territorial divisions set out in the table above is based on mainly uniform sizes of local authorities. In total, for the six countries there are 2205 communes of which 87 per cent are rural.

Mali, where establishment of the communal boundaries took place on the bases of free choice of villages and areas that wanted to be together, is the country of the sub-region with the highest number of communes, with a total of 703, of which 523 have under 17,000 inhabitants. This figure represents the median population size of a Malian commune. An estimated 15.1 per cent of Malian communes have under 5,000 inhabitants, compared to 15.6 per

Table N° 1: Institutional Architecture of decentralization

Country	Territorial division	Number and type of local authority	Synthesis of territorial system
Benin	Department (12)	Commune (77)	One (1) level of devolution One (1) level of decentralization
Burkina Faso	Region (13), province (45), department (350)	Region (13), commune (351) or (49) urban communes and (302) rural communes	Three (3) levels of devolution Two (2) levels of decentralization
Guinea	Region (4), prefecture (7), sub-prefecture	Commune (422): urban commune et rural development community	Three (3) levels of devolution One (1) level of decentralization
Mali	Region (8), circle (49), Commune	Region (8), circle (49), commune (703)	Three (3) levels of devolution Three (3) levels of decentralization
Niger	Region (8), department (36), arrondissement	Region (8), department (36), commune (265)	Three (3) levels of devolution Three (3) levels of decentralization
Senegal	Region (11), departments (34), arrondissement (103), villages	Region (11) and communes (387) including (67) urban communes, (43) communes d'arrondissement and (320) rural communities	Three (3) levels of devolution Two (2) levels of decentralization

cent with over 20,000. This disparity is not without effect on the economic viability of communes which depend in large part on the ability of the population to contribute.

In Senegal and Burkina Faso, on the other hand, a commune must have a population of at least 10,000, compared with 5,000 in Benin and Guinea. However, the demographic size is highly variable and contrasting both within each country and between countries. The average population of a commune is 70,000 in Senegal, 35,000 in Burkina Faso and 39,000 in Niger. These figures should be viewed with some scepticism, however, because they include the national capitals, which automatically creates an imbalance and significantly inflates the average. In reality, if the large communes are removed from the calculations, we are left with small communes on the whole.

Although the average surface area of communes in Mali is 1700 square km., that of the commune of Salam in the Timbuctu region is 1.22 times the entire surface area of Benin and 0.7 times the area of Senegal. In Niger, there is some contrast between communes, with areas varying between 500 sq. km. on average in the South to over 10,000 sq. km. in the far North. The rural commune of N'Gourty, a commune of UNCDF intervention in Niger, covers 96,000 square km., with a population of 23,000 spread among 265 villages, with widely-dispersed population. From the point of view of land use ma-

nagement, it will be difficult to share some equipment among communities, such as the school, the health centre, and village water supply pipes because of the distances separating most of the villages. Moreover, the absence of the critical mass required for users of community social services poses problems in optimization and return on investment. It follows that the cost of combating poverty in these vast, isolated and sparsely-populated areas is higher than elsewhere for the same needs. These areas require greater solidarity at the national level to avoid marginalization of the concerned populations.

1.3.2. Representation of local authorities

In all the countries, the basic laws or codes for the local authorities have stipulated elections to designate representatives of the population on the deliberating bodies for all local authorities. The number of elected members of the deliberating bodies is also regulated by law and is adjusted as a function of the population size of each electoral district and, therefore, of the local authority as a whole.

The number of commune councillors is more than 9 everywhere, with a maximum of 49 per local authority. For those countries that have provided for a deliberating body at the regional level, their composition is somewhat variable, with between 52 and 62 members in Senegal, 15 to 41 in Niger, and 7 to 31 in Guinea. The size of communal and regional councils in each country generates an impressive number of local elected officials. For example, there are more than 13,000 elected officials in Senegal, around 18,000 in Burkina Faso and 1,199 in Benin. Of course, this poses a major problem for any capacity-building programme, given that the great majority of these elected officials are illiterate and consequently have some difficulties in benefiting appropriately from training programmes because they cannot use written material.

Generally, communal, municipal and regional councillors are elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term, except in Guinea where the term of office is four years. Suffrage at the regional level provides for a quota of representatives from each department within the regional council (in the case of Senegal).

Political affiliation, other than for the election of the President of the Republic, is required when running for elective office. Local and regional elections are highly controlled by political parties and local public leadership becomes the monopoly of one class to the detriment of others. On this point, Senegal has chosen not to accept independent candidacies for local and legislative elections and thus this measure excludes a major part of the electorate from the management of local affairs. This situation is no better in the other countries (Benin, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger) who have opened up

these elections to independent candidates. The six countries end up with the same political and partisan configuration of the deliberating bodies of local authorities.

Although it is true that a pluralistic communal council is difficult to manage and costly to maintain, it is unacceptable that such a body should not be representative of the majority of the grassroots community. On the other hand, in Mali, the electoral system does not take into account territorial representation of local communities (villages, sections and neighbourhoods) within the communal council. Thus, of the 11,160 local communities in the country during the communal term 1999-2004, 65.58 per cent did not have a member on a communal council and for the current term (2004-2009), that proportion rose to 66.20 per cent. That means that some influential villages or sections dominate local political life and comprise the heads of political party lists at elections. From a legal standpoint, this situation cannot be criticized, but it will not be without consequences for the participation of citizens in the life of their community. Certain villages justify their failure to pay taxes by the fact that they have no elected official from their community on the communal council. The important thing is not that each village has its elected representative on the council but that there is local representation at least for a group of neighbouring villages. Benin has been successful with local representation not by ensuring one representative per village but by preserving the old administrative districts, the *arrondissements*. Each *arrondissement* is represented by two elected officials on the council.

Risks of recentralization of local power

In most of the countries and in many local communities, a type of recentralization of power can be noted towards the influential local village communities because of their prior history and their demographic weight. And the more the country is vast with a population widely dispersed over its territory, the greater the tendency to confiscate local power by those who hold traditional and religious power in the locality. This holds true in Mali and Niger, in fact.

The representivity of local councils is a delicate and complex issue which cannot be ignored because it is fundamental in a decentralization process whose reason for existence is local participatory democracy, resolving the problems of the citizens where they live by themselves. Above all, it involves making the local community a common project of its inhabitants. That being said, a local election is important not only from the point of view of the source of legitimacy it represents, but it is also an element giving structure to the social identity of each local authority. Thus, each grassroots community wants

to recognize itself through its elected councillors, who together form a local mini-parliament. This is why the role of local civil society must be supported and strengthened to be able to play the role of advance guard.

Maintaining strong ties between the commune and each of its administrative units

Widely dispersed settlement, which is supposed to find a solution in decentralization through appropriate administrative oversight of the population and their increased participation in management of local affairs, is handicapped in cases where local communities are too vast and thinly populated. To address this, Burkina Faso has added a village level to the institutional pyramid of decentralization by institution of village development committees (VDCs), inherited from the model of the village land use committee (VLUC), which together represent the rural community of a department.

These VDCs have their development plans, linked with the rural community development plan, and they are authorized to manage the development tasks in the village area. A decentralized national programme for rural development goes along with responsibility for project management of local investments. This community strategy for structuring rural communes is based on *a support on demand approach* for village communities, *support through flexible funds approach* to finance the priorities of the VDCs, a *cooperation-centred support approach*, synergy and coherence, and a *modular approach to adapt financial tools* as a function of the various levels of the institutional structure of decentralization.

In sum, the village is not a level of decentralization in Burkina Faso and Senegal, it has no legal status but can have financial autonomy in certain cases. This approach is also in effect in Benin with the national development programme conducted by the communities (NDPCC), and unlike Burkina Faso, communities benefiting from this programme are responsible for managing community projects and there are legal provisions to that effect. This rural comunization based on the land use management approach is derived from experiences in this area developed by the World Bank and UNCDF in these countries and the poverty reduction strategy. UNCDF and many donors, including the French Development Agency (AFD) argue for true project management by the commune, and it is up to the commune to decide later if it will delegate project management to the grassroots communities by means of delegation of management authority. In the view of UNCDF, it does not favour this type of community approach when the local communities exist because of decentralization laws alone. It thus favours an approach respectful of national political commitments through decentralization laws that recognize the commune as having rights and responsibilities for project management.

1.4. Evolution of the decentralization process

Local elected officials everywhere have inherited a command local administration with an institutional profile showing a lack of ability to collaborate with civil society organizations, having been unable in most cases to integrate modern local management techniques, and above all, having had difficulty adapting to the givens of decentralization. As a corollary, the degree of autonomy given by law is hindered by the weakness of the technical and financial ability of staff and local elected officials, which explains the strong dependence on the State and its services.

1.4.1. Skills transferred

In the six countries, the competence (powers and responsibilities) of the State and local communities are defined and distributed by the legislature on the basis of a number of principles:

- **progressivity** (learning, progressive acquisition of independent means of operation and investment, appropriation by results-based management capacity taking into account the complexity of the many dimensions of competence);
- **subsidiarity** (a relevant anchor for competence)
- **proximity** (accessibility for users of local public services offered)
- **concomitance** (any transfer of competence from the State to the community is accompanied by a concomitant transfer of resources to enable them to manage their new responsibilities).

According to the sector and as a function of political will, the distribution of competences among local authorities takes into account the way each common service sector is organized. Thus the distribution takes into account the *health pyramid* (community health centres, zone health centres, regional hospital centres), the various *levels of the education system* (pre-school, primary, general secondary, high school, vocational training), and the orientation of *local and regional development priorities* that the country establishes.

As a whole, the competence of local authorities concerns:

- management of the civil registry and archives
- civil protection, assistance and emergency aid
- carrying out local and regional development plans so that each area makes the most of its potential and opportunities and resolves problems that arise in the community through the production and consumption models that characterise it;
- promotion of economic, educational social, health, cultural and scientific development in the region, the commune and the rural community;

- land use, real estate and urban planning;
- environmental protection and natural resource management;
- coordination development investments and activities for harmonious, balanced and sustainable development of local authorities, taking into account the interests of different social groups (the majority, minority, privileged and disadvantaged, local and non-local partners) of the nation as a whole;
- promotion of functional linkages between the various levels of local authorities for coherent and harmonious development of the region helping to consolidate national unity.

Each local authority enjoys full decision-making powers in terms of its legal personality and financial autonomy. In sum, the principle of freedom of administration is established for each level of decentralization, even in countries where several levels of local communities exist, like Senegal, Mali, Niger, Guinea and Burkina Faso. Thus, there is no hierarchy of local authorities, but a functional relationship. In general, it appears that transfers of competence have suffered from a lack of transfer of resources in some countries of the sub-region. Moreover, the transfer technique adopted favours the “sharing of competence” and the absence of block transfers of competence in the name of the principle of progressivity.

1.4.2. Local governments and their management capacity

The communal council (or municipal for those communes with special status, or rural council for rural communities) the circle council and the regional council represent the assemblies elected by the population to manage the affairs of the commune, circle or region. These various bodies have an administration coordinated by general or community secretaries, whose qualification levels depend on the budgetary ability of the commune, and whether or not they can recruit a manager with the required skills. Generally, they are agents of the State or the local authority made available or subsidized by the State budget.

As the deliberating body of the local authorities, these various councils have decision-making authority that is exercised by deliberations in the areas specified by law, in particular budget, the development plan of the local jurisdiction covered, the overall outline for land use and urban planning, economic, social, health, scientific, sports and cultural development, environmental protection, improving the standard of living, inter-commune cooperation and decentralized cooperation.

The functions performed by mayors go far beyond those assigned to the local structures that preceded them. In Benin, for example, the administrative

position mayors hold corresponds to that of a sub-prefect before decentralization. Those sub-prefects were generally senior officials (civil administration, taxation, social affairs or labour). If not, they were from the middle management category of various types (educators, agricultural agents, security officers) and thus did not necessarily have the required background for these posts.

In Benin, the only educational requirement prescribed by law to be mayor is to know how to read and write. But the country has just one decentralization level and a small number of communes (77) with a limited number of elected posts (1,199 elected officials), and communal elections attract intellectuals, either young graduates, retired or seconded civil servants or more or less well-educated businessmen.

In Mali, mayors have replaced heads of arrondissements, and the level required is middle management (equivalent of the baccalaureat). Malian law allows elected officials in general, from the President of the Republic down to local officials, including deputies to the National Assembly and heads of deliberating bodies, to be illiterate. Like Mali, Senegal also has an impressive number of presidents of rural councils (PRCs) and their deputies who are illiterate because the requirement "to know how to read and write" included in the local cooperation framework (LCF) in Senegal is not implemented. In all cases, there is a problem finding the balance between democracy founded on legitimacy and the confidence of the electorate and the basic skills of local elected officials in relation to their mission in all the countries without exception.

In order to maintain team spirit within these deliberating bodies and mobilize the know-how of certain resource persons to strengthen the ability to make proposals, the legislature has prescribed some required committees and the possibility for each local authority to establish additional committees (permanent or temporary) to study and monitor issues that come before it. In general, the three required committees encountered in all the countries of the sub-region are (i) the economic and financial affairs committee, (ii) the land use and environment committee, and (iii) the social and cultural affairs committee.

In order to broaden consultation and suggestions, all legislation has prescribed cooperation, coordination and coherence frameworks, with varying titles but virtually the same missions and objectives.

Centres of power and struggles for influence in the conquest of local power

Although it is true that local power is exercised at the local authority level through the expression of regional, municipal or communal councils rural

councils, it has been established in many countries that the influence of traditional and religious chiefs remains significant in social control and popular expression, especially in rural areas. Indeed, traditional chiefs have strong influence in the social and political arena and although they have no particular legal authority compared to the competence of local authorities, they are at the heart of the electoral system, whatever the level considered. All elections, whether national, regional or local, whether presidential, parliamentary or municipal, have always demonstrated the important and inescapable place of these traditional chiefs (historical legitimacy) in the conquest of institutional power of the State. It is obligatory for the political system to work through them to mobilize the electorate.

In effect, at the institutional level, and going down to the grassroots to create local authorities at the commune level, decentralization is not happening on uncharted territory. These areas were already a power base (the authoritarian power of governors, prefects, sub-prefects representing the State, but also the traditional power of customary chiefs). It is also a framework for intervention of technical services from central government line agencies², and for projects. The field is also open to other types of activities conducted by new independent actors (associations, national and international NGOs and many rural organizations spontaneously established by the population or created under various development programmes and projects) that communal management bodies cannot leave out.

In other words, communalization is taking place in a landscape already structured by traditional powers, local representatives of central government line agencies (State representatives, technical services) accustomed thus far to lines of authority, and where more experienced local development protagonists also co-exist, sometimes long and well-established (communities, associations, NGOs, projects, etc.), which may possibly have more means than the local authorities.

Regional and departmental authorities, although planned and organized on a legal and territorial level, still have far to go in terms of their functions and visibility (Senegal, Mali) and are not yet operational in Niger and Guinea.

1.4.3. Supervisory authority

According to the level of decentralization and devolution, supervisory authority is entrusted to the Governor of a region or the prefect of a province, department or circle.

² which in most of West Africa are not really “devolved”, but rather “deconcentrated” across the territory, and accountable to central, not local – government (Translation Note)

The exercise of supervisory authority includes three main functions: (i) assistance and advice to local authorities, support for their actions and harmonization with the direction of State activities; (ii) monitoring of the legality of actions taken by the communal council or mayor, the regional council and its president; (iii) control of the budget, which should be strictly exercised by means of approval, cancellation or substitution. Governors and prefects are supported in their mission by cooperation and coordination frameworks, with varying composition according to the country but whose basic motivation remains identical: improving the circulation of information and acting in synergy.

Actions of communes subject to approval by the supervisory authority generally involve:

- management of communal property;
- travel abroad by the mayor and his deputies;
- individual decisions regarding appointments, promotions and punishments submitted for review to the disciplinary committee and the firing of commune staff;
- the commune budget and its amendments during the budget period;
- modalities for implementing local taxes, fees and tariffs and setting tariffs and other non-tax resources as well as the method of collecting them;
- the amount, guarantee period and method of reimbursement for advances and loans;
- naming of public streets, squares and buildings;
- drafting of all urban planning documents;
- agreements concerning public markets and concerning local concessions for public services that are industrial or commercial in nature.

All the countries have a mechanism for dialogue on local public policy and two models synthesize the various coordination and cooperation frameworks encountered in the sub-region. The Benin model can be distinguished for the Senegalese model. In all the countries, these cooperation frameworks depending on devolved structures are barely operational or not at all because of lack of resources, but also because of important differences between the concept of command (Ministry of the Interior, which oversees governors and prefects) and the direction taken by sectoral ministries represented in the field and relying on their central ministry.

In the Benin model, there are two dialogue frameworks provided by law:

The Departmental Administrative Conference (DAC) presided over by the prefect of the department, includes only directors and heads of departmental services. The DAC is the mechanism for State advice and counsel. This technical framework, which is a type of departmental council of representative of ministries, is intended to coordinate government action in each department.

The Departmental Council for Dialogue and Coordination (DCDC) presided over by the prefect of the department includes mayors and their deputies, a representative of the departmental rural producers' union, a representative of the departmental consular chamber, a representative of the departmental federation of school parents. This required advisory body on economic, social and cultural development programmes in the communes and on their coherence with national programmes is the main framework for formalization of relationships between the State, the local authorities and civil society in each department. the DCDC only makes recommendations on (i) the land use management plan and development projects in the department; (ii) environmental protection measures, (iii) proposals to merge, separate and change the boundaries of departmental territories or communes composing it and arbitration of disputes between communes. Finally, no local head of a central government technical service sits on the DCDC, the prefect represents them.

In the Senegalese model, there are three levels of framework for dialogue, but each level integrates the *State/central government* (supervisory authorities, line agencies), *local authorities* and *civil society*.

The Regional Development Programme (RDP) presided over by the governor assisted by two deputies (administration, development) includes the various local authorities of the region, the representatives of central government line agencies, civil society and other structures. This advisory body for coordination of development activities, in comparison with the Benin model, is a fusion of the DAC and DCDC. In sum, the RDC is more integrated. The same configuration can be found in the **Departmental Development Committee (DDC)** and the **Local Development Committee (LDC)**. However, the dialogue frameworks mentioned for Senegal (RDC, DDC and LDC) no longer have a legal basis since the passage of Act No. 96-06 abrogating them.

An assessment of the exercise of supervisory authority indicates that there is much confusion among all members of the chain of supervision: government, governors, prefects and local authorities. In many cases, the agents of State authority (governors and prefects) continue to treat communal and municipal authorities as if they had some type of hierarchical power over them. Some local elected officials, from mayors to councillors, themselves maintain

their submission to the prefects by not asserting the independent administration given by law to local authorities. This situation can be explained by a limited understanding of the laws. At the same time, other local elected officials have difficulty admitting the role of prefects in their communes or pretend to be unaware of it, thereby giving the impression that they only wish to accept supervision when it suits them, giving rise to conflicts of institutional leadership.

Conflicts sometimes arise between the governor or prefect and the local authorities over competition for use of the local representatives of central government line agencies that are under the administrative supervision of the governor and at the same time make up the technical advisory committee of the regional development agency headed by the regional president (the case of Senegal). Regional or departmental services have a strong tendency to favour the orientations defined by the national offices that provide their budget allocations, advancement and transfers, to the detriment of operations in the region and the local authority.

It is also true that attempts by political parties to control appointments to the office of governor and prefect in certain countries are one of the reasons behind the mistrust of directors and heads of central government line agencies for these senior representatives of the State in territorial administration. This lack of coherence between decentralization (devolution to local government) and “deconcentration of central government” (State devolution) is the result of a regionalization without a real policy behind it, which weakens the power of agents of State authority in the regions or departments over the local representatives of central government line agencies.

1.4.4. Support and advisory approaches

Although the name varies from one country to another, each has a Ministry responsible for decentralization. In Benin, Niger and Guinea, decentralization co-exists with public security, while in Senegal, Mali and Burkina Faso, a Ministry is concerned specifically with territorial administration and local authorities.

Each country also has a support and advisory structure just to serve the local authorities, like the House of Elected Officials in Senegal, the Local Authorities Office in Benin or the Mayors' Association of Burkina Faso (MABF) with the mission of training and capacity-building, decentralized cooperation and institutional support. These structures, however, remain rather weak and often still have a culture of not sharing information with all their members.

Technical support and advisory services of the State to the benefit of local authorities remain rather timid, even in countries where the legal frameworks have specified the modalities for making them available. The underlying pro-

blem remains the institutional weakness which has worsened over the course of the past two decades with recruitment freezes, ageing of staff, lack of budgetary resources, corruption and politicization of appointments, which do not place value on competent people.

While the choice of Mali to privatize support and advisory services appears justified in that regard, the Malian model is based on a concept of projects benefiting from support from various development partners. The whole question is to know whether in the medium term Malian communes, especially rural ones, will be able to bear the cost of such support and advice. Likewise, will private providers adjust their costs as a function of the capacity of communes when they know that the viability of many communes is uncertain? Or again, will the State be able to make additional efforts to support partnership between communes and private providers of support and advisory services?

