

Sharing local governance M&E tools

West Africa shows the way

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The members of REDL, a network of development actors working in the field of decentralisation and local government in West Africa, are documenting, analysing and sharing their methods and lessons learned. Now no one has to reinvent the wheel.

Some time ago, a number of development organisations in Mali discovered that they had all been testing their own approaches and tools for building the monitoring and evaluation capacities of local governments and other actors. Enquiries in neighbouring countries pointed to several interesting experiences in the field. But none of these efforts had been documented, analysed or published, and so had tended to pass largely unnoticed in regional and international debates. This also meant that lessons learned in one area were not available to others facing similar challenges, so that they were having to reinvent the wheel.



The Réseau de réflexion et d'échanges sur le développement local (REDL) is a Mali-based network of 12 development organisations and programmes working in the field of decentralisation and local governance. Together with the Malian Ministry of Local Government and Territorial Administration (MATCL), SNV and ECDPM, the network decided to initiate a process to identify and document experiences with M&E tools and approaches, and to disseminate good practices and lessons learned. We decided to carry out the work ourselves, rather than hiring outside experts to do it for us.

Case studies

In early 2006 the members prepared 11 case studies describing a wide range of experiences, including self-evaluation tools for local governments, multi-stakeholder approaches to establishing baselines, geographical information systems for local governments and service providers, as well as the use of participatory M&E for assessing the impacts of external assistance. All of these case studies will be published online and in print.

The resulting inventory illustrated that most of the tools and approaches identified had multiple aims and purposes. Besides building the M&E capacity of actors in local governance, they also aimed to promote dialogue, collaboration and trust among these actors or to increase the accountability of local governments.

In May 2006, the network organised a seminar in the capital Bamako to discuss the outcomes. The seminar attracted over 100 participants from regional and local governments, civil society, the private sector, national institutions and development organisations in six West African countries, most of whom had been involved in developing and testing the tools and approaches.

Assessing local governance

During the meeting local government officials commented that they need to show results and to prove that the resources they receive from central government and donors are being used to strengthen democratic governance and promote local development. The participating mayors and chief executives requested that they too have access to 'user friendly' tools and approaches adapted to the needs and capacities of municipalities in rural areas. But participants from all levels of government and development organisations warned of the proliferation of donor-driven efforts to develop M&E tools for assessing local governance, and called on central governments to take on a coordinating role.

The positive results of these joint efforts are already apparent. A tool initially developed for self-evaluation of local governments in Mali, for example, has been adapted to the needs of municipalities in Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. All users have been eager to learn from the experiences in neighbouring countries and the adaptations and innovations they have introduced.

Multi-stakeholder processes

Other cases presented at the seminar illustrated that investing in multi-stakeholder processes for joint monitoring of public service delivery does more than strengthen the capacities of local actors to generate, analyse and use statistical data that they need to provide or demand better services. Such investments can also help to increase the willingness of local actors to work together, thus creating the conditions necessary for the further transfer of competencies and resources for basic service provision to the local level.

In the coming months, the network members will address other questions raised at the seminar, such as how to keep the process going and consolidate the case study teams into a community of practice. They will also discuss how to ensure that the inventory, its conclusions and recommendations have a real impact on policy making and M&E practice in West Africa.

Links

[Réseau de réflexion et d'échanges sur le développement local](#) (REDL) members include the Programme d'appui aux collectivités territoriales (PACT-GTZ/DED), Participatory Governance Programme (PGP), SNV Mali, Helvetas, Intercoopération, AFVP, Care International, AEN, SUCO, GRDR and IUED.

[SNV Mali: The 'Actualités' section offers access to the inventory, case studies \(forthcoming\) and other documents.](#)

[ECDPM: M&E support to decentralisation and local governance](#)

[Another link for ECDPM.](#)

[Pelican Initiative: An online platform for discussing tools and case studies.](#)

[Toolkit Citizen Participation](#)

Further reading

S. Diarra et al., eds (2004)
[Decentralisation in Mali: Putting policy into practice, KIT Bulletin 362, KIT/SNV/CEDELO](#)

[MATCL/SNV/Helvetas/PACT-GTZ \(2004\) Outil d'auto évaluation des performances des collectivités territoriales.](#)

P. Sebahara (2003) Monitoring of evaluation of support for decentralisation and local governance: A case study on Burkina Faso.
[ECDPM Inbrief 7.](#)