All these questions show that decentralization is not a simple administrative and territorial reform: it is a process of remaking the State that takes time and much experimentation with many approaches to find the solutions to the problems encountered.

Missions of the regional development agencies in Senegal

(i) coordination and harmonization of investment plans and programmes of action between the State and the region and, on the regional scale, among the various local authorities, (ii) direction of land use plans, environmental and sectoral plans at the regional level, (iii) drafting and monitoring of agreements making available external State services to benefit the communities, (iv) design and execution of all studies concerning economic, social, educational and cultural development, (v) support to initiatives for decentralized cooperation. These missions are executed free of charge for the benefit of the local authorities. However, the RDA may charge for project management services delegated to it by the local authority.

In each country, local authorities are also linked among themselves by one or two national associations of elected officials as a function of the number of levels of decentralization: they include national and regional associations of communes or mayors, national associations of rural councils, associations of rural council presidents (ARPs). To bring together all these associations of local authorities in Senegal, there is an umbrella organization called the Union of Associations of Local Elected Officials (UAEA). All these associations of territorial elected officials provide a space for solidarity, advocacy and lobbying.

Importance of territorial agencies for regional and local development in the machinery for implementation of decentralization

Among the six countries which are the subject of this synthesis, Senegal is the only one with territorial agencies established by law as the property of the local authorities to operate in the area of support to project management, the Regional Development Agencies (RDA). Under article 37 of Act No. 96-06 establishing the RDA³, the regions establishes jointly with the communes and rural communities an agency for the purpose of supporting the development of member local authorities. The local representatives of central government line agencies at the regional level are members of the technical committee of the RDA and participate in its board of directors in an advisory capacity.

The agencies depend on the obligatory contributions of member local authorities for their operating funds, set each year by a joint decree of the Minister of Decentralization and the Minister of Finance, subsidies, donations and bequests, as well as resources generated by the services offered.

Support and advisory services by the private sector in Mali

Technical support to local authorities in Mali depends on Community Advisory Centres (CAC) which are operated by NGOs, development projects or research offices. Each CAC covers a circle and its role is to support the communes in its territory in project management for local development. The mission of the CAC is to build the capacity of communes, to provide them technical assistance for project management in making investments, leading the activities of orientation committees and managing the database on local authorities.

Compared to the Senegalese model, the Malian model is more centred around privatization of support and advisory services in the local authorities according to a project-type mechanism.

The CAC are under a National Coordination Unit (NCU) which provides some degree of supervision in each region, known as regional monitoring. The entire machinery comes under the authority of the National Office of Local Authorities through an agreement reached with the NCU.

The CAC machinery is backed up by an orientation machinery ensuring coordination between the territorial approach and the sectoral approach to combating poverty:

- A National Orientation Committee (NOC) with an inter-ministerial profile expanded into the National Local Authority Investment Agency

³ When this report was being drafted, the RDA had received the new mission of supporting the National Local Development Programme (NLDP)

(NLAlA) which is the financial component of the national machinery to support local authorities, consular chambers, the Malian Mayors' Association (MMA) and NGO networks. The interest of the NOC is to ensure the smooth operation of the CAC, to create synergy among the projects of local authorities and sectoral programmes, and among the projects of different actors;

- A Regional Orientation Committee (ROC) comprising the governor, prefects, the Regional Assembly and the regional consular chambers. The ROC is a framework for monitoring and evaluation, coordination of technical support related to the implementation of economic, social and cultural development plans in the region;
- A Local Orientation Committee (LOC) in each circle made up of the prefect, communal councils, the circle council, the local consular chambers and active NGOs. The LOC is a body which approves the programme of work of the CAC and monitors the execution of their tasks.

1.4.5. Financial instruments and project management in local authorities

The reputation of the civil service is that it is **hardly predictive** (lack of planning capacity) and **hardly pro-active** (poor capacity to institute desired changes). Therefore, decentralization aims to break with this tendency towards routine management by promoting a dynamic of change based on the practice of forward planning of evolution in the programming of investment in the medium and long terms which are two essential preparatory conditions for success in the exercise of delegated responsibility and in directing local development.

a) Local planning for territorial governance of development

The planning of local development for a greater mastery of the needs of the population and by a system for programming of investments in the annual budgets of local authorities can be considered as an important emerging culture. More than just to solve problems, all these development plans are oriented towards making the most of local potential, and essential condition for creating wealth in order to combat poverty. Because of the significant contribution of local planning to the development process of local authorities, local planning has been expressly prescribed by the laws on decentralization of all the countries of the sub-region. Whatever the quality and feasibility of these plans, the planning exercise is worthwhile for its learning, social and political interest because the planning process is experienced by local elected officials and their staff as an important mobilization event, an opportunity for debate on projects in society, reflection and strategic choices on the future of the territory and its population.

Planning is essential, but its usefulness depends on evaluation mechanisms on what comes up in the daily management of local authorities and initiatives by other categories of actors (public and private). In these beginnings of the democratic and decentralization processes, it is thus essential for management of local authorities to make progress in satisfying users by offering services that are of general interest, good quality and accessible and are in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Therefore, performance evaluation is an important exercise to which local elected officials should be subject in fulfilling their mandate, because it is part of local governance. Many such mechanisms are provided for this purpose by the countries and by the cooperation frameworks, announcements and possibilities for citizens to attend ordinary sessions of communal councils as observers.

Planning to stimulate local initiatives

Planning is accompanied by performance indicators that should target the following levels or fields for progress: social stimulation linked to partnership, economic stimulation by creating wealth, modernization by improving municipal administration to provide quality services within a reasonable time, a management dynamic by public services (education, health, water, telephone, electricity, sanitation) and the protection of the environment and natural resources.

That said, while financial criteria are essential, it is also essential to consider the quality of territorial governance as a whole, in particular (i) *regular meetings* of the executive boards of technical commissions, *opening the accounts* of the communes *and announcing deliberations*, (ii) *the physical quality of products* and the maintenance *of equipment in operating order*, (iii) *restoration efforts* in degraded neighbourhoods and zones, (iv) the link between planning and yearly *programme budgets*, (v) the functioning of venues for *social dialogue* with local activists and neighbouring local authorities, (vi) the *level of receipts collected* compared to budget forecasts, the level of mastery of the payroll and emoluments, (vi) the effort *to invest with their own resources* and to *maintain equipment with their own resources*.

b) Financial instruments to make the programming of investments concrete

In exercising their authority, the local authorities must meet *operating expenses* (ordinary expenditures) and *investment expenses* (capital expenditures), and the latter are far beyond the local resource mobilization capacity. In fact, the local elected officials are forced to turn to external resources such as cooperation funds, grants, bequests, grants allocated by the State and loans. However, they can only rely for certain on two types of receipts to finance public

expenditure even if they are far from strengthening financial independence. Those are in fact (i) *tax revenues*, (ii) resources coming from *the price paid by clients (billing) in return for public goods and services* offered by the commune administration.

Most communes and rural communities have inherited an unbalanced, and even catastrophic, financial situation, from the structures of the territorial administration that preceded them. This situation affects the functioning, visibility and viability of local authorities, in particular the most numerous, in rural areas. With the exception of communes in large cities and to some extent in secondary towns with high demographic and economic potential, the financial situation of most communes remains rather precarious despite the various financial transfers from the State (support or rebates).

Support to decentralization and to local authorities in each country rests on the creation of various financial instruments to strengthen institutional capacity and produce social, community and market infrastructure. These instruments are aided by various forms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, including decentralized North-South cooperation. The partners with the highest profile in territorial policies are the European Union, the World Bank, the United Nations system (UNDP, UNCDF, UNICEF), the African Development Bank, the United States of America, Canada, Germany, France, Belgium, Denmark, Switzerland, the Netherlands... The financial circuit adopted by programmes and projects in support of decentralization is more or less identical given that the same development partners are found in the six countries with the same cooperation policies. Their contributions can be grouped into three categories according to the circuits of financial flows:

- **Financial contributions through the public accounting circuit (budget support)**
 - Some projects have opened a dedicated account in the Public Treasury and the funding follows the classic circuit of public expenditure (for example the ADECOI/UNDP/UNCDF programme in Benin, PADMIR in Senegal, PACR-T in Mali through ANICT). This type of funding is most in line with national procedures for decentralization.
 - Specific funds are made available to communes to exercise their authority over project management and these funds are deposited in an account in the Treasury of the location involved.
- **Financial contributions outside public accounting (parallel support)**
 - Other projects request the communes to systematically delegate their project management to an infra-communal level, particu-

larly to a village development council or association. This is the case for certain support programmes for decentralized rural development implemented under the poverty reduction strategy in Benin, Burkina Faso and Senegal, financed for infrastructure chosen by the communities.

- Direct financial contributions to local authorities
- In Guinea the local authorities can have their own bank account. Under the PDLG, the RDCs have opened their own bank accounts, which has allowed them to manage directly the subsidies granted as UNCDF support.

Still others require investments to be registered in local development plans to allow them to reinforce local project management (procedures for procurement, supervision and control of the work) by facilitating the double registration of the investment involved in the budget and following that, the necessary provision for their maintenance in the annual operating budgets. The financial circuit thus goes through the commune budget, procurement procedures and payments made by the public accountant. But generally, project management is delegated to executing agencies or project units.

On the impetus of some donors, like the World Bank, project management delegated to a municipal agency is tending to become a management approach that is gaining strength in the institutional landscape of implementing decentralization in the sub-region. Some of the agencies authorized specialize in rural areas, others in urban areas and still others in both types of areas. Space planning specializations predominate in Senegal, with among others the Commune Support Project (CSP). All the programmes and agencies have allowed for experimentation with model management and maintenance contracts for infrastructure in the health, education and water sectors and for income-generating activities (IGA), whose management in certain countries was given back to grassroots associations (school parents' associations, management committees, women's forums, associations for the protection of nature) by communal councils, under an agreement to delegate management for operation and maintenance.

Finally, government initiatives to aid decentralization and local development in local authorities come down to two basic tools, *grant funds* and *agencies* funded by several donors (the State, local authorities, development partners) which are illustrated here by two examples from Senegal and Mali.

For investment, since 1977 Senegal has established the *Local Authority Capital Fund (LACF)*. The mission of this fund was to grant to local authorities:

- no-interest loans to carry out their investments (not yet made up to the present)
- assistance funds.

To operate, the LACF has resources (articles 58 and 63 of Act No. 96-07 of 22 March 1996) coming from a levy on the VAT, the rate of which is set each year by the finance act. The allocation committee meets periodically to examine requests for assistance funds submitted by local authorities. The LACF allocates two types of funds: regular assistance funds and special assistance funds. *Regular assistance funds* are equivalent to a capital donation allocated to the local authorities without designation for a specific project. Their distribution among local authorities is according to good management criteria with the aim of giving them incentives to make an effort to improve the return on their investment and to rationalize their expenses. Once allocated the regular assistance funds may be freely used by the local authority with the only requirement that they be used to finance investments. *Special assistance funds* are granted to local authorities to allow them to finance either counterpart funds required by projects and programmes in support of decentralization, or to cover capital expenses initiated by the State itself. Special assistance funds are also used to encourage rural communities to raise the level of collection of the rural tax. A rural community that collects 100 per cent of its rural tax benefits from special assistance funds of 3 million francs.

To supplement the LACF, Senegal has established a *Decentralization Endowment Fund (DEF)*. The DEF, whose funding level is determined annually, is intended to compensate for operating expenses resulting from the transfer of competences to the local authorities. It is distributed on the basis of criteria for compensation of local communities and criteria for support to devolved administrations for the support and advisory services to those communities. At least 82 per cent of the total amount of the fund are distributed among the regions, the communes and rural communities, an allocation not exceeding 10 per cent of the overall endowment is received by the regions to cover operating expenses for their bodies. Finally, a fixed amount and a proportional amount established as a function of the area and population of the regional administrative district are set aside for the devolved administrations of the State to meet the requests of the local authorities.

Mali has created the *Local Authorities National Investment Agency (ANICT)*, the financial component of the national machinery to support local authorities. The Agency gives local authorities drawing rights intended to support public investment, according to a procedure for selection and approval of micro-projects which depends on the regional branch of ANICT in each region and its Regional Orientation Committee (ROC) headed by the governor. A

similar fund is also planned for Benin (Commune Development Support Fund), in Burkina Faso (Local Development Support Fund) and Niger (Decentralization Support Fund).

Despite serious difficulties in transfer of resources to local authorities, sometimes indicating an objective lack of State budget resources, and often a lack of political will, it must be acknowledged that State financial efforts are nevertheless growing, but far from the minimum required to meet the needs of local authorities to exercise their competence. Resources are still retained and managed for the most part by the central level or entrusted to executing agencies. In sum, the transfer of competence and resources remains a major political challenge in poverty reduction strategies in all the countries of the sub-region where UNCDF is involved. From one point of view, this situation is understandable considering that the decentralization process is still new, the rather poor qualifications of most local elected officials and the lack of awareness among agents of the State regarding what is at stake in this remaking of the State. Other opinions are that the recentralization of resources through development agencies and projects is a logical result of the extreme politicization of local authorities, the risk of diversion of funds, and is a pragmatic means to improve the absorption capacity of international assistance with the aim of raising the level of achievement of the MDGs.

1.5. Impact and principal lessons learned

1.5.1. Principal impact of decentralization on the local and national dynamic

Towards the diversification of social eligibility criteria

Decentralization is under way in the six countries, indicating the beginnings of awareness of the need to democratize the management of local affairs to improve the conception and implementation of development programmes. Each local election is experienced as an evaluation exercise for local elected officials, to the point where they are beginning to integrate and connect their mandates to the obligation to get results underlying all communal competences. Although the first elections were essentially under the influence of the political parties, people are moving progressively towards diversification of the social criteria for eligibility based on moral values and the proven personal abilities of candidates to a post as a local councillor.

It also appears clearly that citizen awareness is building regarding local taxation. The elected officials know that they need to mobilize local resources and that is an essential criterion for governance and performance. Even if the level of tax revenues is still very low compared to its potential, people are

better understanding the role of taxes after decentralization, than before its arrival.

Decentralization and development have become themes around which the development partners can be mobilized because they are effectively centred around the MDGs and on improving the level of consumption of international aid.

A culture of planning is spreading, as a result of which today each commune knows its strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, and attempts to provide a chance for access by disadvantaged groups to basic social services.

Even though participatory management and being accountable are not yet automatic for all elected officials, some of them have truly made progress in dialogue with civil society. Cooperation frameworks are formally prescribed by law. Thus, whatever the country, the legislature is concerned with the need for territorial development (regional or local) to integrate other forms of legitimacy with which the people already identify in their areas: thus the various cooperation frameworks constitute a wise combination of *political legitimacy* (representivity coming out of the political class), *social legitimacy* (various associations coming out of traditional chiefs, cultural authorities, some types of dominant professions like agriculture in rural areas, representatives of users of basic social services like education, health and water supply), *technical legitimacy* (local representatives of central government line agencies, some networks of technical support NGOs), and *administrative and institutional legitimacy* (supervisory authority, executive offices of elected bodies).

All these experiences in community development through land use management programmes serve as a prerequisite for the entire process of decentralization in the sub-region.

The de facto monopoly of support and advisory services exercised by local representatives of central government line agencies is in the process of disappearing to the benefit of liberalized support to local authorities with the emergence or consolidation of NGOs and local research offices that support them while learning in the field. The various capacity building programmes that are in progress in each of the countries offer a real chance to build a body of local expertise that will enable local elected officials to rely on the private sector to consolidate project management.

1.5.2. Principal lessons learned on the context and the institutional framework

Lesson one: Decentralization and local development represent a means to be encouraged to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

- Local authorities raised many fears and questions among the population in terms of the threat of tax pressure and the viability of communes. Today, the beginnings of an appropriation of decentralization can be seen everywhere, both by local elected officials and by the population as an opportunity to strengthen social and political dialogue, appreciating local dynamics and taking control of the development of each area. Decentralization, as a step reaffirming popular legitimacy and the promotion of democracy of the population, amplifies the emergence of a local civil society around grassroots community organizations (GCOs), which are already growing the seeds of citizen control alongside classic control (administrative, political and legal).
- Administrative and financial autonomy, which constitutes the basic principle of decentralization, requires local elected officials to communicate frequently with the population to obtain their adherence to the contribution of one and all to local development and maintaining the common good. Decentralization is an opportunity to raise the local collective awareness of development problems and the responsibility of each individual.
- Even if most communes are dependent on external aid, the fact that the usefulness of decentralization is beginning to be understood by the population is progress on the road to strengthening autonomy.

Lesson two: The transfer of competence to local authorities is justified by the failure of State centralism and deepening poverty. However, these competences are outsized compared to current technical and financial capacities of elected officials of local authorities.

This situation has several causes:

- Low managerial capacity among elected officials, many of whom are illiterate;
- Poorly qualified and motivated municipal staff, too few and with too few skills (a high proportion are illiterate and unqualified) often maintain an authoritarian relationship with users;
- Low local tax revenues and a low annual budget compared to missions of general interest;
- The absence of a local administration: it is confined to the community secretary (or general secretary of the mayor's office), a contracted agent or a State civil servant on secondment, generally a high school graduate, recruited and paid by the State;
- Lack of political will to transfer to the community because of privileges and other advantages associated with management;

- Lack of awareness of the opportunities offered by cooperation among communes: proud of their autonomy yet handicapped by political differences or quarrels among the leadership, each local authority wants to have all its own services as provided by law for optimal functioning. Although this desire appears legitimate, its feasibility is hampered by the lack of its own resources and transfers. All the laws on decentralization allow cooperation among local authorities, but unfortunately, in actual fact, they are unaware of the opportunities offered by cooperation and the economies of scale that could result from some common service.

Lesson three: Insufficient consideration given to the concept of territory in the decentralization process, lack of political will to make decentralization a true opportunity to strengthen efficiency, effectiveness and impact of sectoral policies at the territorial level.

This context is explained by the following facts and statements:

- Lack of regulations implementing laws on decentralization to strengthen and speed the pace of reform of territorial administration. Through ministerial departments the central structures continue to take care of execution rather than the definition and monitoring of national policies and strategies. This institutional context is explained by the slow pace of passage of rules implementing laws on decentralization. Governors and prefects, who are supposed to be the bearers of State authority at the regional and departmental level, only provide partial coordination of State actions. In effect, the local representatives of central government line agencies define and execute their programme of activities more in relation to their sectoral hierarchies than with the local authorities.
- Lack of linkages between the project portfolio identified and the local budget and the technical capacity of communes. Execution rates for these plans are very low because of they are unrealistic and the lack of will by central governments and their low value in the national investment programming system. There are a plethora of guides in each country and in the absence of a regulatory system providing a national framework harmonized with the national programming system, it becomes quite laborious to produce a regional and national synthesis of local development plans because the variations in the basic structure are too great.
- Clear mechanisms are nonexistent for going from imposed delegation of project management by the State and certain development partners to chosen delegation of project management to motivate elected of-

ficials and especially to show them that they are stakeholders in an effective process of transfer of competence and not of recentralization of a major part of their power to certain technical and financial support bodies.

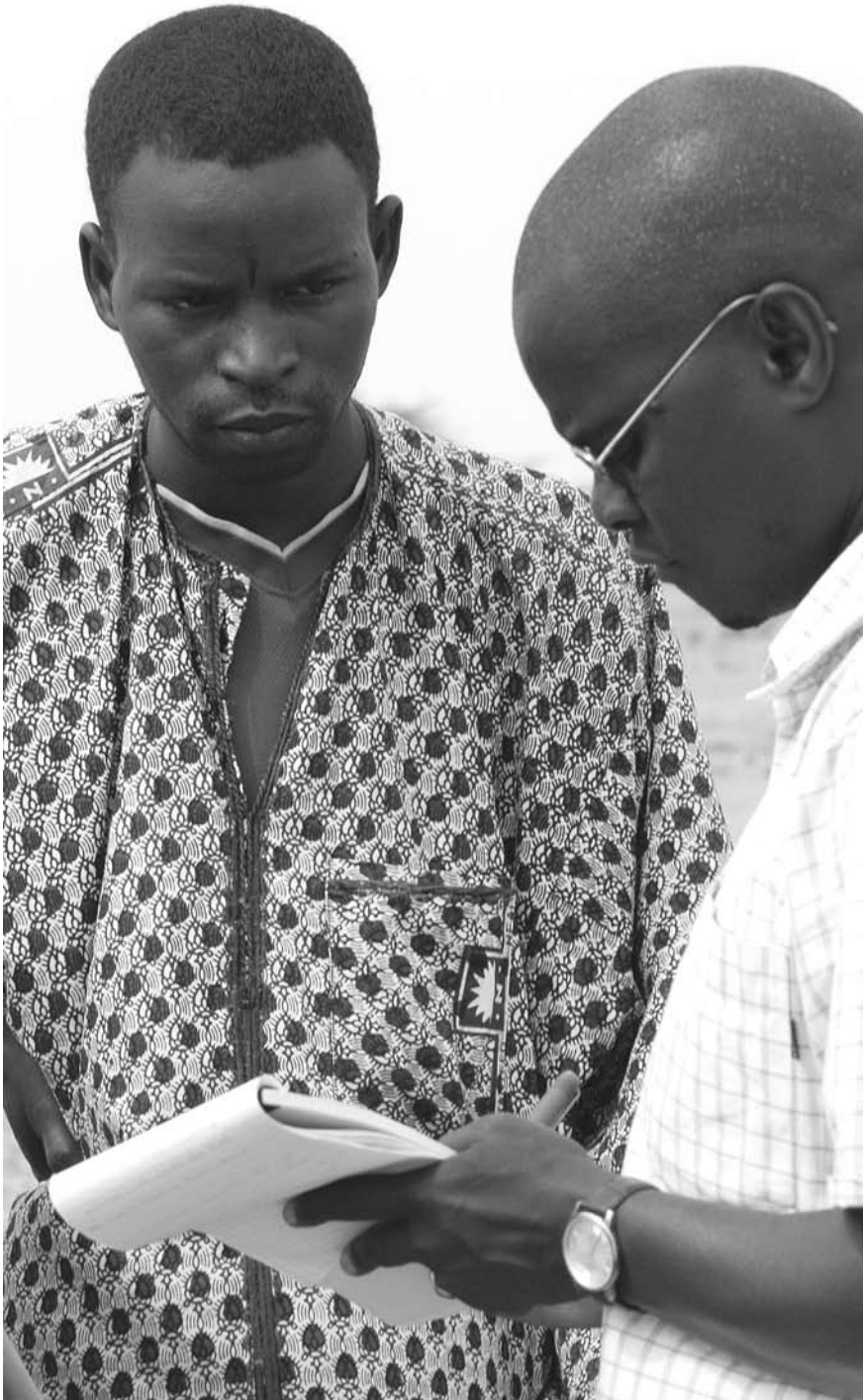
- Difficulty in coordination and harmonization of regional development activities among the region and the local authorities, and the region and the State.
- Lack of a shared vision of local development among the local authorities making up a region and almost no inter-communal cooperation initiatives among neighbouring communes.
- Pre-eminence of macroeconomic and sectoral policies over territorial policies. States have difficulty in going from a sectoral concept to a territorial concept where sectoral administrations would become the means for carrying out territorial development in the service of local districts and authorities. Forecasting of investment resources to the benefit of local authorities being managed by each ministry, communes, the communes lack information on these State forecasts when they conduct their local programming and planning exercises. Nevertheless, representatives of devolved public services are present during the planning/programming process. Thus there are still major efforts to be made to improve the circulation of information in each sector, and among each sector in a local authority.
- Possible improvements to frameworks and efforts for social dialogue on local and sectoral public policies. Coordination frameworks are provided for in all laws on decentralization to enable the participation of civil society organizations in defining and implementing development activities. But it must be noted that the functioning of these cooperation and coordination frameworks is far from a priority in territorial budgets. Likewise, tools for leadership and monitoring that would allow their value-added to be appreciated are lacking. The OSC also see themselves more as policemen and project operators than as a source of proposals, which hurts their credibility with local elected officials who are already seeking means to limit their influence.
- Poor development of a culture of accountability. This management approach is not yet a habit and efforts should be made in that regard to strengthen local governance.
- Pre-eminence of hierarchical relationships over supportive relationships. Many supervisory authorities have not yet understood what is at stake in decentralization and prefer to remain in a command role. This situa-

tion is exacerbated even more in cases of co-territoriality that in institutional outlines where the two types of powers are not superimposed over the same local competence. Unfortunately, capacity building programmes are targeted more at local elected officials than at governors, prefects, sub-prefects and directors of local representatives of central government line agencies. This situation should be corrected.

- Marginal integration of traditional chiefs in the institutional framework of decentralization. Because of their historical legitimacy, the influence of traditional or religious chiefs still remains significant in social control and popular expression, especially in rural areas. They cannot be ignored in all elections and are opinion-makers, but in the name of democratic principles, the laws give them no place in the decision-making system. But it is in the interest of elected officials at the local level to have the traditional chiefs with them rather than against them.
- Marginalization of civil society in the conquest of local power. The extreme politicization of local elections for community leadership is a discriminatory approach that does not value all those wishing to contribute their skills and make a personal commitment to the management of their community. Control of local authorities by political parties represents high stakes for national elections. But this politicization is often behind the instability and clashes within elected bodies: the 2002 dissolution of the municipal and rural councils in favour of the change in political power in Senegal, the wholesale removal of mayors during the first two years of communization in Benin, the dissolution of communal councils to replace them by appointed mayors in Guinea.... Further thought is needed on the subject of conditions of eligibility for the office of territorial councillor in order to consolidate grassroots participatory democracy and shelter it from political upheavals at the national level.
- Lack of authority and capacity of the ministries responsible for local authorities. While in the field it is the governors or prefects who by law should coordinate all sectoral interventions on the ground on behalf of the State, project management for these programmes escapes the control of the ministries responsible for local authorities. This situation can be explained by the fact that, traditionally, these are ministries more concerned with security than with local and regional development. This lack of practice in directing development programmes and related procedures explains why many donors prefer to entrust supervision of

their programmes to crosscutting ministries like ministries for finance or development. However, this mindset is changing and it was possible to place the ADECOI programme in Benin under the supervision of both the ministries for decentralization and for development.

- Slow pace of land reform, which maintains the vagueness regarding the effective responsibilities of local elected officials in land management and natural resources management in general.



2] PROJECTS IN SUPPORT OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTED BY UNCDF AND ITS PARTNERS

2.1. History of the projects

The various programmes and projects implemented by UNCDF in partnership with UNDP and other donors are generally pilot projects in support to local development that prefigure decentralization, and more specifically communalization.

Nine experiences are examined in this capitalization study. The following programmes and projects are considered:

- **Benin:** Project in support of Communal Development and Local Initiative in Borgou (ADECOI). Financing partners: UNDP, Belgian Survival Fund, Government of Benin and local authorities.
- **Burkina Faso:** Namentenga Province Agro-pastoral resources development project (PAPNA) and Sahel Burkinabe Programme Support Project (SBP) in Soum Province. Financing partners: UNDP, Belgian Survival Fund, Government of Burkina Faso and the population of the target areas.
- **Guinea:** Local Development Programme in Guinea (PDLG). Financing partners: UNDP, Government of Guinea and local authorities.
- **Mali:** Support Project for the rural communes of Timbuctu and Mopti (PACR/TM). Financing partners: UNDP, Belgian Survival Fund, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Government of Mali and local communities.
- **Niger:** Local Development Support Projects (PADL) at N'Guigmi and Mayahi. Financing partners: UNDP, Belgian Survival Fund, Government of Niger and the population of the target areas.
- **Senegal:** Rural Support Programme (PADMIR). Financing partners:

UNDP, European Union, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Government of Senegal and local authorities.

Most of these projects either follow previous interventions focused on an eco-development approach going back to the nineties, or interventions of the latest generation more oriented towards support to decentralization and local development. Among previous projects can be mentioned (i) the Support to Local Development in East Bourgoou and West Atacora Project (PADEL) in Benin; (ii) The Production and Assistance Project in Namentenga (PAPANAM), the Boulsa-Tougouri Road Construction Project, the Sahel Burkinabe Support Project (PA-PSB phase 1) in Burkina Faso, (iii) the Support Programme for the Middle Guinea Rural Development Programme (PDG/MG), the Support Programme for the Seno-Gonde Village Land Use Programme and the Rice Cultivation Programme in the Gao and Timbuctu regions of Mali.

The analysis of these projects through their location and their objectives shows three types of projects which structured UNCDF interventions in West Africa at the time:

- **Eco-development projects** placed great importance on natural resources management and environmental protection through most of the operational components of interventions while also addressing poverty eradication.
- **Rural development projects** gave priority attention to food security as a sector where the actions promoted were concentrated.
- **Local development projects** were based on a more comprehensive approach putting the commune structure at the centre of the intervention. By nature they were both (i) institutional by strengthening the role and capacities of the various local actors and promoting participatory democracy, (ii) planning by establishing social-collective infrastructure and equipment, and (iii) economic by diversifying income-generating activities for the population and for the local territorial administration by mobilization of tax resources.

In all these interventions that are part of the recent history of projects conducted by UNCDF in West Africa, village microprojects were at the heart of the local rural development strategy. They should not be perceived as a simple exercise of building infrastructure but through the concept of local public service that this infrastructure offers to the citizens of these localities.

Overall, these microprojects constitute an important source of improvement in living conditions and production systems. They have enabled experimentation and promotion of technical progress in agriculture, forestry and grazing as well as stimulation to the local economy by support to microfinance

Objectives of previous generations of UNCDF projects

PADEL in Benin

(i) Improve living conditions for the population and revitalize economic growth at the grassroots level by establishing an appropriate financing tool, (ii) increase capacity for initiatives and management in local authorities in local economic and social life, (iii) promote micro-business by providing access to appropriate financial services

PAPANAM in Burkina Faso

(i) Make agriculture more secure by controlling water and increase agricultural production, (ii) improve the people's food supply and nutrition in basic grains and (iii) promote self-development through the land use management approach.

PA-PSB in Burkina Faso

(i) Help to combat desertification and implement agricultural and land reorganization (ii) support the institutional strengthening of inter-village structures (CIVGT) to transform them into structures for stimulation and management of local development.

PDRMG in Guinea

Sustainable improvement of the living conditions of farmers through increasing their income by integrating the agricultural sector into national economic policy.

PPSR in Mali

(i) Perpetuate production systems, (ii) give autonomy to representation structures and development operators, (iii) promote banking and credit in rural areas, (iv) promote diversification of production activities, especially for women.

FDL Kédougou in Senegal

Improve living conditions for the poorest groups through eco-development and the local development fund.

and income-generating activities, especially to benefit women's groups.

One constant in all these microprojects is the aid provided to rural communities in view of the adoption of democratic and participatory decision-making processes preparing to defend their interests better with the development administrations and to work in greater harmony for the higher interests of their community.

It should be noted that, apart from Senegal, where PADMIR was already linked with rural councils, in the other countries where decentralization was not effective, the execution of these projects resulted in the establishment of village and inter-village land use committees serving as frameworks for the people to take responsibility for local planning, resources mobilization, procurement, monitoring of projects and receiving and operating building sites.

The three types of projects demonstrate a certain number of essential and common characteristics that should be highlighted:

- a) **local project management** of project activities at the level of each community according to a concept of making the entire community responsible and taking all the decisions within the community concerning access to social and community services in the sectors of education, health, and water as the case may be. What is at stake here is allowing the institutions and organizations responsible for taking the decision to be as close as possible to the people concerned. This institutional characteristic of support projects resulted in support to capacity building through training such areas as group dynamics, planning-programming, procurement, management, community monitoring-evaluation and accounting. Anything having to do with learning the roles and responsibilities of a deliberating body of a local authority. For certain projects, this dynamic was part of a strategy of preparing for the advent of decentralization.
- b) **natural resource management and protection of the environment:** Almost all the areas of UNCDF intervention are undergoing difficult environmental conditions marked by problems of rainfall, degradation of land and wood resources, lack of pasture for cattle. These areas are often faced with frequent conflicts between farmers and grazers. The food deficit and malnutrition are recurrent situations affecting the development of these zones. Stabilization of family agricultural operations and food security requires actions in the areas of soil protection and restoration, rural water supply, promotion of village forestry and integration of agriculture, grazing and reforestation in production systems.
- c) **development of income-generating activities:** monetary poverty is a dominant characteristic of all the intervention zones. Its excessive influence over food security, children's schooling, access to health care and mobilization of local tax resources for community investment no longer needs to be demonstrated. It would appear to be evident that the response requires establishment of credit lines and loan security funds among the banking and microfinance structures to support small promoters. However, these practices have been modified in order to take into account the lessons learned and best practices in microfinance.
- d) **improved social-community services offered through co-financing:** this is relative to, in particular, infrastructure and equipment for primary education, adult education, community health, village water supply, sanitation and connection to the outside world. A financial mechanism

(the Local Development Fund) supports this offer, which also permits financing of commercial equipment and infrastructure, in particular storage areas and market stalls, stores, slaughterhouses, butchers... from which taxes can be collected by local administrations. Support was also provided in some cases to bring some villages with production potential out of isolation.

- e) **the gender approach** (advancement of women) **the participatory approach** (learning by doing and taking responsibility), integration of marginalized groups (lower castes) and land use management for **equitable distribution of investments** among the communities on the basis of social dialogue and consensus in the framework of a planning process.

2.2. Characteristics of projects capitalized

2.2.1. *Characteristics of intervention zones*

General characteristics

UNCDF prefers to intervene in the most vulnerable and poorest zones. This choice is in perfect harmony with its mandate which aims to reduce poverty by implementing local development programmes.

The project zones of intervention have the following geographical characteristics: (i) very far removed from the capitals of the countries of intervention (up to 1500 km in the case of N'Guigmi in Niger), (ii) located in zones with low rainfall or right on the threshold of the Sahel and subject to recurring ecological and food crises; (iii) very high agricultural potential but isolated and the potential unrecognized, as is the case in the intervention zones of Benin and Guinea.

All the projects are linked with decentralization and are in support of local authorities and grassroots organizations. They cover a significant number of communes, from 7 communes in Benin to 23 rural development communities in Guinea and 134 communes in Mali.

Major problems leading to the selection of each zone

The consolidation of prior UNCDF interventions in each of these countries and the need to assist the decentralization process in its strategies to combat poverty justify the choice of the zones as a whole. However, each intervention zone is part of the poorest areas in its country, and a few structural specifics that can explain their vulnerability in part should be presented here.

Benin

- 50 per cent of the population in the intervention zone lives below the poverty threshold;
- Poverty is manifested in many forms: (i) households face difficulty in meeting their food costs during the dry season, lasting 4 to 6 months, aggravating the problems of child malnutrition, (ii) very low school enrolment rates, (iii) a heavy burden of work for women, (iv) farmers selling of cropland to compensate for their drop in income.

Burkina Faso

- Low level of development interventions in the area and its low level of development compared to other provinces in the country

Guinea

- A social situation of great concern: (i) very limited access to basic services, (ii) a very low school enrolment rate, especially among girls, (iii) the illiteracy rate among the population is in the neighbourhood of 70 per cent, (iv) isolation of production zones.

Mali

- Around 76 per cent of the population of Mopti and Timbuctu live below the poverty threshold.

Niger

- The departments of N'Guigmi and Mayahi are extremely vulnerable with regard to their geographical location which exposes them to recurring ecological and economic crises.
- Factors of vulnerability: (i) the illiteracy rate approaches 80 per cent, (ii) poor performance of agricultural tools and equipment, (iii) decline in soil fertility and chronic food crises, (iv) lack of and mediocre quality of socio-economic infrastructure (schools, health care centres, water systems and roads).

Senegal

- A drastic lack of infrastructure and equipment for health, education and water supply: (i) a deficit in quantity and quality of health centres and 44 per cent of the population does not have access to health infrastructure within 5 km, (ii) a high proportion of schools are in temporary shelters (flimsy materials), without sanitation facilities, enclosing walls and water points. These schools do not meet the required standard of

quality, (iii) access to water is difficult and is most often provided by wells in rural areas.

From all these characteristics and problems described above, it can be seen that the choice of the zones of intervention was determined by their very low level of development: (i) hunger and malnutrition, (ii) monetary poverty, (iii) degradation of natural resources serving as the production base for the rural world, (iv) adult illiteracy and a low rate of school enrolment for children, (v) difficult access to safe drinking water and health care, (vi) low level of social and community investments and deplorable conditions of hygiene and sanitation, (vii) lack of institutional and organizational capacity to promote local development.

2.2.2. Project objectives

The development objectives of the UNDP/UNCDF projects overall are almost identical and are based on the characteristics and problems discussed before.

They deal with *the sustainable improvement of modes and means of existence of rural populations* through a system of local programming and multisectoral investments.

As for immediate objectives, they have to do with: (i) improvement of food security, (ii) capacity building of organizations of society, local authorities and local representatives of central government line agencies, (iii) assistance to decentralization and improvement to local governance for sustainable human development in rural communities, (iv) improving the well-being of the population through income-generating activities and the promotion of local economic development, (v) improving the level of equipment, infrastructure and delivery of basic social services and the decentralized management of natural resources.

2.2.3. Approaches and methods of intervention

The objectives of projects having their foundation in combating poverty and sustainable human development are operationalized through modalities that can be summarized through several elements of the profile found in every project.

Principles of intervention

Assistance to the decentralization process and support to local development by experimental programmes and projects conducted by UNCDF in partnership with UNDP and its other financial partners mentioned before follow a set of fundamental principles.

- **Decentralization and project management of local development:** Projects help to combat poverty by homogenous support (methodological, technical, financial, delegation of decision-making power, etc) to local actors, in particular to transitional local institutions (IVLUC and CMC) and more specifically to local authorities if they are in place. The projects aim to make a concrete contribution to the discussion on the implementation of decentralization.
- **Subsidiarity and having it done:** Subsidiarity affirms that all functions should be entrusted to the level as close as possible to the base because of comparative advantage. Subsidiarity constitutes a main strategic focus to the extent that it enables a partnership with all local actors, civil society organizations, peasant organizations, NGOs and producers' groups to learn to decide on and implement effectively the development activities involving them.
- **Strategic partnership:** All projects favour taking initiative with a view to establishing collaborative relationships with institutional partners (projects, government institutions, national and international NGOs, local associations) which are already involved or plan to start up their activities in the intervention zone as part of a sustainable strategy for financing and implementation of local development.
- **Cofinancing of micro-projects** with local contributions in various forms as a way to demonstrate the ownership, will, commitment and perpetuation of the available services generated. It places particular emphasis on the financial contribution of the communal institution.
- **Transparency:** Sharing of information concerning management of development activities and as a means of strengthening social dialogue on local policies, as a means of social control and strengthening of citizen participation in the management of local affairs.
- **Requirement of accountability:** The duty of each institutional actor to account for its actions to the other stakeholders as a method of results-based management and of verifying user satisfaction and taking into account the interests of poor and marginalized groups and minorities.
- **Capitalization:** Projects capitalize lessons learned, particularly in the fields of participation of all actors in decision-making processes, transparency in management of development activities and the requirement of accountability.

Intervention strategies conveying these principles

- **A local planning system** as a repeated process of participation and a programming mechanism for priority actions affecting several villages and giving responsibility to various actors for the project management of development activities.
- **A Local Development Fund** adapted to the realities of the zone and giving financing managed according to decentralized mechanisms.
- Project financing aligned with national procedures for decentralization.
- **Experimentation with structuring of actors** to strengthen dialogue and collective actions (communal development commissions, communal procurement commissions, inter-village land use committees)
- **A disengagement strategy** through inter-village committees and the communal institutions that will take over the project to consolidate achievements in each field of investment.
- **A review of lessons learned** in order to nourish and influence national policies at both the legislative and instrumental levels.

Supports to formalization of the strategy

The formalization of the intervention strategy happens through fundamental documents common to all intervention projects. These are documents that the projects help the authorities and communities to establish to promote local development:

- **A partnership agreement** between each local authority and the project defining the financial commitments of the parties, roles and responsibilities and performance criteria;
- A local development plan, general covering 5 years;
- A multi-year investment programme (MIP) over 3 years;
- An annual investment programme (AIP);
- **Contracts for activities** to assign responsibilities and accountability requirements;
- **Technical execution and financial reports** at varying intervals, but in all cases, an annual report is obligatory, and must specify activities performed.

Typology of activities financed

Micro-projects financed by projects are in two groups:

- **Micro-projects done by communal project management:** social-community infrastructure under the supervision of the commune;

- **Micro-projects managed by groups:** carried out by grassroots organizations, not under commune supervisions, generally involving income-generating activities or relieving women's burdens, for instance a mill or a village grain bank or inputs for a village association.

Several dimensions are revealed by the intervention approach to UNCDF/UNDP projects:

- **A political dimension:** linked to improved governance at the State and local authority level;
- **A social and cultural dimension:** based on raising the basic level of equipment and the quality of delivery of services essential to the well-being of the population;
- **An economic dimension:** relating to the promotion of local economic development through income-generating activities and strengthening of market infrastructure;
- **An environmental dimension:** relating to sustainable management of natural resources, land use planning and protection of the environment.

Financial contributions

Financing is based on co-financing (see 3.4). Most of the interventions conducted by UNCDF in Africa are financed by UNDP/UNCDF, Luxembourg Cooperation, and the European Union on the one hand, and African Governments, local authorities, microfinance institutions and direct beneficiaries on the other. The funding envelope mobilized by project is in the range of 4 to 12.6 million US dollars.

2.3. Frameworks for coordination and partnership

Institutional partnerships are made up both of : (i) governmental structures: central ministries and devolved administrations; (ii) local authorities, (iii) private bodies: NGOs and research institutes which act as operators in conducting activities in partnership with project management teams in the communes, (iv) village associations and groups, (v) and certain development projects with an interest in a collaboration. The UNCDF/UNDP intervention zones are increasingly the zones of concentration of the United Nations system agencies in each country.

In general, the project coordination framework involves the following institutional arrangements:

An anchoring ministry with a focal point within it, usually the central office in charge of research, forecasting and planning. Technical and administrative supervision of each project is provided according to the project by the

ministry for agriculture, water and plant resources (in the case of PAPNA in Burkina Faso), Decentralization and Territorial Administration (ADECOI in Benin, PDLG in Guinea, PACR in Mali and PADMIR in Senegal), Finance, the Economy and Development (in the case of PADL in Niger) and the Environment (the case of PA/PSB in Burkina Faso).

The tripartite review which is where decisions are made and which takes the place of a steering committee for the project, is responsible for approving annual investment plans and annual execution reports. It has competence to decide on the direction for the project, in particular its amendment, continuation and/or termination. It includes representatives of the government (all the technical ministries involved and those of finance and development) representatives of donors (UNDP/UNCDF), representatives of the population, and the project management unit.

The technical cooperation framework or regional cooperation and coordination framework for development activities. It can be specific to one project or a standing territorial cooperation and coordination framework utilized by all the projects of the zone concerned. It is presided over by the supervisory authority of the project intervention zone. According to the administrative organization of the country, that can be the regional governor, high commissioner or prefect of the department. All the devolved services of the State concerned and the project management unit are part of it. The purpose of the framework is to promote the circulation of information among all actors in the zone in order to harmonize actions on the ground taking into account the national and regional outlines for land use management.

The operational partnership gathering together all the development projects, NGOs and local associations operating in similar or complementary fields in the same locations in the intervention zone. Generally, these are actors working on land use planning programmes, food security, basic infrastructure development, rural extension and adult training, income-generating activities and micro-finance. Thus, at the local level, the primary partners of projects are communal councils and mayors, village land use committees or commissions and inter-village land use committees or commissions and communal land use commissions or committees.

2.4. Innovations promoted

Organizational dynamic and structuring of the environment

From a situation where only traditional chiefs, local administrations and local representatives of central government line agencies reflected, decided and

executed in the name of and in the place of the rural communities, we have moved to another situation characterized by the emergence of new actors marking the birth of new decision-making and action centres through the village and inter-village councils and the communal councils that henceforward act in the name of and on behalf of the general interest of the local people, to whom they are accountable.

The local planning process and its execution costs

It rests on major involvement by the population through cooperation, reporting and decision-making mechanisms and execution of programmed actions.

The communes, village and inter-village committees and social and professional organizations (women's groups, ranchers and farmer's associations) provide frameworks for participation in planning, while at the same time serving as channels of communication and mobilization.

Principal difficulties related to planning

The planning process, while certainly participatory, is very lengthy and not easily reproduced by local bodies in particular because of the expense of some communes and the lack of their own means of transportation, the complexity of diagnostic and planning tools (numerous pages of questionnaires, voluminous documents issued in French) and the low educational level of the actors and the general population. Planning also creates very high expectations which financing mechanisms are incapable of meeting fully. Thus, there is a major gap between expectations and capacity to implement the priority actions identified. This creates the danger of disillusionment among the population towards the participatory planning process.

The most important contributions emerge from village committees, groups and social and professional organizations, thus making the elaboration of the communal development plan a participatory exercise experienced and conducted by the communities themselves with the support of the assisting technical services and NGOs.

The highly participatory planning/programming system allows the progressive and endogenous emergence of a spirit of openness, tolerance and solidarity acting at the level of VLUCs and IVLUCs. This change in behaviour prepares communities for an inter-community dynamic and a culture of peace that will open up opportunities for executing projects of common interest of broad scope with economies of scale in several fields. The experience of the lo-

cal planning process in the UNCDF projects (see the following table) show an average production cost of the PDC between 131 FCFA and 190 FCFA per capita on the basis of the data coming out of three countries: Benin, Guinea and Senegal. This cost includes all the instruments executed in the first year of the project, the Local Development Plan (a 5-year horizon), the Multi-Year Investment Plan (over 3 years) and the Annual Investment Plan (1 year).

Table N°2 : Average production costs of community development plans

Country	Number of communes	Population	Total cost	Average cost per commune	Cost per capita
Bénin	7	500,000	65.760.908 Fcfa	9 million Fcfa	131 Fcfa/person
Guinée	23	375,000	71.300.000 Fcfa	3,1 million Fcfa	190 Fcfa/person
Sénégal	26	455,000	78.000.000 Fcfa	3,0 million Fcfa	171 Fcfa/person

A cost above 200 FCFA per person would be difficult for the community to absorb. It is therefore important to determine the cost of planning per person because that will allow the costs of these exercises to be made relative.

Preventive management of rural conflicts through communal land commissions: defining the boundaries of spaces for public use (grazing areas) by these structures that represent the appropriate forum for preventive management of rural conflicts, in particularly those related to exploitation of natural resources.

Protection of the environment and natural resources management: making cooperation frameworks responsible for functions as essential as renewal, protection and conservation of natural resources has helped to make up for gaps in the official State machinery in this area.

Procurement: competition and contracting

The creation of procurement committees in communes thus enshrines devolution of the procedure for awarding public contracts, that up to the present, has been perceived as a duty of central power and territorial representatives of the State (governors, high commissioners, prefects, sub-prefects). Moreover, procurement through a bidding process and as necessary, through restricted consultation, but still open to multiple candidates, has introduced at the community level new reflexes and new methods and perceptions towards public management. This places transparency at the centre of management of local general interests.

Furthermore, in their management practices, local elected officials call for open competition or restricted to local operators, or even national, through

requests for bids that they open publicly according to the rules, deciding how to award the contracts for the projects of which they are monitoring the execution.

The committees to award contracts at the IVLUC have developed a number of innovative procedures for requests for bids and restricted consultation by separating bids for supplies from bids for services as far as contracts for infrastructure are concerned. This initiative has led to significant progress at the level of control of supplies and management of stocks, including monitoring of materials at the work site. This is an important step forward for communities with low literacy.

The local development financing system based on the commune budget:

The mobilization of the total amount of State counterpart funds and communes through a levy at the source through the public Treasury, management of counterpart funds (State and commune) by the commune, the absence of in-kind counterpart funds demanded by the population in order to progressively establish a local taxation culture, are important innovations leading to progress in local governance and poverty reduction.

Expenditure circuit through national public finance: This is the circuit of transfer of funds from the Public Treasury which is used for the financial execution of LDF. UNCDF has made available the necessary funds on the basis of the decision of the steering and financing allocation committee. The funds were then transferred into a special account in the Public Treasury. This experiment is in the process of building the credibility of the State, by showing that certain public financial administrations are capable of managing project funds efficiently and transparently, which are resources whose use follows a strict programming for consumption and according to precise objectives. Today, this experiment is attracting many development partners.

Community management of collective infrastructure through a system of participatory technical control:

The creation of specific committees responsible for management of collective infrastructure and equipment represents a new approach intended to give more responsibility to rural communities and guarantee ownership and perpetuation of investments whose renewal remains well above current local abilities.

Confidence in decentralization: Under UNCDF projects, there is a real desire to trust the institutions established through decentralization policies, for it is through the consolidation of the communes that decentralization will survive and succeed. It is a matter of shifting from a *project concept* to one of *institutional sustainability*.

Some constraints not to be overlooked:

- **In-kind counterparts are difficult to manage for local authorities.** Operators or entrepreneurs can use problems with quantity or quality as a pretext to get out of their responsibilities for project management. Furthermore, when manpower is furnished by the community, it is not always available when desired, which causes major delays in producing infrastructure and once again takes responsibility away from the entrepreneur.
- **The functioning of infrastructure is not always guaranteed.** Indeed, despite prior commitments by both sides, it happens that additional investments promised by others are not delivered or that staff promised by the State are not made available to the communities.
- **Poor management practices in some communes** in some cases, like holding back payments to enterprises either by mayors or by agents of the State, are noted. These practices cause major income shortfalls as well as delays in the actual construction of the infrastructure.



3] INSTRUMENTS AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

3.1. Instruments and the local planning cycle

UNCDF support to decentralization and local development includes systematic support to the establishment of local planning instruments. UNCDF agreements to support a local authority or commune thus include local planning and related assistance efforts, in particular the strengthening of the technical and institutional capacity of local actors to lead the planning – budgeting process and co-financing of the implementation of part of the sections of the annual local development plans. For that purpose, and in accordance with the legal framework of decentralization in each country, a mechanism is set up, either a communal development commission, or an inter-village land use committee.

3.1.1. Instruments and principles of communal and local development planning

Communal or local planning is a territorial management approach, requiring results-based management to channel investments and rationalize the use of resources mobilized for the good of the local population and the future generations. It is aimed at raising awareness amongst local elected officials and the population about the future of their territory in terms of local development, poverty reduction and attenuation of unequal access to public goods and services. Local planning understood that way means breaking with a lack of effort on the part of communes (local government) to programme and mobilize local investment resources for annual budgets. The commune's budget should thus be an annual instrument for implementing the commune's development plan.

Principal planning instruments

As already mentioned in the section on supports to formalization of the strategy, the planning exercise generates three documents in UNCDF partner communes:

- *The communal development plan (CDP) or local development plan (LDP), which is a tool for guidance and a long-term framework generally covering a five-year period;*

- *The multi-year investment programme (MIP)* which is an operationalization of the CDP by programming covering investment needs and resources to be mobilized over the next three years;
- *The annual investment programme (AIP)* takes the place of a programme budget for the year and ensures the implementation of the CDP following a result-based approach. This approach brings about a yearly performance evaluation in the commune to evaluate the level of achievement of the local development objectives.

Through these tools for support and management of local development, new orientations and impetus can be given to local authorities, particularly local government (communes), who from now on must be very close to their citizens and offer services meeting their expectations. To accomplish this, the commune cannot be concerned with its own operations alone and, as in the past, fail to become involved in the resolution of local development problems of each community. Thus the commune needs to master the local population's demands for public services, local economic potential, the capacity of the people to contribute and ways and means to increase the commune's investment capacity in order to meet investment expenditure. In sum, the mobilization of local resources is essential to lay the foundations for sustainable local development. This is why UNCDF projects stress that local resource mobilization efforts must be taken into account in the annual performance evaluation of communes.

Local development plans or communal development plans can thus be understood as economic, social and cultural development plans incorporating concerns about the environment and a gender dimension.

Some main principles of local planning

The principles of communal project management are observed by UNCDF projects as soon as the communes are established.

In a situation prior to decentralization and on an experimental basis, these principles were used by inter-village land use commissions or committees. From the number of these principles, which are based on decentralization laws, the following can be noted about local planning:

1. The commune provides the management of the planning process;
2. The preparation for the planning process should be made by informing the people extensively on what is at stake and by training the actors that will provide leadership at various levels: communal councilors and agents, technical services of central government line agencies present in the region, community leaders and contractors/service providers of the services involved;

3. The planning process is participatory, in the sense that all the components of the commune (villages, sections, hamlets and various organizations) are consulted by the communal authorities;
4. Development actors working the commune take part in the planning process;
5. The communal development plan is drawn up taking into account both the needs of the people and State sectoral policies;
6. Development plans should express a long-term vision for local development that is not conditional on the term of office of its elected officials. The development objectives, projects and activities arising from this vision should indicate a desire to integrate all the grassroots communities and social groups into the local development process;
7. The annual programmed budget is derived from the multi-year investment programme;
8. The local development plan is the tool for coordination and coherence for all public and private interventions that should take place within the territory of the local authority;
9. The local development plan takes into account, in addition to its own interests, those it shares with neighbouring communities, in order to promote cooperation among communities and good relationships with its neighbours.

3.1.2. Communal development planning cycle

The planning cycle includes three main phases: (i) preparation, (ii) planning and (iii) programming and implementation. These phases are divided into nine stages which are not compartmentalized but intertwined at the operational level.

Preparation Phase

1. Establishment of a steering committee and wide public information campaign on the initiative of the mayor.
 - This stage enables all the organizational structures necessary for the elaboration of the development plan to be set up. It defines the terms of reference for the process and a timetable for execution. Mainly, it provides explanation of what is at stake in the communal development plan and the importance of wide mobilization among the people in its design.
 - The planning process entails the establishment of a steering committee, if there was not one in place already, generally headed by the mayor or one of his deputies. The committee draws up the

communal development plan. It has representation within the commune that helps to organize and mobilize the people and to lead village assemblies and panels within the community to diagnose problems and seek solutions.

- The communal planning commission is made up of local elected officials and resources persons assigned to the development projects, the services depending from central government line agencies and NGOs working within the community. Leaders are trained within the community and made available to village development committees and inter-village committees to help them to organize village assemblies to conduct a diagnosis, make proposals and define their priority needs.
 - A planning guide serves as a support to guide the process and train members of various committees on the tools to assist the planning process.
 - The budget for implementation of the planning process is established and put into motion.
 - This stage relies on a variety of channels for communication: local radio, traditional communicators (griots), leaders of public opinion, heads of civil society organizations, administrative bulletins and supervisory tours made by local elected officials.
2. Inventory of available documentation and agents present in the commune.
- Primary data collection among commune officials, technical services, administrative authorities, development projects, eminent persons and other local resources persons on (i) the prevailing situation in various sectors of economic, social and environmental concern, (ii) investments planned for the commune by the public administration and development projects, (iii) the list of the various actors involved in the commune and their field of activity.
 - Processing and analysis of that data to get a better understanding of the information that must be gathered in the subsequent stages (diagnostic/proposals by grassroots communities).
 - **Outcome of the stage:** relevant documentation gathered and analyzed by sector and by location (intermediate level, between the commune and the village) according to the availability of information.

Planning Phase

3. Diagnosis/ participatory proposals at the community level.

- Participatory diagnosis (PD) sessions at the village, inter-village and commune levels are held. The purpose of these PD are to identify potential and assets, problems, needs and aspirations at the level of each village and commune. At each level, the priorities are determined on the basis of three questions: (i) what problems are obstacles to development? (ii) what problems seriously affect all villages as a whole? (iii) what problems can the people solve themselves? This questioning guides the community management system and the means to reach those goals. Data is collected in assemblies and through panels made up according to the type and/or local development topic within the communities and in workshops with technical working groups at the commune level. The same organization is maintained during the other phases as needed.
- In order to refine the diagnosis, some UNCDF support projects, in Mali and Benin especially, have tried a system of financial and institutional analysis in the communes based on three types of audits: (i) *institutional and organizational audit* which produces a status report on the functioning of communal services, evaluates the technical abilities of their human resources and the quality of services provided to the population, analyses citizen participation and their level of knowledge and awareness on the public affairs of the commune. The institutional and organizational audit results in the elaboration of an institutional and organizational capacity-building programme for the commune; (ii) *a financial audit* is an analysis focusing on the tax base, census, roles, offerings, recovery, budget and irreducible expenses of the community. The financial audit results in a plan of action for economic recovery of the local authority; and (iii) *audit of the local economy* which deals with an analysis of promising economic prospects. It identifies potential, opportunities and constraints on economic activity. The purpose of this audit is to increase the capacity of the communities to contribute financially to local development. The audit of the local economy ends by drawing up a plan of action for the development of the local economy.
- **Outcome of the stage:** (i) the main resources and potential are identified, (ii) they are made aware of major problems, (iii) the identification and analysis of the needs and aspirations of grassroots communities, inter-village needs and needs on a communal scale, including those specific to communal administration, are determined.

4. Definition of orientations, objectives and strategic focal points for development.
 - Participatory planning begins with a meeting to report on the results of PD. Solutions identified during the diagnostic process are made into concrete orientations and projects in the short, medium and long terms covering the territory involved. The results of this process give structure to the local development plan (LDP).
 - **Outcome of the stage:** This stage generates the local or communal development plan. It encompasses the vision and global and specific development objectives, the strategic areas of concentration and the priority types of projects and development activities decided by the communal council. The results of all the stages in this phase are reported to the population through village assemblies.

Programming and Implementation Phase

5. Triennial programming.
 - The principle projects and activities forming each strategic area are identified and are the subject of a summary feasibility study through cost estimates and analysis of the ability of the commune to mobilize resources. Next comes the scheduling and spatial planning of the activities over the next three years.
 - **Outcome of the stage:** Space planning and scheduling of the projects and activities takes place and the financing plan is designed. The involvement of the multi-year programme with the communal institutions and grassroots communities in terms of organization and means to be mobilized is examined so that each component of local society already knows the efforts it will be expected to contribute to the achievement of the development plan objectives. An assessment made of resources shortfalls to be sought from the government and development partners, which contribute the most. The results of this phase are reported to the community.
 - **Outcome of the stage:** the draft development plan and the multi-year investment programme are endorsed by the communal commission guiding the process of producing the development plan.

6. Adoption and approval of the development plan and the multi-year investment programme.
 - The communal council adopts the two planning documents and then submits them to the supervisory authority for approval. Both tools can be submitted in a single document or separately. Approval is generally the responsibility of a cooperation and coordination framework for development activities above the commune level (circle, province, department, region, etc.) which, according to the country, is headed either by the prefect, the governor or the high commissioner. This commission includes the supervisory authority, local elected officials and sometimes representatives of civil society. Its role is to verify the coherence of plans with national orientation and their conformity with regional land use development outlines.
 - **Outcome of the stage:** The communal council has deliberated on the development plan and the multi-year investment programme and they are then approved by the supervisory authority which ensures their coherence with national and regional development plans.

7. Dissemination and promotion of the development plan and the multi-year programme.
 - After taking into account the advice given by the relevant supervisory authority, the final version of the development plan and the multi-year investment programme are disseminated and promoted with technical and financial partners, both public and private, national and international.
 - **Outcome of the stage:** each grassroots community is informed of the end result of the two orientation and management documents as well as the actions concerning it. Projects are developed and submitted to various sources of funding.

8. Implementation of MIP by annual segments.
 - Each year the commune draws up an annual investment programme (AIP) which is the annual segment of the MIP and CDP. The commune's annual investment budget conveys the financing needs of the AIP. The annual investment programme covers the type of investment, costs, location, beneficiaries, stakeholder participation in financing.
 - **Outcome of the stage:** The commune has an annual investment budget which conveys the AIP.

9. Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system for the development plan.

- The commune sets up tools for management of information and reporting to monitor the implementation of the annual segment of the multi-year investment programme . These tools generate regular activity reports (quarterly). At the end of each year, these periodic reports are evaluated as part of a self-evaluation process of the performance of the commune initiated by the mayor. The fields where self-evaluations are conducted are mainly (i) functioning of the communal administration, (ii) financial resource management, (iii) implementation of investments, maintenance and operation of existing infrastructure. Self-evaluation places particular emphasis on strengths and weaknesses of the commune in each of those fields. The lessons learned are noted in the programme budget for the following year and in many cases result in capacity-building activities.
- Self-evaluation is part of the accountability process because the results must be shared with the population for their information and to raise their awareness of the results of activities in the commune, the response to citizen demands and the efforts that all should make to meet the objective of the CDP when the overall assessment is conducted. The report on the self-evaluation is a yearly opportunity for dialogue between communal institutions and their constituency.
- **Outcome of the stage:** Tools for reporting and capitalizing on the implementation of the development plan are set up and capacity-building measures applied with a view to their use. The assessment of the execution of the AIP is submitted to the population to make them aware of its impact and results. The presentation of this report is made in a public meeting in order to allow representatives of the grassroots communities and civil society to participate.

3.1.3. Principle lessons on local planning instruments

Lesson one: *Shared knowledge of development problems and perspectives.*

The beginning of mobilization of technical and financial partners to support the development plan can be noted, which is starting to limit scattered actions lacking coordination and cooperation which preceded decentralization. With the development plan, local elected officials have more knowledge and understanding of the territory and what is at stake with local development.

Lesson two: *Local planning should be backed up by better knowledge of the local economy.* The study of the commune's economic profile and opportunities should be done before or during the planning process and not after approval of the development plan. In other words, the diagnostic exercise and dialogue on the local economy is essential in order to give the CDP a true identity as an economic, social and cultural development plan.

Lesson three: *Visibility of the CDP and monitoring of the commune's performance through the AIP.* One of the advantages of the AIP is to facilitate the monitoring of investments by financial partners who support communal investments and by the people themselves. The AIP requires the communal institutions to justify operational expenditures in order to identify resources for the investment budget. The AIP thus becomes a powerful local tool to combat poverty, advocacy and social control of communal actions. At the same time, it allows the population to understand that it is in their interest to pay fees and taxes.

Lesson four: *Weakness of inter-communal activities.* Little effort is made in the planning process to identify areas of comparative advantage in cooperation between communes in the UNCDF intervention zones. This can be explained by the extent of the internal problems that each local authority must face.

Lesson five: *Lack of visibility of State sectoral policies.* The principles of planning on the whole were handicapped by a lack of knowledge of sectoral policies by community actors. This is due to the fact that line agencies from the central government working in provincial outposts are not often well informed on the programmes of their own ministries. Despite the involvement of officials from these services in forecasting and analysis for communes, their contribution is sometimes limited, which limits the coherence of development plans with sectoral policies.

Lesson six: *Vague approval of plans by the supervisory authority.* It must be acknowledged that an analysis of coherence at the level of the supervisory authority is not yet supported by a formal method of operation with precise tools. This situation leads to delays in the approval of communal plans. Consequently, approval is not given on a rational basis, to the extent that most intervention zones (departments, regions) do not have general outlines to serve as a point of reference to evaluate compliance by CDPs. The law is not clear on what the minimum content of a plan must be. Furthermore, there is not always a plan to use as a reference to ensure conformity of local plans, to the point where a synthesis of communal plans at the regional level under a general regional management outline would be a tedious exercise.

Lesson seven: *Participation is costly and takes time.* The main constraint on the participatory planning process lies in its repeated nature. It actually requires numerous meetings to share information both vertically (territorial levels) and horizontally (meetings of specific groups or sectors). Even though it leads to ownership of information, strengthening of participatory democracy and construction of a development plan reflecting the people's real problems and demands, it remains a costly approach. For the moment, the communes cannot take on such costs in their own budgets, which are generally small despite the progress made. The capacity of leaders of grassroots organizations must be strengthened so that they are capable of taking on the entire burden of leadership in the community so that there is no need to turn to external donors at the basic inter-community level.

Lesson eight: *Complexity of diagnostic and planning tools.* Given the low educational level of grassroots actors and the rural population in general, it seems clear that, unless the tools are simplified, in particular the many interview questionnaires and voluminous documents drafted in French, it will be difficult for them to take ownership of the planning function and it could be quite difficult to replicate.

Lesson nine: *Slow pace of implementation of State commitments.* Despite commitments made by State services, some equipment funded is still not operational due to a lack of supplementary investments or because staff has not been made available, for instance in the fields of health or education.

Lesson ten: *Risk of raising people's expectations.* Participatory planning creates very high expectations that the scarce financial resources made available to the communities cannot meet. This is a source of frustration both to the community and to elected officials. Implementation of this dynamic should be done very carefully.

3.2. Participation mechanisms, frameworks for dialogue and arbitration modalities

Participation and responsibility are constants in the operating method of UNCDF projects both in planning, activities, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

The planning cycle described above demonstrates the establishment and strengthening of the capacities of planning committees and commissions at the commune level and within communes through village assemblies, thematic working groups, panels on women and youth with the involvement of donors and/or outside resource persons to facilitate dialogue. In all partner communes with UNCDF projects the planning process was an opportunity

for discussion with the local representatives of central government line agencies, technical and financial partners and local civil society. It also fostered dialogue among all the powers which form the community (local elected officials, traditional chiefs, religious leaders, peasant leaders). The participation mechanism thus produced community technical workshops bringing together elected officials and technical officials of the various sectors of economic and social life for further study of the data collected in the diagnostic exercise and proposals coming out of village and inter-village consultations. The planning documents, once they are adopted in the communal council, are submitted to the supervisory authority, the chairman of the regional coordination and cooperation framework for development activities, which verifies that they are in compliance with national and regional development orientations.

With regard to the institutional mechanism for operating the local development fund to enable the implementation of commune annual investment programmes and support initiatives by grassroots communities, three cooperation frameworks should be highlighted:

- **The tripartite review** which is the forum for guidance and decision-making responsible for approving the annual work plan, harmonizing the local development tools to be tried and their appreciation on the national level (see 2.3 for its composition). This body decides on the level of local contribution to the LDF, to adapt it to the context of the intervention zone.
- **The steering and funds allocation committee** covers the entire intervention zone. It is headed by the supervisory authority of the communes involved and includes mayors, some local representatives of central government line agencies, in particular finance (Public Treasury), the development plan and the project support unit. This committee coordinates project activities in the field and monitors observance of certain criteria for access to the LDF in the distribution of the annual total of this investment subsidy. The regulatory role of this committee is beneficial in relation to the evident pressures on village communities, political pressures and the risk of favoritism to win votes, which can influence the allocation of funds.
- **The local initiatives financing committee** at the level of each commune, is headed by the mayor or one of his deputies and made up of representatives of economic groups, tax collection, the project support unit and the secretary-general of the mayor's office and/or the head of the financial affairs unit. This committee must select micro-projects not under the jurisdiction of the commune and finance them from the LDF. Mills, grain banks, agricultural and animal husbandry input

banks, cattle and poultry and small business are examples of projects that on the whole produce layers that (i) feed the local economy directly, including the classrooms, wells, community health centres, and (ii) help to improve the living conditions of the beneficiary groups. With a very high demand for financing by grassroots organizations and limited availability of funding, direct funding of local promoters by the commune might give rise to unmanageable conflicts both among elected officials and between them and their communities. The available funds are disbursed in various ways each year, either as lines of credit or guarantee funds invested with micro-finance institutions, or allocated to natural resource management activities or for inter-commune cooperation according to the project.

3.3. Principal lessons on participation mechanisms

Lesson one: *Even if communal councils are composed of elected officials whose overall level is similar, yet rather low*, it should be noted that capacity-building activities have improved teamwork and each one's understanding of his role in the management of communal institutions.

Lesson two: *The functioning of coordination frameworks presents real problems in communes with a large land area* because of isolation, distance and travel costs to attend meetings.

Lesson three: *Financing of activities of local initiatives comes up against the inability to meet the extent of the demand for financing of income-generating activities (IGA)*, the lack of competent local micro-finance institutions, the risk of non-payment linked to a lack of understanding of profitable areas and promoters' low levels of management capacity. The decision to allocate part of this financing to natural resources management (NRM) or to inter-communal activities in certain intervention zones remains a fallback solution because monetary poverty is a serious threat to NRM, and finding innovative ways to address it, despite the risks of non-payment, remains a challenge in poverty eradication.

Lesson four: *Lack of will among local elected officials to play a primary or significant role in providing subsidies to local economic initiatives because of the risk of favoritism that can be assumed.*

3.4. Instruments for financing and local development

3.4.1. Local development funds and their characteristics

LDF objectives

The local development fund (LDF) is a financial instrument intended to support the budgets of partner communes with UNCDF projects with a view to

financing public, social, collective and economic investments in the fields of development and poverty eradication in rural areas. These are global subsidies (financing facilities) intended to stimulate performance of local authorities and IVLUC, to promote institutional development and help to build the capacity of local actors to enable them to carry out the micro-projects identified and conceived at the local level.

Determining the size of LDF

The size of the overall endowment of the LDF is based on the size of the population, geographic considerations (distance and isolation) and a base amount per capita which applies to all communes in an intervention zone. Certain UNCDF projects, in addition to criteria, have instituted a system of additional rebates at a preferential rate or discounts based on efforts to mobilize local resources (Benin).

Resources are allocated to each commune on the basis of a financing matrix establishing the financial commitment of each party (commune, population, State, development partners, etc.)

Conditions of eligibility for LDF

A commune's eligibility for LDF is based on legal and regulatory conditions as well as financial conditions. The following conditions are part of a progressive and sequential approach. Their degree of application also depends on the motivation of local elected officials, the mayor in particular, and the country's socio-political context.

Basic conditions applicable to all projects

- Prior signing of a partnership agreement and a co-financing agreement for LDF between the commune and the UNCDF project;
- Existence of a communal development plan and a multi-year investment plan draw up using a participatory approach and adopted by the communal council with a record of the deliberations and a letter of approval by the supervisory authority (quitus);
- Financing objectives coming under the jurisdiction of communes or rural grassroots social and professional organizations, which are compatible with poverty eradication;
- Limited environmental impact.

Conditions specific to certain projects or infrequently applied because of the difficult environment

- Significant proportion of projects from local initiatives to benefit women's groups;

- Establishment of an outline for steering the annual activities of the commune development plan;
- Availability of basic technical staff, including the secretary-general and the tax collector, for the implementation of administrative, financial and accounting procedures;
- Observance of school and health cards and availability of staff for posts;
- Adoption and implementation of a management programme for the maintenance of community housing;
- Existence of protocols of agreement with social and professional organizations for the management of infrastructure when applicable, in view of the provisions in effect;
- Adoption and implementation of a policy for access to information, especially by the local population;
- Existence of a file of minutes of communal assemblies and publication of the decisions of the communal council;
- The commune's operating budget is established in advance for the current fiscal year: obligation of a local counterpart included in the commune budget with clear identification of funding sources;
- Performance criteria regarding mobilization of local resources and level of physical and financial execution of the previous allocation;
- At least two thirds of the actions included in the co-financing agreement for the AIP for the current year have been completed and provisionally delivered;
- The proportion of LDF allocations on the basis of geographic and demographic criteria observed, and funds defined;
- Contributions of communes collected at the source, directly by the General or Regional Office of the Treasury and public accounting of the budget subsidies granted to them by the State.

Funds and financing sectors under LDF

The LDF of UNCDF projects are usually structured by three funds: (i) *a social and collective investment fund* intended for construction, repair or rehabilitation of collective social infrastructure, (ii) *an inter-communal fund* or a fund focused on natural resources management allocated for cooperation projects among partner communes in the project for the management of shared natural resources, environmental protection and infrastructure of interest to

all communes (rural roads) (iii) *a support subsidy for local economic initiatives* intended to support income-generating activities and to combat monetary poverty. The three funds are part of the communal budget for direct support, and secondarily, the subsidy to local economic initiatives is allocated in some cases by the commune to a financial institution following an agreement either in the form of a line of credit and/or loan guarantee funds to the benefit of local economic promoters or directly managed by the council.

With the implementation of decentralization in the sub-region, LDF provide experience in the implementation in real time of a model of budget transfer towards the communes based on programmed utilization, transparent allocation and rapid expenditure through the Public Treasury circuit (Benin and Senegal) or through the channel of investment and development agencies (ANICT in Mali) or directly into bank accounts in the name of local authorities (Guinea), or finally, managed by project teams because communes and financial institutions do not exist (Niger and Burkina Faso).

Transferred LDF resources are entered into and accounted for in communal budgets. They are intended to finance the investment priorities of each of the communes as defined in the participatory planning and budgeting documents. The share of resources allocated to each sector depends on the resources that can be mobilized and the order of priority of projects included in each AIP, as the two examples below illustrate:

Benin: ADECOI 2004

- Infrastructure and equipment: Education (51%), commercial equipment (21%), health (12%), transport and communications (7%), water and sanitation (5%), agriculture and grazing (2%), environment (2%).

Mali: PACR-T, 2003

- Infrastructure and equipment: agricultural sector (29.7%), water (19.4%), education (14.5%) and grazing sub-sector (12%).

This distribution of LDF is on the whole in accordance with the concerns and priorities defined in the development programmes of the communes concerned and fully observes the UNCDF guidelines. Where there are national mechanisms for funding of local authorities, as in Mali with ANICT, UNCDF avoid creating parallel mechanisms for allocation of investment funds to communes.

LDP investment financing and the system of disbursement

For each investment, the process involves the following steps: (i) registering

the commune funds in the financing plan; (ii) registering the commune funds in the commune budget; (iii) mobilizing counterpart funds by the Treasury by keeping a part of funds transferred by the central government; (iv) mobilisation de la contrepartie par le Trésor public; (v) registering all this in the commune budget with implementing by the commune.

The system of financial programming and mobilization mentioned above includes the system of funds transfer from the country's Public Treasury, which implies that UNCDF should make the necessary funds available to the Treasury, on the basis of the decision of the steering and funding allocation committees. The funds are then transferred into a special account in the Treasury opened in the records of the Public Treasury at the central or regional level (see 1.4.5 and annex 2).

Local co-financing systems

During the pre-decentralization phase, community contributions were made by means of private collection of funds from individuals and peasant organizations based on a list of contributing households or organizations in each village. With decentralization and the advent of communes, contributions come, or should mainly come from commune budgets based on fees, taxes and levies. The local co-financing system thus involves the participation of the commune both as beneficiary and project manager.

The financial participation in the LDF based on the communal budget breaks with traditional development financing practices based on contributions and voluntary subscriptions of the population. These informal practices present problems of resource mobilization and transparent management. Moreover, these subscriptions did not permit the commune to levy local taxes to increase its contribution to the form LDF mechanism.

3.4.2. *Financial arrangements for resource mobilization*

Towards communal programme budgets for coherence in local development activities

Contrary to the turnkey practices of investments in beneficiary communities, projects receiving UNCDF support contrast with traditional practices which, since the advent of decentralization, infringe on the competence of communes. The originality of the UNCDF project approach in the financing mechanism of local development projects is based on the following factors:

- *Determination of the financial endowment of communes:* The demographic criteria have always been taken into account in the determination of financial endowments granted to communes, whatever the type of

fund. Mali has added a geographical coefficient to favour the most isolated communes or transport costs having a significant impact on the cost of realizing investments.

- *Evaluating the performance of communes:* The performance of communes is evaluated at the end of each year. The results of this evaluation have a positive or negative impact on the financial endowments of communes, according to whether the communes perform well or not. This is to promote a culture of evaluation and the requirement to get results in such a way that the support mobilized for the implementation of CDPs make an effective contribution to improving the living conditions of the poor, not to feed spending on communal councils.
- *The principle of budgetary support:* financial endowments allocated to communes come under the heading of budget investments. Disbursement of these funds occurs by use of the services of the Public Treasury (in most countries) and sometime through a national agency for financing of local authorities). In all cases, the financing agreement with communes does not target specific micro-projects; it is more of a block grant intended to support communal investments. Therefore, it is up to the communal council to distribute the funding as a function of its investment priorities. This practice offers the advantage of encouraging harmonization and transparency in the financial contribution of partners, because the procedure of drawing up, adopting and approving the commune budget facilitates the allocation of resources and monitoring of the participation of various partners in local development:
 - elected officials are held responsible more easily and build their credibility with the citizens of whom they are the elected representatives;
 - easier accounting of investments in commune property;
 - an opportunity to build the capacity of elected officials and local public administrations in understanding of public finance procedures;
 - better absorption capacity for investment funds;
 - more comprehensive and less piecemeal execution of development plans
 - understanding of financial flows emanating from various partners which makes it possible to coordinate and monitor development activities and which stimulates a more balanced and harmonious approach to land use management in the commune.

- *The use of the Treasury circuit is a double-edged sword:* This can actually help to value the State instruments but can also be a source of major delays. In the francophone system, with the principle of unique accounts, the State services are unavoidable. In using the circuit of disbursement through the Public Treasury, it is up to these services to prove their effectiveness and efficiency; it is not for the project. Success in that area is varied: in Senegal they succeeded in shortening the delay by 5 months for transfers between the central State and the communes, in Benin the State's financial difficulties caused major problems in making these funds available, and because of the low level of human resources in the services of the Treasury at the local level, entrepreneurs could not be paid within a reasonable time.
- *Co-financing of investments:* financial subsidies granted to communes can be disbursed in investment co-financing with other sources of financing.
- *Counterpart funds in cash:* In the majority of projects preference is given to local counterpart funds in cash entered in good and due form in the local budget. They have often served to pay startup costs to enterprises in order to make the commune responsible for management of financial flows but also to hold local enterprises responsible for defects.

The mobilization of investment funds by communes has proven to be very important. This can essentially be explained by the principle of budget support and simplification of public procurement procedures for local authorities. In carrying out investments, the financial participation of communes has exceeded expectations in many cases, even if there is more to be done in the area of mobilization of local resources.

The mobilization of external resources intendeds for investment has proved to be highly useful. In many cases the LDF, used as a counterpart fund, has served as a lever to raise other external financing. This leverage effect is especially pronounced with ANICT in Mali and in Senegal with European Union funding in UNCDF zones.

In the countries overall, financial participation of communes varies from 5 to 25% according to the type of investment. This threshold depends on the level of monetary poverty and ecological vulnerability of each intervention zone.

Finally, the level of recovery of local levies and taxes influences the funding granted to communes. This has a ricochet effect on the villages and sections who use the tax collection rate as a criterion for evaluation of funding re-

quests. Thus, a grassroots community with an unsatisfactory level of payment of taxes can lose funding for its infrastructure to the benefit of another which is up to date with its tax payments. The direct consequence of this practice has been a net improvement in collection of communal taxes.

3.5. Local Procurement Cycles

Calls for competitive bids and awarding of contracts by the commune is done in accordance with laws on public procurement of each State. The mayor awards the contracts on the recommendations of the commune's committee to evaluate bids, headed by one of the deputy mayors, and which also includes members of the communal council, experts and the tax collector. In general, agreements regarding public bids and awarding of contracts for industrial and commercial services are submitted for approval to the supervisory authority. However, deadlines for approval of these contracts are provided by law in order to avoid delays that could affect the execution of the AIP.

Prescribing this method of awarding contracts is intended to bring the communes gradually to a procurement process that is transparent and observes the State code for awarding of public contracts. The steps followed were:

- *At the institutional level:* (i) develop a manual for procurement by communes; (ii) provide training (analysis of bids, awarding of contracts, etc.) (iii) support to communes in establishing the commune committee for analysis and evaluation of bids;
- *At the level of management of the procurement cycle:* (i) preparing requests for bids (ii) launching the bid submission process either through announcements, limited consultation or by open requests for bids to the segments of the market authorized by the country's laws (iii) opening of the bids and evaluation of the proposals, (iv) the mayor signs a letter of notification of the decision, (v) signing of the contract between the mayor and the service provider or vendor with a service order indicating the date on which the work to execute the projects can begin (vi) monitoring of the execution of the work for the project by the commune, the grassroots communities, the advising engineering firms, the project management unit and the competent State services, (vii) submit a report on the prior use of funds before making any new funding request, (viii) signing a notice of receipt on the completion of any activity financed by the beneficiary (commune, village or inter-village community or community group), the lender and the project, (ix) establish a management committee or recruit a manager to ensure the operation, maintenance and perpetuation of the infrastructure, (x) conduct an end-of-year community self-evaluation of the AIP to eva-

luate the impact of the infrastructure as a whole through analysis of the services rendered to the population and its maintenance.

3.6. Development of local project management and expertise

Community project management and the principle of budgetary support entails that all bidding and procurement contract procedures must take place at the commune level. In contrast to classic interventions where construction, delivery equipment and provision of services are centralized in the project management unit, in this case, each commune undertakes the procedures for carrying out its investments. Time is saved compared to the centralized model for interventions where the keys to a completed project are turned over to the beneficiaries.

The development of local project management requires building the capacity of local elected officials and commune staff in the skills needed for communal institutions, local planning, procurement, running micro-projects, managing construction, local governance, decentralization and communal administration, developing and executing the communal budget, managing the town records, archives and administrative reports, the gender perspective, etc.

The capacity-building strategy was based on procedures in effect in each country and experience gained through support to communes at the preliminary phase.

The results obtained in terms of improvement to work skills are interesting. But the gains remain precarious because of the professional instability of communal workers (older, with a low educational level) and the high turnover rate among communal councilors when their terms of office end. Mali has suffered particularly in this area.

The emergence or consolidation of formal local companies for public works and buildings (BTP) remains an important benefit from the support provided by UNCDF projects to communes. The transformation of day labourers in the intervention zone into formal companies is part of the strategy of tax enrolment for these economic operators which then begin to pay some taxes to the commune.

Training of local elected officials and commune staff and the LDF facility which can be mobilized have had a positive impact on the whole. Communes, groups, village and inter-village committees have demonstrated a good ability to take ownership of the development tools initiated by UNCDF projects.

3.7. Quality and functionality of infrastructure produced

Production of infrastructure takes into account the existing educational and health facilities and water points. In general, the commune relies on the norms

and standards in effect and involves the State technical services, which must monitor observance of these norms. The projects also help the communes to recruit advisors to provide more detailed technical monitoring of worksites until the final delivery. In villages which have had the VLUC or IVLUC experience, there is social know-how in monitoring worksites which requires the labourers to follow the procedures in the workplan, in particular regarding measurements and quality of materials, etc.

The system of payment for entrepreneurs is spread out and based on an interview evaluating the level of execution of the assigned tasks (daily report) compared to expenditure (deductions) at each stage of the schedule of execution at the worksite until the final handover, which can take place after the infrastructure has been in use for several months. Problems detected are corrected by the entrepreneur before final handover.

It must be recognized, however, that capacity building provided by projects for the benefit of workers, masons in particular, has led to a clear improvement in the quality of the infrastructure.

Despite these efforts, it is clear that communes which do not have a technical service (and most do not) naturally have less ability to monitor worksites, which is not without its problems.

One of the major difficulties has to do with the lack of quality materials and the isolation of places where infrastructure is to be built. In some cases, the difficulties in providing oversight and monitoring are compounded by work which does not follow regulations.

The strategy for maintenance and upkeep of infrastructure is an essential dimension of the impact of the infrastructure on living conditions in the community. Efforts at upkeep are variable, and overall, communes lack budget resources for this purpose. The following shared concerns have been noted with regard to:

- *Infrastructure for common use*, like town halls: their maintenance can most easily be seen as part of the commune budget;
- *Infrastructure for non-commercial community use*: its maintenance is provided by the beneficiary community, through a management committee that reports to the communal authority. On the other hand, communities which have not had the VLUC experience and where this tradition does not exist face serious problems with responsibility for upkeep of community infrastructure;
- *Commercial infrastructure*: most often, it is offered free to economic interest groups to manage, or a manager is hired. Most management contracts deal with shops or stalls in markets. Maintenance of this

infrastructure is provided by IEGs and specified in the management contract.

The majority of projects have not been able to come to an agreement with the communes resulting in a policy for management of commune equipment.

Management committees have not always been established according to the rules spelled out in the agreements with communes before startup of the financing. They are often set up after or while the work is being done.

Comparative analysis of delivery of local infrastructure

Compared to similar infrastructure observed in the intervention zones, infrastructure produced under UNCDF projects is of better quality. This is certainly a logical result of giving responsibility to the beneficiary community and the commune which provides the project management. It is also a result of the remarkable effort in capacity building of local labourers and all the administrative support given them to become formal companies and get more contracts, which allows them to continue to improve their skills. In addition, the leadership process and the administrative and financial processes that govern the definition of needs to their satisfaction are determining factors in the quality and functionality of the infrastructure, to which can be added to technical monitoring provided by various actors (experts, elected officials, project management units and the population). However, particular attention has not been paid to the cost of the projects compared with investments by NGOs, sectoral ministries and delegated project management (executing agencies for highly labour-intensive projects).

3.8. Capacity building and strategies for handover

The various forums for cooperation and dialogue which were created or strengthened at the commune, inter-commune and supra-communal level are organizational and administrative assets which assist in the decentralization process in the six countries. These forums provide opportunities for exchange of information, advice and mutual learning which enables local actors to share experiences in management of their communes, and when possible strategies for maintenance and renewal of investments. Oversight bodies like school parent associations, management committees, users' associations, etc. are some of the local strategies to provide good management and perpetuation of UNCDF project outcomes. In addition, a major network of local elected officials, State agents, NGOs, women and men has been trained through their exposure to this form of public management, gradually forming a significant body of local actors that can potentially assume leadership in the local development process.

Likewise, individuals trained in negotiation skills have acquired the ability to discuss their projects with technical and financial partners. Eventually, these local actors will be able to attract supplementary external financing to feed the local economy. Moreover, the development by communes (local governments) of services for which they can charge using commercial and non-commercial facilities is part of a strategy of handover and perpetuation of the efforts to combat poverty by increasing their capacity to contribute to the commune budget.

Finally, an important toolbox has been set up for all projects which represents precious capital for continued capacity building among local and even national actors. It includes: (i) a guide for designing a local development plan; (ii) a guide for designing income-generating micro-projects; (iii) a manual for presentation and management of the LDF, (iv) a guide for procurement, (v) a manual for drafting a budget, (vi) a collection of laws and regulations on legal aspects of operations, (vii) various reports on relevant studies on economic potential and flows.

3.9. Strategies to promote local economies

Promotion of the local economy is part of an approach to perpetuating the achievements of support by UNCDF projects to communes, which is essential in order to combat the monetary poverty that affects efforts to eradicate poverty in all other sectors. Indeed, the ability of the commune budget to meet its investment costs in a sustainable way to improve local living conditions depends on the amount of money available to its inhabitants. The goal here is to help to generate wealth so that the poor have income and purchasing power that will improve local circulation of money and thus their access to basic social services.

In sum, promotion of the local economy is a strategic sector for the viability of communes and at the same time, it is a job that requires know-how and specific knowledge of local economic potential and limitations. For the time being it remains the weak link in the chain of support to local authorities. In fact, it is in the future or is being experimented with.

In all of this, all UNCDF projects have supported communes in conducting studies of their local economies. These have resulted in more awareness of economic potential, evaluation of strengths and weaknesses of the economy and analysis of each different commercial sector. In certain zones, these studies have already led to the identification of the contribution of each economic sector. This knowledge of the local economic structure will be pursued in the medium term through institutional partnerships to improve information on markets (price, seasonal price variations and variations in availability of products in the commune, the zone and the country), in order to make better

use of opportunities in the flow of local products.

In addition to these new orientations, projects are providing less and less direct financing to economic actors for their rotation funds. However, commercial infrastructure for collective use comes under the jurisdiction of the commune and minor infrastructure which might belong to groups (warehouses, grain banks, manufacturing equipment) are financed by the LDF. Funding needs of income-generating activities are supported by the intervention of decentralized financial systems where a credit and/or guarantee fund is established.

3.10. Principal lessons on financial mechanisms and procurement

Lesson one: *Traceability is a pre-condition for laying the foundation of a culture of transparency.* One of the best practices gathered from the LDF is valuing and tracing the financial contribution of the population in carrying out public investment.

Lesson two: *a LDF aligned with national financial procedures.* Alignment of financing of communes with national public finance procedures has proven to be effective when the country has no tension with the Treasury. The prejudice that the Public Treasury and its principle of unique accounts are inefficient and unfavourable to the management of funds of local authorities has proven to be outdated. It results in more credibility for the State and public treasuries of the sub-region. This experiment has demonstrated that public procedures are valuable to hold project funds and monitor their execution. The effectiveness of the system depends on the quality of human resources.

Lesson three: *an original system of financial support focused on budget support to communes.* The originality of the financial support system is based on taking into account the evaluation of performance in allocating funding, the principle of budget support and the possibility of co-financing of investments with other partners who intervene through budget support. The funding agreement with communes does not target specific micro-projects, but rather represents a global subsidy intended to support communal investments in line with the UNCDF mission. Thus, it is up to each communal council to distribute the funding as a function of its investment priorities outlined in the AIP, which has as its source the multi-year investment programme and the communal development plan.

Lesson four: *a financing system with a leverage effect.* Experience shows that it is extremely difficult for a commune in a rural area to come up with counterpart funds, at different rates from one programme to another, through

its own resources. Co-financing with a leverage effect have often led to the development of a system of financing investments perfectly in line with the abilities of the local authorities.

The implementation of the co-financing system by communes and the UNCDF project has demonstrated the possibility of (i) mobilizing the total of counterpart funds of the commune and of the State, (ii) disbursing the counterpart funds of the commune and the State more quickly than in the past, (iii) avoiding work stoppages because of inability to mobilize funds, (iv) incorporating investment expenditures in the commune budget and having them provide the management.

Lesson five: *positive impact in the budget process and management of communal services.* Progress made includes: (i) holding regular meetings of the commune with acceptable frequency, (ii) development of AIP and annual budgets by almost all communes in the intervention zones within the legal deadlines and of acceptable quality, (iii) in many cases, mastery of procedures for public procurement, (iv) clear improvement in management of public records, in particular shorter delays in giving records to clients.

Lesson six: *positive impact but political will not at the same level.* Overall, elected officials are concerned with seeing the communal institutions provide accessible and effective services to the people. This awareness is laudable, but major efforts are still needed both on the part of elected officials, the population and the government to strengthen the means of communal institutions. For the moment, the transfer of State resources to local authorities is weak and local investment programmes remain somewhat dependent on international aid.

Lesson seven: *significant efforts are still needed to promote local governance.* In the absence of a durable strategy to continue building the capacity of newly-elected officials, there is reason to fear that the quality of local governance will deteriorate. Therefore, activities to inform and train grassroots communities should be strengthened in order to create a nursery for community leaders able to emerge from the communal councils over the years to come. Even better, considering that the decentralization and communalization process is in its infancy, more ambitious national capacity building programmes for decentralization over the long term ought to be considered.

Lesson eight: *weak linkages at the territorial level of decentralized financial systems and the banking network.* The financial machinery for implementation of the LDF faces several constraints: (i) an inadequate banking network that does not facilitate liquidation of payment orders for service providers and vendors, (ii) lack of human and material resources of the local services of the Treasury, sometimes causing delays in processing payment

requests, (iii) lack of credible structures for micro-finance in many communes limits the effective use of subsidies in support of local economic initiatives from the LDF and for some projects results in a low level of utilization. The problem with funding remains the lack of true national policies on micro-finance in these countries, which hinders the implementation of strategies for creditworthiness of the poor and improving their access to financial services in their own areas.



4] CONTRIBUTION TO THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs)

1.1. MDGs and poverty reduction strategies in West Africa

On 8 September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled “Millennium Declaration” which put forward a vision of a world free of extreme poverty by 2015. The content of this declaration is none other than the “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs), which number eight, originally with 18 targets and 48 indicators. Each country then adapted these global objectives to national problems with poverty.

With the cooperation of the United Nations system, each of the UNCDF countries of intervention has already adjusted its MDGS. More than a battery of indicators, these MDGs make up a system of monitoring and accountability for the purpose of international, national and local mobilization as well as in each development initiative to confront the poverty that affects a huge proportion of the people in the world (see the table following).

Among the major problems on which the MDGs for West Africa are based are found (i) the low level of development of income-generating activities and lack of equipment in communities which leads to growing monetary poverty and food insecurity; (ii) problems with land, related to pressure from exploitation and intra- and inter-community conflicts causing displacement of people and animals; (iii) environmental degradation (drought, floods, erosion, deforestation, decline in soil fertility, overgrazing, pollution); (iv) the isolation of some areas affecting mobility of persons and goods, in particular access to markets and public services; (v) lack of facilities and difficulty in access to safe drinking water and primary health care, (vi) the spread of infection and sexually-transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, (vii) illiteracy and abandonment of schooling, (viii) lack of capacity building among the population for good governance of public affairs and increasing the pace of participatory democracy, (ix) inequality and violence against women and other vulnerable groups in addition to socio-cultural burdens detrimental to the promotion of human rights.

At the institutional level, decentralization and sectoral public policy is the

Table No. 3: Links between MDG and PRS in countries of intervention

MDG	Target by 2015	Conclusions of national reports
Goal 1 : Eliminate extreme poverty	<p>Target 1: Halve the proportion of the population (men-women) living below the poverty threshold</p> <p>Target 2: By 2015, halve the number of people suffering hunger and malnutrition</p>	<p>The evolution of the indicators studied does not give much hope for a halving of the number of persons living below the poverty threshold or suffering malnutrition by 2015.</p>
Goal 2 : Provide primary education for all	<p>Target e: By 2015, provide primary education for all children of school age</p> <p>Target 4 : Give all children from 9 to 18 years old and adults 18 to 24 a basic minimum education.</p>	<p>The goal of primary schooling for all by 2015 may be achieved, but sustained efforts by all are needed to improve the quality of instruction and to keep children in school until the end of primary school as well as to reduce the disparity between boys and girls</p>
Goal 3 : Promote gender equality and empowerment of women	<p>Target 5: Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and at all levels of education by 2015 at the latest.</p> <p>Target 6: Reduce gender disparities in economic and political life</p>	<p>The evolution of the indicators predicts the achievement of this target by 2015 but not in all the countries. This target is strongly influenced by socio-cultural burdens and will make only limited progress by 2015 if education in rural areas is not sufficiently strengthened.</p>
Goal 4 : Reduce infant mortality	<p>Target 7: Reduce by 2/3 the mortality rate of children under 5 years old</p>	<p>The countries are far from this target. Current trends in infant and child mortality rates give not cause for optimism. Government must make major efforts to approach this goal..</p>
Goal 5 : Improve maternal health	<p>Target 8: Reduce maternal mortality rates by 3/4</p>	<p>The efforts made by government in the sub-region, with the support of development in the area of reproductive health give some hope that the target will be reached</p>

MDG	Target by 2015	Conclusions of national reports
Goal 6 : Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Target 9 :Reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS Target 10: Control malaria and other major diseases, and have begun to reverse current trends	Strengthening of actions to combat AIDS, facilitating access to retrovirals and the hope that a programme to distribute an AIDS vaccine gives some hope that the situation will stabilize and that the trends will eventually reverse themselves by 2015.
Goal 7 : Ensure environmental sustainability	Target 11: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into national policies and reverse the current trend towards degradation of environmental resources Target 12: Halve the percentage of the population without sustainable access to a supply of safe drinking water Target 13: Facilitate access by the greatest possible number of households to public housing	Indicators observed show that the trend towards loss of natural resources will be difficult to reverse, despite the many initiatives undertaken in the area of sustainable development, and taking the environment into account in the poverty reduction strategy papers. If the trend begun by the implementation of various projects and programmes were to be maintained, some countries could hope to achieve or even exceed the goal of access to safe drinking water by 2015. However, this expectation is not certain in Sahel and areas undergoing desertification. The policies and programmes undertaken for access to decent housing, in general, will not be sufficient to meet the challenge because of the cost of construction materials, the enormous needs for public housing and the huge need for sanitation and public health facilities..
Goal 8 :Establish a global partnership for development	Target 14: Address the particular needs of the least developed countries	Debt relief programmes have been implemented and will lead to an increase in the resources available for the poverty reduction strategy

backdrop for the design and implementation of poverty reduction initiatives. At the least, the characteristics of political will expressed in these poverty reduction strategy frameworks and documents place great importance on harmonious land use management, creation of wealth, valuing of human resources, promotion of the private sector, national solidarity and respect for human rights. From this viewpoint, the main lines of action in these documents are: (i) sustained economic growth, creating jobs and income, (ii) development of the production sector, (iii) development of basic social services, (iv) promotion of good governance, capacity building of human and institutional resources and decentralization, (v) protection of the environment and sustainable management of natural resources

Conclusions regarding the countries' possibilities of achieving the MDGs by 2015, as they stand from the current level of implementation of those goals, indicate some tendency towards hesitation due to lack of sufficient resources and the slow pace of decentralization and devolution in the six countries. Most of the MDG indicators are not disaggregated to the local level. Performing this disaggregation of data is a prerequisite for the integration of MDGs into territorial planning. The difficulty lies with the lack of experience in a methodology to make the MDGs effective in the management of local communities, as their primary purpose is to combat poverty and promote local development.

4.2. Voices of the poor and disadvantaged in the choice of local investments and services to be offered

Support forums for social mobilization to listen to the poor

In order to strengthen the role of grassroots communities in the local development process, support programmes begun by UNCDF have favoured as a principle of intervention (i) creation and/or consolidation of forums for coordination, dialogue, arbitration and advocacy at various structural levels in the intervention zones, (ii) creation and/or valuing of village and inter-village development committees as well as community project management committees, (iii) the establishment of partnership mechanisms to monitor projects and participatory studies/surveys/evaluations to measure the people's satisfaction with how the offers of support matches their expressed needs. Including UNCDF programmes in the decentralization dynamic brings about systematic support to the exercise of community management of construction projects by strengthening the capacities of communal and rural councils to practice the skills and responsibilities entrusted to them by the laws of their countries. Because of their legitimacy through elections, local officials represent a major proportion of the voices of the poor, which is reinforced by the

direct support given to various networks of local actors who have other types of legitimacy in their communities: women's groups, groups of producers, ranchers, artisans, village development committees...

The voice of the poor is pluralistic and is found at various levels of the territorial structure and in several sectors of economic and social life. In each zone of intervention and partner local authority, this plural voice has been affirmed in the implementation of the local planning component which mobilized various segments of the local community, independent of their ethnicity, gender or social standing. All the marginalized groups (lower castes), persons disadvantaged by gender and age (women and youth) and villages marginalized for various reasons (historical, cultural, political...) have been involved in the unfolding process. The various workshops, meetings and forums held by the heads of village and inter-village coordination and at the commune level have allowed choices to be made that meet the real needs of the population.

Difficulty in arbitrating among the voices of the poor and disadvantaged

The voices of the poor naturally convey their experiences and their hopes. But the needs are so varied, all are important and sometimes very urgent, while local resources mobilized are still very limited and additional resources restricted compared to the seriousness of the situation of poverty. Major problems then arise in making decisions during the land use planning process and establishing the timetable of arbitration on priorities to be programmed for each community is not based on a concept of complementarity and solidarity among communities.

The participatory approach in a planning process should take enough time so that the poor can discuss among themselves and with their elected officials, and take into account the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities that characterize each community. This effort thus requires mediation which should also be based on *good documentation* (production statistics, demographic profile, economic and ecological potential, schools, health care centres, number of clean water points, risk exposure factors) to support the analysis by the people. That is why the *voice of the poor* is backed up, for support and advisory services, by the *voice of resource persons* who live the day-to-day life of the population. Despite the linkage between the two types of voices, it can happen that the people's expression does not take into account the means for solving their problems of poverty in the short and medium term. This is often what leads to plans that are highly participatory and take into account the voice of the poor, but which nevertheless do not produce results of the magnitude required. Therefore, in its approach, UNCDF has made partnership systematic, which leads to mutual or complementary means for synergetic activities in that demonstrate the maxim, "we are stronger together than alone".

The voice of the poor is necessary for good local governance and achievement of the MDGs

The voice of the poor is a sign of transparency in local governance, a condition for adherence of the poor and marginalized to the work of developing their community and a requirement for building civic awareness among the poor. From this ability to express themselves, and this opportunity which decentralization offers them to be recognized as full-fledged actors, they will accept in return to do their duty to pay taxes because they will have understood the relationship between paying taxes, the development plan and the poverty reduction strategy leading to a solution to their problems.

Such a style of governance, in the experience of UNCDF, has led to the promotion of an open and inclusive approach towards the poor and marginalized, which has allowed the interests of all actors present and all social classes in the community to be taken into account in local planning. The structuring of common spaces and the composition of structures established transcend all traditional divisions (social and especially political affiliation, place of residence...) and consider the interests of all the groups present. This inclusive approach sometimes corrects the lack of representation on communal councils.

Finally, the nature and function of the investments produced are indicators of the voice of the poor, because they express the consideration of the needs of the population. The voice of the poor helps to limit the failure of development projects, meaning that the achievement of the MDGs depends on the roles and responsibilities of the poor in the process of developing their community.

4.3. Choice of the location of investments

Carefully determine relevant locations for the success of spatial planning

The location of investments is an element of the planning process, especially spatial planning. In practice, UNCDF support to decentralization and local development must distinguish among several relevant locations to place investment projects.

Investments at the community level cover (i) infrastructure and equipment that concerns the entire village community or area (village, hamlets and sections all together) and (ii) infrastructure and equipment intended to support a specific organization within the village community, such as women's groups devoted to certain income-generating activities or grazers' groups, for instance.

Investments at the level above the community are found (i) at the intermediate level between the commune and the village or area (ii) in major towns in the commune which are often the most urbanized areas of the territory or the

rural community and which cover a number of neighbourhoods in a town.

Finally, *investments in institutional capacity building* of the municipal administration which concern only the mayor's office and branch offices of administrations at the intra- community level. These investments, which are aimed at modernization of administrative, technical and financial management, are for the purpose of providing clients, particularly the poor, with quality services within a reasonable time and at a price they can pay. These investments mainly involve computerization of services, electrification, telephone systems, civil registry, archives means of transport and sanitation equipment (road services).

Some criteria to develop in a participatory space planning process

The choice of locations for investments gives rise to many difficulties in the planning process. There are villages which demand equipment because of the significant portion they bear of the rural tax payments or simply because of historical factors. Some village chiefs with political influence also attempt to legitimize the location of equipment in their areas in order to retain or gain favour with voters. This is also the case for central villages that want to continue to polarize the rest of the villages because of their historical or religious role or their administrative advantages. In the face of all these obstacles, care must be taken that the choice of the location meets some objective criteria that will allow progress towards the MDGs. In addition to practical criteria (LDF arbitration rules) in UNCDF projects and programmes, in order to rationalize the process of identifying an appropriate location for each type of investment at the planning stage, the following should be considered:

At the sociological and institutional level:

- The voice of the poor and marginalized,
- The voice of elected officials and local development leaders,
- The voice of all social classes;

At the technical level:

- The size of the population,
- The concept of the central village with its satellite hamlets and sections,
- Geographical accessibility,
- Environmental constraints and the status of natural resources that affects food security and community health,
- Schools and health care centres,

- Availability of safe drinking water points,
- The level of mobilization of tax resources (taxes and local levies): poverty should not be a pretext for failure to promote a culture of taxation which is an essential condition for sustainable local development, which justifies it as a criterion for allocation of local development funds;
- Specific constraints on women in the development of their income-generating activities,
- Financial envelopes predefined at the territorial or local authority level: for example, the AECOI programme decided for the annual investment programmes that at least 60% of financing would go to arondissements outside the main town in the commune. This formula established in the procedural manual is targeted solely at the interests of the poor and is fully in keeping with a perspective of harmonious and balanced management of the territory of the commune.

Local planning, when it relies on the voice of the poor, enables social cohesion to be maintained and restores the citizenship of persons often given little consideration or marginalized. Just the fact that the poor feel taken into account because we are learning to listen to them creates in them the need for openness and learning, engaging them in a process of change which they themselves embody.

4.4. Frame of reference to measure impact and effects

Concern with impact to combat poverty effectively

Impact is understood here as the abilities acquired and valued as a whole from the investments in infrastructure and equipment and the investments in technical and organizational capacity building among local authorities, grassroots communities and local development workers. In other words, impact is the end result of the investment offered and for the support programmes to decentralization and local development, it is mainly a matter of poverty reduction through assisting people in enjoying better living conditions in their daily life.

To measure and impact, a mechanism for observation must be established to trace facts (production) and behaviours (reactions) which inform and demonstrate the manifestation of capacity acquired.

An impact can involve the internal governance of local authorities the quality of relationships among support partners, the quality of utilization of resources mobilized, initiatives to strengthen financial autonomy in relation to the operating costs of those authorities. The impact of a project is also

measured through its functionality which can be verified through the maintenance which these water points, classrooms, health centres, mills, market warehouses, sanitation trenches, etc., receive. The impact is also the voluntary restocking of grain in the food bank to get through the dry period in order to limit the rise in prices in the village and the cases of child malnutrition.

Towards a culture of measuring changes in living conditions, the population and communal administration must become used to following these impacts in a rational way, and also the problems encountered. The exercise of learning to measure impacts has often helped to provide a more reliable foundation for the annual reports of communal councils and the yearly programmes which provide an opportunity to update the local development plans.

The monitoring and evaluation components in each UNCDF programme include two modules:

- A module on *monitoring of execution* focused on analysis of differences between what was produced and what was planned including what was accomplished on the physical and financial levels and factors explaining the gaps noted and problems encountered;
- A module on *monitoring of impact* focused on measuring the changes in the situation and behaviours among direct and indirect beneficiaries and including a battery of indicators which are supplied with data from surveys and studies, or information given at meetings or general assemblies of the population, local elected officials and institutional support partners.

Measurement tools

In the two monitoring modules, major consideration is given to observance of the competence devolving to the local authorities under the law of the country, the national poverty reduction strategy paper, records of the deliberations of communal councils and to working documents from the various committees for management of investments. The minutes of committees to allocate LDF in relation to the procedural manual are important tools in evaluating the soundness of practices for allocation of investment funds. In addition to these tools, many other are highly useful to the MDGs because they allow the measurement of effectiveness, efficiency, perpetuation, replication or use as a model of investments compared to the improvement of living conditions for the poor and local governance. There are essentially three types of instruments: (i) the communal development plan, annual investment programmes, and work plans covering several months, (ii) activity reports, financial reports, training reports, (iii) reports from programme orientation and monitoring committees, external evaluation reports and audit reports.

Limits of the monitoring of impacts according to MDG criteria and indicators

In order to harmonize the monitoring system with the MDGs at the national level, monitoring indicators of local development plans must be based on the MDG model. Unfortunately, none of the countries has broken down the MDGs at the local level to support the impact of local development plans. In sum, as long as the UNCDF intervention zones do not have a regional and local scheme linked with the national MDGs, it will be difficult to measure effectively the contribution of support activities to the reduction of poverty in the disadvantaged communities of those zones. One of the weaknesses in operationalizing the MDGs has to do with the lack of a functioning internal monitoring-evaluation mechanism at the level of the local authorities to support the implementation of local development plans. This can be explained by several constraints: limited access to information technology and electricity, and a scarcity of qualified staff and the cost of data collection and processing.

To reverse this trend and to enable ownership of the MDGs in communal management, the following factors should be taken into account:

- Support to local authorities in establishing reliable databases, regularly updated and linked with national MDGs;
- Dissemination of the monitoring system centred on the MDGs in all the programme intervention zones;
- Share the system with other partners;
- Consolidation of achievements in archiving of strategic documents of the local authority; *and*
- Building of capacities of local authorities in the areas of planning and programming/budgeting of yearly investments.

Thus, the analysis of financing of the programmes and projects to support decentralization and local development shows that they take into account the multidimensional nature of poverty in their design and implementation as the table below attempts to summarize.

Table N° 4: Linkage of UNCDF programmes and projects with the MDGs

MDG referred to	Profile of UNDP/UNCDF investment programmes and projects
Goal 1 : Eliminate extreme poverty	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthening of technical and institutional capacity of local actors (VLUC, IVLUC) communes, grassroots associations, devolved services, local NGOs, local labour) 2. Advocacy for principles of good governance in basic social sectors and promotion of the local economy 3. Establishment of a local development fund in support to the IVLUC and communes to carry out investment programmes including a guarantee fund to support AGR 4. Management of irrigation areas 5. Promotion of market gardening 6. Grain banks 7. Warehouses for products 8. Sheltered mills 9. Cattle vaccination areas, and slaughterhouses/ veterinary pharmacy 10. Commercial equipment 11. Promotion of traditional or improved energy sources 12. Rural roads and tracks and road building works
Goal 2 : Provide primary education for all	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. Classrooms and equipment 14. Meeting and training rooms for adults 15. Housing for teachers
Goal 3 : Promote gender equality and the advancement of women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Social mobilization for girls' schooling 17. Production inputs to relieve women's burden of labour 18. Promotion of women in village and inter-village development committees 19. Centres for reading, literacy and training
Goal 4 : Reduce infant mortality	20. Community health centres
Goal 5 : Improve maternal health	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 21. Health care posts 22. Maternity centres
Goal 6 : Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 23. Pharmacy depots 24. Ambulance motorbikes 25. Medical kits 26. Training for matrons and health care assistants 27. 28.
Goal 7 : Ensure environmental sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 29. Village wells, drilled wells and water pipe networks 30. Latrines 31. Forest management, hedgerows and training in techniques for planting, pasture management and forage crops 32. Soil regeneration and conservation

The following matrix supplements tables 3 and 4 to show in what way local development objectives harmonize with the MDGs to structure the development plan of the local authority and help to combat poverty.

Tableau N°5 : Sample Planning Table for Local Development Aligned with the MDGs

Local development objectives	Implementation activities	MDGs and targets aimed at	Costs (thousands of FCFA)	Execution period (years)				
				1	2	3	4	5
1- Améliorer la sécurité alimentaire	1.1 Agricultural water resource management	MDG 1 – target 2	150.000					
	1.2 Soil regeneration and conservation	MDG 1-targets 2 and 11	200.000					
	1.3 Grain bank	MDG 1 target 2	80.000					
....								
....								

See table 3 for the MDGs and their targets.

4.5. Impact of support programmes in the field

Improving the situation of the poor means supporting a local development plan

Local development plans have become real tools which arouse interest both from the communities themselves and of support partners. The fact that UNCDF chose rural areas and their poverty pockets as a priority area of intervention is worthy of notice. Improving rural areas means giving rural people a chance to thrive in their environment, and not to risk it is to cause many of these poor to move to the cities and abroad. The problems caused by emigration are in part due to insufficient investment in rural areas. The choice of strengthening available infrastructure and equipment in health care, education, water supply, land reclamation and the local economy (commercial equipment, production equipment, guarantee funds for production credits...) can only benefit the people involved: more pupils, both boys and girls, enrolled in school, more reinforcement for teachers, better understanding of what is at stake in local development, improved management of local public affairs, increased capacity for advocacy and lobbying by local organizations, fewer

problems of morbidity and mortality, including a decline in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS ... (see MDG 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6).

All the village and inter-village committees that were formed through the planning and project management process constitute a critical mass of local actors (men and women) who participate actively in leadership of local community life on the political, economic, and socio-cultural levels (see MDG 3).

In all the countries of the sub-region, the missions of decentralization, the communal centres, development agencies and the communes themselves are greatly inspired by the approach to local development management. They have been promoted in particular through local planning and village and inter-village development committees under support projects. This valuing of those achievements is a major interest of the partnership approach which characterizes the interventions in support of local development initiated by UNCDF (see MDG 1 and 8).

Combating rural poverty means stabilizing family farms and feeding the poor

The many activities promoted in the areas of agriculture, grazing, soil reclamation. The environment, forestry, pastoral water supply and small irrigated plots have served as a platform for expanding the production base, thus creating the conditions for true food security and combating diseases related to malnutrition in children (see MDG 1, 6, 7 and 8).

No local development is sustainable without the mobilization of local resources

Investments in commercial equipment has allowed markets to be reorganized and to be made cleaner and safer, to establish management committees and especially to allow women to conduct their income-generating activities to combat monetary poverty (see MDG 1). In the general interest of the people, the poor in particular, collection of fees for market stalls and rental of shops and stores to users in most beneficiary communes have promoted a significant and rapid increase in local tax resources. This emerging culture of taxation is an asset for sustainable development to the extent that it allows the commune to maintain its investments in operational condition and to make others out of its own funds. Thus many communes progressively contribute to the local development fund even if the levels of mobilization are highly variable and leave room for improvement.

Dynamics for mobilization of local resources

In Mali, for example, several communes have established among their respective communities a rule of arbitration that takes into account the rate of recovery of taxes and levies in the allocation of funding. Thus a village or section that has not paid its taxes in full will have lower priority than another that may have met all its tax obligations. Financial participation by communes in the costs of producing investments thus becomes an essential condition for continuing efforts to combat poverty even beyond the support period for the development partners.

6.6. Lesson learned and improvements to be made in achieving the MDGs

The conclusions of national reports on the progress made towards achieving the MDGs have shown that without a sustained effort by means of increased resources for investment in the social and commercial sectors, it will be difficult to achieve the MDG targets by 2015 even if significant progress is expected in the education and water sectors. Concerning the recognition of the MDGs, it must be acknowledged that local public investment contributes to them and could contribute more. But the MDGs must still be brought to the attention of local actors to ensure that they will be given more attention in local planning.

Lesson one: *The portfolio of actions promoted in support programmes is multidimensional* and takes into account the complexities of poverty. It includes (i) the establishment of collective infrastructure and equipment of a social and commercial nature, (ii) natural resources management and environmental protection, (iii) strengthening of local governance and results-based management, (iv) a participatory approach and a gender perspective, (v) links between all levels of the commune's territorial structure, (vi) consideration of all sectors of economic, social and cultural life which have an influence on poverty reduction, (vii) mobilization, strengthening and valuing of local competence.

Lesson two: *Support programmes strengthen community project management while reinforcing grassroots communities.* Investments are inconceivable without multi-year planning, annual programming, giving responsibility to communal authorities, the local development fund and the financial contribution of the commune.

Lesson three: *Translating the MDGs to the local level is required to strengthen monitoring of local development plans.* While the nature of investments and their mode of implementation fits in perfectly with the MDGs, none of the programmes that are the subject of this study and none of the

intervention zones are monitored or evaluated on the basis of MDG targets by 2015. This situation represents a bias at the level of the management of local authorities which must be corrected by breaking the MDGs down to the local level so that they can be sustained by the support programmes. On this point, it would be appropriate to make the communes responsible, since their principle mission is to combat poverty.

Lesson four: *It is absolutely necessary to take the MDGs into account in updating local development plans.* The integration of the MDGs into local development plans and annual investment programmes results in a programme budget that is results-based. This will be beneficial for the performance evaluation of each commune and devolved State service. However, it assumes the implementation of a devolution policy and the transfer of competence and resources which are still being retained by the ministerial departments.

Lesson five: *There is a need to consider local and regional development plans in sectoral planning at the central level* to ensure greater coherence between local and national policy. The coordination of territorial policies with sectoral policies remains a challenge to be addressed in each of the States of the sub-region.



5] PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED

In the implementation of support programmes for decentralized local development in West Africa, UNCDF and its project teams seek to build national, local and international partnerships. More than a necessity, partnerships are for UNDP/UNCDF a key component of its strategy for combating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

5.1. The stakes and winning formulas for a partnership

A partnership is a contract of objectives, whether or not these are formalized. As an instrument for mobilizing the stakeholders involved in the pursuit of the common goal of implementing a shared project, its importance lies in the common understanding that poverty is multi-dimensional, complex, very costly to eradicate, and very demanding in terms of the solutions to be applied. In this sense, the notion of partnership, which is inherent in UNCDF programmes, means that all actors interested in a territory and in the living conditions of its population must be convinced of the necessity for cooperation and for helping each other in the fight against poverty.

5.1.1. What is at stake in a partnership?

Doing more and better together than all alone

The main objective of decentralization and local development is to mobilize local actors and their partners in seeking to tackle the problems of populations and their territories through better local governance that exploits local potential to the maximum and provides adequate responses to the challenges of development. The advantage of this approach is that it enables the partners to become more familiar with each other, establishes or strengthens technical and economic mutual reinforcement, and establishes new forms of development based on solidarity. The support of UNCDF is therefore a contribution at the organizational, technical and financial levels and in the form of capital to create poles of development through the exploitation of social and economic potential. Satellite settlements will develop around these poles so that local land-use plans could encourage sustainable and harmonious local development. Such a challenge can be overcome only in partnership.

Indeed, when the areas of intervention are as extensive and as remote as those in which UNCDF intervenes, most of the time it is clear that no development programme by itself can have sufficient resources to support all of the communities living in these areas. Only the establishment of a solid partnership with various stakeholders can ensure the successful implementation of the projects to be undertaken. Partnerships have often been established with NGOs on the ground to achieve this objective. UNCDF has relied on such collaboration to reach the poorest sectors and to ensure better monitoring of the discharge by communities of their responsibilities within the framework of the activities of village and inter-village land-use committees. This experience, which has been tried for example with such NGOs as CARE and the French Association of Volunteers for Progress (AFVP), has resulted in remarkable development work being done in northern Mali.

Why partnerships for local development?

Partnerships provide for : (i) synergy and coherence of actions; (ii) exploitation of the comparative advantages of each stakeholder; (iii) leveraging to increase investments and ensure their more equitable and harmonious distribution; (iv) pooling of expertise and financial resources for the benefit of all projects; (v) each partner learning from the other; (vi) harmonization of approaches; (vii) lessening of leadership conflicts between donors; (viii) better local governance with greater transparency at all levels and more active social monitoring; (ix) obligation to be accountable more easily accepted by elected officials; (x) relatively less coercion in the acceptance by the population of the efforts to mobilize local resources through taxes because they see and benefit from the fruits of the partnership; (xi) improvement in the skill level of local workers.

5.1.2. What are the winning formulas for a partnership?

In order to be successful, a partnership must adhere to a number of principles which the parties must integrate into their joint approaches in pursuit of a shared goal. This schematic outline is based on and patterned after instruments and analyses that are set out in the country reports.

The winning formulas for partnerships distilled from the experience of UNCDF programmes in West Africa can be summarized in nine key principles that form the basis of a partnership charter for decentralized local development in the service of the MDGs.

- **Principle 1: A formula for partnership in the basic cooperation documents.** Project documents, funding agreements and manuals of procedure must clearly allow for all forms of beneficial partnerships at the institutional and operational levels for a programme of support for decentralized local development.

- **Principle 2: Integration of proposed programmes and projects into national policies.** Bringing the projects to be undertaken into line with the MDGs and the country's decentralization policy is essential since the State is the principal guarantor of national land-use policy.
- **Principle 3: A common vision of partnership.** The vision is the shared grand dream of success in reducing poverty and achieving decentralized local development which requires individual, collective and institutional commitment in order to be realized.
- **Principle 4: Linkages between the institutional structure of the partnership and the institutions and competences of local collectivities.** The partnership must seek to strengthen the capacities of communal institutions to enable them to improve the quality of management of local public affairs.
- **Principle 5: Local planning focused on grassroots democratization.** The partnership must seek to provide coherent responses geared to the needs of the populations and not only based on what the donors and technical partners consider to be beneficial to the populations. The relationship with populations must be underpinned by an approach characterized by participation and accountability at all phases of the project cycle. This participation of necessity requires the mobilization of local resources, in this case the promotion of a local tax culture, by the payment of fees and taxes that would enable social investments in communities to be made, maintained and renewed.
- **Principle 6: Synergy and mutually reinforcing actions.** The partnership must seek to leverage and to establish consistency in the total supply of support for local development and a balanced distribution. This approach must promote the integration of remote communities and marginalized groups, particularly women, into the process of transformation of land so that local collectivities could become a genuine space of solidarity. This partnership also requires cooperation between neighbouring local collectivities (inter-community, for example).
- **Principle 7: Flexibility on the part of the different stakeholders.** Each partner must show understanding and respect for the other within the limits of his prerogatives.
- **Principle 8: Transparency in the implementation of common projects and special attention to the image of each partner:** the actions of communication, monitoring meetings, joint visits to field operations, and full traceability of the acts of each stakeholder are ongoing efforts needed to strengthen and further develop cooperation.

- **Principle 9: Development and sound management of local potential:** the strengthening and development of the capacities of local workers, development of natural potentials and comparative advantages at the institutional level, and of the geographic, sociological, cultural and economic situation are all essential conditions for sustainable access by grassroots communities to the dynamic for change in their living conditions offered by partnerships.

5.2. Forms of partnership

The search for financial support or collaboration in the pursuit of a common development objective is part of the strategy to combat poverty and may therefore take several forms which should be characterized here on the basis of the experiences of UNCDF.

5.2.1. Institutional and operational partnerships

The willingness to cooperate is manifested at two strategic levels: the institutional and the operational.

Institutional partnership: this type of partnership is based on the similarity of projects at the national level, which is why the actors are concerned at their consistency and capacity for mutual reinforcement and therefore create a melting pot of exchange, a kind of thematic or sub-sectoral coalition. This is the case of the coalition for natural resource management projects in Burkina Faso, which has provided support for the National Plan to Combat Desertification (PNLCD), of which the UNCDF country projects are a part. The PNLCD has become: (i) a genuine forum for the harmonization of methods of intervention in the different projects; (ii) a forum for advocacy to remove the constraints to cooperation and in particular the bureaucratic burden of the public administration; (iii) a framework for mutual sharing of experiences at the national level, which gives it greater visibility. This type of partnership is much more effective at mobilizing decision-makers, financial partners, members of the management committees of projects and project heads. The institutional partnership operates mainly at the strategic level and is therefore concerned with questions of approach, procedures, relations with the Government and donors. It provides the intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral connections at the national level as well as management of the relations inherent in international partnerships.

Operational partnership: this type of partnership concerns the search for mutual reinforcement between the actors involved in the same area of intervention and providing the same services to local collectivities and their populations. The geographic similarity is a determining factor but not the only

one, since collaboration can extend to exchanges of experiences, goods and services between actors who do not share the same territory but are involved in the same area of activity and are concerned with solutions to specific problems arising in the field, especially those affecting the populations. Different partnership agreements may involve the same actor, with each partner representing a different focus of interest. For example, UNCDF programmes are in a different partnership with the Special Programme on Food Security (PSSA) of FAO for the regeneration of soils and access to fertilizers. At the same time, however, they are part of a different partnership with the World Food Programme which provides the initial stock of grain for grain banks. With other NGOs, cooperation may centre on a project that seeks financing to support the implementation of local development plans elaborated by inter-village land-use management committees. At the same time, the international partnership seeks to provide training for the officials in these committees.

5.2.2. Methods of formalizing a partnership

A partnership may or may not be formalized, but it is always preferable that it should be formalized as evidence of commitment.

A partnership may be formalized in the project document and the financing agreement that specifies the institutional framework of the project.

At the operational level, the process of formalizing the partnership may begin with: (i) the geographic location of the support actors operating in the field; (ii) a list of potential donors and lenders; (iii) relations with neighbouring communes, etc. This formalization is done by the signing of contracts, agreements, charters, etc. It operates with different social structures of the local population for the implementation and management of selected activities under the local development plan: municipal offices, land-use management village committees, parent-teachers associations, management committees for health centres, water supply points, etc.

Failure to formalize or institutionalize a partnership may be attributable to the fact that the partnership is one of circumstance, or ad hoc, or limited to a specific intervention. This type of partnership, based on a verbal commitment, is often semi-formalized either through the mission reports of project managers submitted to the communities, whether or not these are illustrated by audio or audiovisual aids and photographs.

5.3. Actors in partnerships

The partnership dynamic is not only a coalition of donors or public administrators. It is also a purposeful and participatory approach and a coalition that is open to other types of actors.

Partnerships create a capacity to go beyond the traditional considerations of leadership and to break the different barriers that are created between actors. Opting for inclusion and integration as against exclusion, marginalization, antagonisms and ignorance or the failure to recognize the capacities of others, partnerships bring stakeholders together and create functional ties among actors. But what types of actors?

Whatever the form chosen, partnerships involve various categories of actors depending on the interest in the area of intervention and the motivation of the actors involved in building a partnership.

On principle, the actor or future stakeholder is a partner only by his intention and his commitment to an effort with which the other actors with whom he will be associated also identify. Otherwise, the status of partner is determined by the third principle, namely, the shared vision. More specifically, actors can be individuals, institutions, associations or enterprises.... A partnership may group together: (i) at the national level, central and decentralized public administrations, local collectivities, development agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, grassroots communities; and (ii) at the international level, structures or individuals representing bilateral or multilateral cooperation agencies, international solidarity organizations, and foreign territorial collectivities.

5.4. Areas of partnership

The areas of partnership are determined by the missions of each party, the competences of the local collectivities and the needs of the grassroots communities.

Without being exhaustive, the areas of partnerships observed within the framework of UNDCF programmes in West Africa are the following:

At the institutional level

- Strengthening the local governance capacities of local elected officials and civil society organizations;
- Technical and/or financial assistance for the implementation of the annual investment programmes of local collectivities and of inter-village and village land-use management committees;
- Advocacy (dialogue on national and local public policies);
- Participatory local planning and harmonization of supporting tools for local development (guide to local planning, indicators of local governance, criteria for access to local development funds);
- Communal committee for the selection of local micro-projects;

- Support for the mobilization of resources through the promotion of contacts between land-use management organizations and economic groups, particularly women, with micro-financing institutions with or without the establishment by UNCDF of a guarantee fund for the institutions;
- Joint or complementary activities for the building of infrastructure and the installation of equipment. For example, UNCDF builds modular classrooms and latrines, one of the partners provides electricity and water, another provides the tables and benches while others provide training for the parent teachers association and for the school administrators in order to ensure effective management;
- Comprehensive monitoring (project management committee and local committee for the monitoring of local development projects);
- Capitalization of experiences and exchange of know-how.

At the operational level

- Food security: grain banks, input banks;
- Strengthening of technical capacities in specific areas of activity;
- Exchange visits;
- Management of natural resources: defence and restoration of soils and reforestation;
- Social and community health and sanitation, water supply, school and educational facilities and commercial infrastructure and equipment.

5.5. Steps in the establishment of a partnership

The establishment of a partnership requires several phases which the Table 6 on the following page summarizes in six key steps.

6.6. Results of partnerships

The results of the partnership must be assessed in terms of the value added. It is evident that partnerships have created synergies for many projects, which has made for coherent and coordinated responses to questions related to (i) food security; (ii) the functionality of school establishments, adult learning centres and health centres; (iii) water supply for populations and cattle; (iv) commercial infrastructure, equipment that helps to lighten the burden of income-generating activities; (v) loans for productive activities to combat monetary poverty; (vi) activities to protect and restore soils and village plantations...

Partnerships have achieved the following results, among others:

Table No. 6: Cycle for the establishment of a partnership

Steps	Actions	Results
1.	Preliminary informational contacts to establish the intention to cooperate, through the exchange of documents on activities or projects by each party involved in the negotiation with the possibility of visits to the projects.	Commitment to the idea of creating a dynamic for partnership Identification of a common vision
2.	Elaboration of draft protocol of understanding, charter or agreement, specifying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The areas of interest for collaboration, including the principles of partnership; • The common objectives sought; • The commitments of each party; • The mechanisms and procedures for the implementation of the collaboration and partnership; • Frameworks of agreement, harmonization and articulation of interventions within the framework of the partnership; • Common strategies for the prevention and management of conflicts; • Modalities for the monitoring of the protocol of understanding, charter or agreement. 	Summary of proposals of areas of interest. Proposals are discussed and a draft protocol of understanding / charter / agreement is produced.
3.	Finalization of the protocol of understanding / charter / agreement	The formal draft partnership has received the notice of no-objection from all stakeholders
4.	Signing of the partnership agreement	The agreement enters into force.
5.	Harmonization of the offer of each stakeholder with the development plan of the local collectivity	A summary is prepared of the mutual offers within the framework of the partnership
6.	Follow-up of the implementation	Periodic meeting to review implementation and stimulate the partnership

- Increase in the level of investments of local development funds;
- Reduction in dispersed and uncoordinated actions through the strengthening of local supervision with greater responsibility given to communal councils for management of development projects in their localities;
- Better visibility of available investment capacities that can be mobilized for the zone of intervention by strategic sector in the fight against poverty;
- The consolidation of budget support mechanisms through better demonstration of the possibilities of using State financing to effectively manage project funds (national budget, financial oversight and public treasury);
- Eliminated or reduced the competition in the search for financing through joint projects with shared responsibility that give coherence to the relations between sources of financing which also have fewer small projects within their portfolios;
- A basis for understanding the procedures for managing supplies to communities: approaches that are less contradictory and less focused on a competitive logic between development projects;
- A mutual learning experience;
- Production of joint reports on execution, thereby limiting the proliferation of contradictory technical and financial reports and promoting a results-driven system of reporting that is not exclusively focused on the source and object of financing.

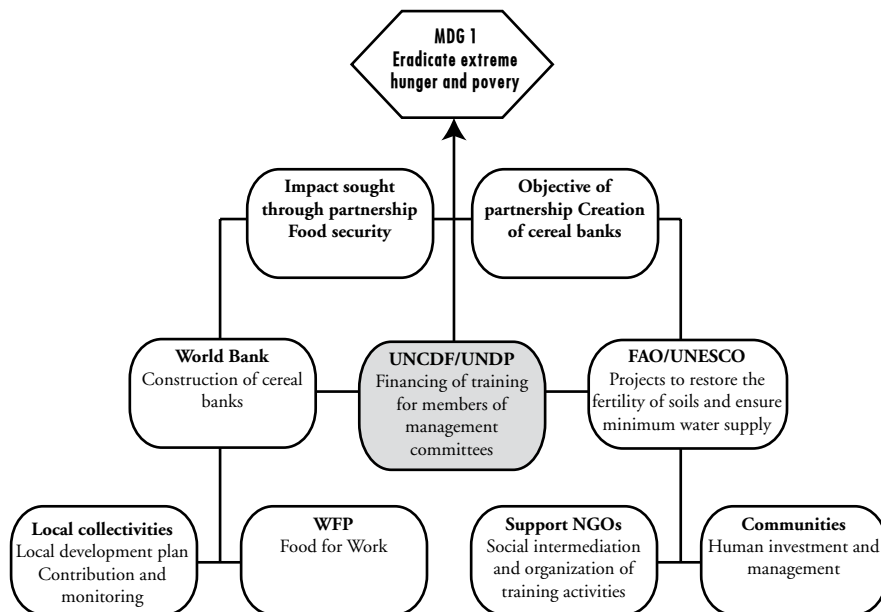
The examples below show the relevance, effectiveness and impact of partnerships in combating poverty:

- A partnership with the Senegalese rural electrification agency made it possible to electrify school and health equipment thus resulting in a marked improvement in comfort for the populations. The health centres that benefited from such a partnership will be better able to conserve medications and to handle emergencies, even at night.
- UNCDF is providing guarantee funding to microfinance institutions to enable groups to access loans from them. This is the case, for example, of the partnership between UNCDF and the Mutual Credit in Kaffine or the FADEC at Kébémér, Senegal.

The promotion of a dynamic of partnership based on the mobilization of several forms of bilateral and multilateral cooperation contributes to the achievement of the MDG 8, i.e. “Establish a global partnership for development”.

The above schema shows the insertion of a local partnership and of a shared zone of intervention in an international partnership. It shows how this partnership tackles the problem of extreme poverty and hunger through food security by working on the productive and management capacities of grassroots communities and on the management of fertility and protection of agricultural land.

Example of the strategic framework of an action of convergence in a partnership initiated by UNCDF for OMD



5.7. Risks and pitfalls to avoid

The risks of a partnership for decentralized local development are at several levels, particularly at the time of the establishment and/or during the growth of the partnership. The determinants of these risks and pitfalls are the socio-political and institutional context of the country, the system of public land management in the intervention area and the commitment of the actors.

The principal risks and pitfalls identified within the framework of UNCDF projects are sometimes the poor preparation of the partnership, the insufficient involvement of the decentralized services of the State, the lack of flexibility, the difficulty of reaching consensus on the schedule of meetings, the difficulty of harmonizing administrative procedures among donors, and the cumbersome payment procedures.

Poor preparation of the partnership

A partnership is not a forced marriage, but it is a demanding process (cf. principles listed above). In areas with a heavy concentration of development partners and civil society organizations, it is not easy to create a partnership by mobilizing all institutional actors. It is absolutely necessary, from the outset, to make a selection in order to base the partnership on credible actors who are respected in the intervention area. A map analyzing the various actors in the intervention area using the FFOM approach (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is essential: (i) analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the partner in relation to his areas of action; (ii) analysis of the opportunities of the actor for the partnership; (iii) analysis of the threats to the partnership due to the fact that the reputation of the actor is based on a negative image, adverse suspicions in the local environment.

Insufficient involvement of the decentralized services of the State

Even though these services are permanent and are supposed to supplement the assistance and advisory services provided by projects, their involvement in the execution of these decentralized local development projects is limited. The shortfall in terms of financial, technical and material resources between the project structures and these decentralized services is so great that it creates frustrations or even jealousy that can go as far as refusal to participate in the partnership. Impaired by a relationship of strength that is hardly constructive, the results of the projects enjoy limited capitalization and development after the completion of their cycle. It is to avoid this regrettable situation that the practical modalities of the partnership with public administrations should be clarified as soon as each project is formulated. The poor quality of these services is due not only to the situation of poverty but also to the absence of an effective policy of devolution to accompany decentralization and to the strategy of poverty reduction.

Lack of flexibility

To engage in a partnership is to submit to a group discipline whatever the scale of the resources provided by each stakeholder. A partnership may limit a part of the freedoms of the stakeholders by the interplay of social control exercised by each partner. Such control should be seen as a common desire to succeed in the partnership enterprise and not to affect the performance of each stakeholder.

Often difficult consensus on the scheduling of meetings

Functional constraints may sometimes arise, especially where the scheduling of meetings is concerned, or when some partners do not find the solidarity

or mutual support which they expected upon embarking on the partnership, or again, quite simply, certain partners repeatedly ignore the contents of the protocol of understanding.

Difficulty of harmonizing the administrative procedures of donors

The procedures of each partner may constitute a limiting factor, despite the desire to cooperate, quite simply because the project document did not leave the necessary room to permit the project team to engage fully in the dynamic of the partnership. The question of supervision of the project can also divide partners. Certain projects are based on strict respect for joint supervision while others, such as those of the World Bank, opt more for communal supervision delegated to the grassroots communities for the building of infrastructure that is within the competence of the community.

Cumbersome payment procedures

The failure of the Public Treasury to pay the invoices of service providers and suppliers on time and the bureaucratic delays in issuing cheques by the financial services of the municipality weaken the partnership. For example, economic operators hesitate to continue to work on their sites or to pre-finance them, which affects the scheduling of activities and creates payment difficulties for certain partners.

5.8. Principal lessons on the steps and stakes of partnerships

First lesson: *Strength through unity* and local partnership is an essential condition to ensure harmonious and sustainable development of local collectivities.

Second lesson: *The local development plan is a tool for bringing together* both partners and the actions to fight poverty which they undertake. It channels the opportunities for resolving the problems of populations and avoids duplication and waste of energy and resources.

Third lesson: *A partnership is not a forced marriage but a voluntary endeavour* that nevertheless has constraints. Group discipline is the key to its success and exemplary conduct by each party determines its credibility and effectiveness.

A few general considerations concerning the UNCDF intervention framework:

- Since the philosophy of intervention of UNCDF is based on intervention on demand, it would seem logical that lessons learnt from this capitalization should be highlighted in the project documents whose content and procedure should be reviewed in order to better reflect the risks and pitfalls associated with partnerships;
- Project formulation should better reflect the determination of the situation of reference, particularly with regard to the MDGs;
- The post descriptions of teams in the field are often ill-suited to the products or strategies of intervention (example of the PADMIR, which has no officials with responsibility for follow up – evaluation or any communication specialists);
- Current procedures of centralized accounting and financial management are in several respects inadequate for the implementation of projects in support of decentralization and local development.



6] CONCLUSION

UNCDF is aware that the fight against poverty is a process that requires time and methodologies but also the means to profoundly and sustainably improve living conditions for the poor. In achieving this goal, decentralization is an essential condition for tackling poverty and laying the groundwork for local development.

Decentralization should be the means to integrate marginalized groups, minorities and women in the decision-making process so that these groups can also fully enjoy their citizenship. In addressing this challenge of social justice, UNCDF and its partners undertook to support local governments in the exercise of their legal competencies. Indeed, UNCDF is not starting from zero and the experiences gained from previous projects are a foundation that it is using to improve its means of action on various government levels: the local government as the conduit for channelling its support, grassroots communities as the main focus of its efforts to reduce poverty, the provincial, regional and national levels as important counterparts for strengthening the partnership and sharing experiences for the benefit of the communes.

In the process of local planning, the LDF, strengthening of local development management capacities and good local governance remain the chief modalities of the mission of UNCDF in the promotion of local development. Over the past five years, various new initiatives have been undertaken while some programmes have been extended on the countries of intervention.

In order to promote a greater understanding of its various instruments of intervention and their impacts, UNCDF has chosen to build on the lessons of its projects in West Africa. The present document is a summary of the lessons learned. The principal element to note is that these UNCDF projects follow the financial procedures of the partner States and their basis in local government budgets/programmes in the form of decentralized budgetary assistance. The agreements for the implementation of these projects have provided for and have succeeded in efforts to mobilize local resources as a strategy for the effective exercise of community supervision of projects and an indispensable condition for ensuring the sustainability of the infrastructure built. They have effectively generated a number of very interesting impacts:

Impact on local governance, land-use planning and environmental governance:

- Introduction of equity, justice and transparency in procurement processes, a good indication of good local governance;
- Expanding forums for dialogue between the various decision-making centres at the local level;
- Promotion of a dynamic for the evaluation of the performance of communes;
- Dialogue between the communes of each zone of intervention, gradually preparing the way for genuine inter-communal cooperation to enable the mutual sharing of resources for joint actions or shared services;
- Promotion of technical approaches for the management of natural resources by the DRS, forested village land, management of grazing areas.

Social impact

- Emergence of a dynamic for the promotion of local development that succeeded first in gaining the confidence of the population then in spurring them to action through processes of capacity-building, planning and implementation of development projects, mobilization of local resources and evaluation of the performance of communes;
- Access to basic social services (health, education, village water supply, cereal banks, etc);
- Account taken of the specific interests of women and the lightening of their daily tasks, thereby creating the conditions for their full participation in the management of local affairs;
- Integration of marginalized groups into the social dialogue on local development by strengthening their participation in the management of local affairs (management committees, parent teacher associations, communal commissions, CVGT, CIVGT);
- Conflict prevention linked to the exploitation of shared natural resources through the promotion of an integrated and sustainable management of the resources.

Financial and economic impact

- Leverage effect to attract funding from other partners;
- Increase in the purchasing power of populations through the financing of income-generating activities;

- Creation of income-generating employment and sources for the increase in consumption demand and thus of the supply of services;
- Improvement in the productive base, a necessary foundation for increasing production and thereby improving food security;
- Improvement in the mobilization of local resources;
- Strengthening of the financial capacities of local collectivities.

Despite the fact that these impacts are consistent with the MDGs, it must be recognized nevertheless that there are certain weaknesses: (i) absence in certain cases of national decentralization and devolution policies or lack of implementing legislation for the laws on decentralization to support the achievement of the MDGs, and the complete exercise of the competencies transferred to the communes; (ii) the limited number of development guidelines at the national and regional levels for the analysis of the coherence of communal development plans; (iii) lack of adequate linkages between micro-finance structures and the banking network affecting the development initiatives of local economies; (iv) weaknesses of human resources in communal institutions.

The consolidation of the impacts of the UNCDF projects will depend heavily on the political will in the countries of intervention, on the efforts to tirelessly pursue the MDGs, strengthening of the operational resources of local collectivities as well as forums for dialogue between local actors. But there is room for hope in the enthusiasm created by decentralization among the populations and local elected officials.



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ANNEX 1: CHOICE OF CRITERIA AND INDICATORS FOR EVALUATING PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The performance criteria of the local governments in relation to each of the areas/instruments for the execution of their projects have been approved by the Management and Disbursement Committee during the course of a workshop.

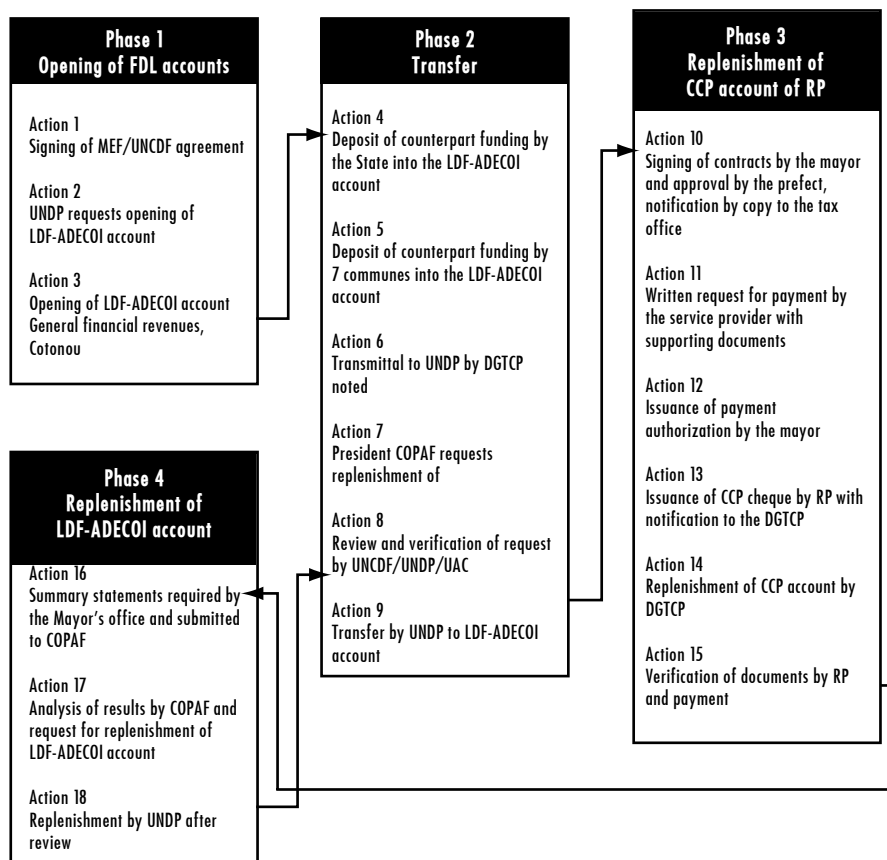
Source: ADECOI: Evaluation of performance of communes in the ADECOI project: monitoring of actors in 2004, Benin.

Note: A certain weight (relative importance) has been attributed to each of the criteria by the participants in the above-mentioned COPAF workshop. It was noted that the weight attributed to each of the criteria would remain the same throughout the life of the project and would be used for calculating the performance of communes in partnership with ADECOI.

Table No. 7: Criteria and indicators for evaluating performance of communes

Areas/instruments	Criteria	Indicators
Local governance	Holding of regular sessions of the commune council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of regular and extraordinary sessions held with deliberations • Method of convocation used to permit the participation of the population (radio, posters, individual invitations)
	Principle of legality: decisions implemented are the result of deliberations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of decisions of the mayor that were previously discussed in the commune council
	Information sessions organized to inform the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of feedback sessions/CA • Posters put up • Radio discussions broadcast
	Public consulted on the quality of services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of opinion polls organized each year • Number of debates organized (radio, public)
Local planning	Annual investment programme (AIP) commensurate with the CDP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of investment projects initiated under the CDP
	AIP promoting partnership within villages and between communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of investments made in rural districts
	Effective mechanisms put in place for follow-up and evaluation of the CDP and AIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of annual assessment of the AIP • Existence of minutes of quarterly meetings of the local planning and coordination council • Feedback sessions organized
Local finances	At least 5% increase in commune's own revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of increase in the commune's own revenues between 2003 and 2004
	Compliance with the legal deadline for the adoption of the first budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates of consultations with population
Local development funds	At least 60% of investments made outside the district capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of LDF invested in rural districts • Total local counterpart resources allocated within the agreed time frame
	Allocations made for operation and maintenance and utilized	
Procurement	Procurement procedures respected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date of issuance of invitations to tender • Date of opening of bids • Date of evaluation of bids • Date of notification of results • Period between notification and signing of the contract
	Disbursements on basis of supporting documents and reports on worksite monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period between request for payment and disbursement
Gender aspect	Communal council takes actions to promote the development of the gender aspect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number (proportion) of actions for the benefit of women and minority or excluded groups from the AIP
	Commune involves minority and marginalized groups in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of young people, women and minority groups participating in the AIP evaluation

ANNEX 2 : PROCEDURE FOR USE OF PUBLIC FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR THE LDF IN BENIN



Source : ADECOI (2004) MPO, Bénin