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## LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND PRO-POOR GROWTH: KADIOLO DISTRICT CASE STUDY

Following the establishment of a full multiparty political system after the 1991 democratic revolution, Mali has embarked once more upon a programme of dynamic institutional change. A number of development programmes are in progress, all with the ultimate objective of improving living conditions for the Malian people: Schéma Directeur du Secteur Développement Rural (SDDR - Rural development sector Masterplan), Programme Décennal de Développement Socio-Sanitaire (PRODESS - Ten-Year Plan for Community Health Development), Programme Décennal de l'Éducation (PRODEC - Ten-Year Plan for Education), Programme de Développement de la Justice (PRODEJ - Justice Development Programme), and an ongoing process of decentralisation.

All of these programmes come within the scope of the Cadre Stratégique de Lutte contre la Pauvreté (CSLP - Strategic Framework for Poverty Reduction), drafted and adopted in May 2002, the official reference document for economic and social development policy in Mali. This means that the institutional framework is in place for sustainable growth and development. However, beyond political willingness and discussion, what are the

real repercussions of such projects at ground level? How do villagers see these reforms?

Within the scope of the IPPG research programme, an exploratory study was undertaken in four villages within the Kadiolo District (Sikasso region) between 14 and 26 December 2005. This is an area well suited to agriculture; livestock production, fishing and trade are secondary activities here. Since 1974 the Compagnie Malienne de Développement des Fibres Textiles (CMDT) has worked in this region, the CMDT being one of the biggest rural development bodies in Mali. The CMDT supports progress in rural areas and co-ordinates cotton growing in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Based on data collected in the villages, the study examines the different types of institution and organisation found there as follows: villagers' own evaluation of these institutions and organizations, according to defined criteria; an analysis of villagers' perceptions of the chronology of institutional changes at local and national levels; an examination of the current land tenure system and conditions for progress in the non-agricultural sector. Future lines of research in Mali are also explored.

1. See Mali Research Brief 3, IPPG Briefing Paper Fifteen.

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## OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the study are:

- To explore the perceptions of villagers and other key agents at village and local levels concerning recently introduced institutional changes.
- To explore the criteria peasants use to evaluate the institutions and organizations which affect them.
- To explore the factors which determine the 'success' or 'failure' of formal institutions at village level.
- To explore the programme's research methodologies for the future, in Mali and elsewhere.
- To evaluate the institutions fighting against poverty with the help of criteria defined or proposed by villagers, and to explore the reasons why some organizations have a greater impact than others.
- To study the land tenure system and the customary land-use rights, to determine whether these rights are secure, to clarify the existence or otherwise of formal title, and to see what problems if any that poses.

## INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COMMUNITIES STUDIED

This study revolves around the evaluation of local institutions and organizations in the communities studied. The broad, common understanding of the term 'institution' is intended here, that is a collection of structured practices and behaviour, or the accepted 'rules of the game'. As it is understood, the term includes organisations, formal institutions such as laws and contracts, and informal institutions such as indigenous land tenure systems and the powers of village leaders, as defined within the terms of reference for the study.

1. Informal or endogenous institutions within the group of villages studied were represented on one hand by the authority of the land chief, called in the local *Sénoufo* language *kulofolo* or *tarafolo*, meaning land owner or land master. He is usually the descendent of the first occupant of that area. On the other hand, there is also the village chief, known locally as *kahanfolo*. In principle he is descended from the family which, historically speaking, settled in the village after that of the *kulofolo*. He is the administrative authority in the community.

2. The formal institutions found at district level are branches of central, regional and sub-regional departments. The range of institutions found depends on whether we are looking at the level of the Cercle or district, the Commune (group of villages) and its centre, or the village. The institutions present in the villages studied were schools, community health centres (*CSCOM*, *Centres de santé communautaires*) and a headquarters in the chief village of each Commune. The range of institutions is more varied at sub-district and district level, where, as well as administrative

services, there are technical departments for agriculture, livestock production, conservation, health, social development and solidarity economics, microfinance institutions, the CMDT, the Banque Nationale de Développement Agricole (BND - National Agricultural Development Bank), non-governmental organisations, the Chamber of Agriculture, the Chamber of Trades, farmers' unions and security services.

3. The term 'organization' is understood here to mean any organized group of people pursuing a common goal in the villages. Depending on their origin and degree of formalization, organizations can either be internal or external, informal or formal.

Informal or endogenous organizations are the types of association found at village level based around mutual help, solidarity and interdependence. They are based on traditional values, and their existence is not subject to any founding statement of intent or official authorisation. The most usual form these associations take is called a ton. Tons are age-old groups of men and women, founded on tradition. In the beginning they were intended as cultural and mutual help associations which brought together different age groups, young people aged between 16 and 40 whose fraternity and solidarity was bound up with the association's initiation rites. At first, the ton united on one hand all the young men from one village and, on the other, all the married women in that village. These days, as villages have grown extensively, a ton can often be found in each village neighbourhood, whereas before there would have been one per village. They take either the name of the village or neighbourhood, or a name related to their origin. As well as tons, there are other self help groups in villages, called *soli* in *Sénoufo* or *dama*, *dèmèton* or *flanton* in Bamanan. In contrast to the membership of a ton, which can reach 30 members, that of a *soli* never exceeds ten people. The *soli* is based on principles of mutual consent and reciprocity.

Formal organizations are those governed by the law and which have a founding statement giving them legal status; they are associations and cooperatives. In Mali, associations are governed by law no. 04-038/5 August 2004, which defines an association as being an 'agreement by which several people pool their knowledge and their activities on a permanent basis for a goal other than shared profits'. Co-operatives are governed by law no. 01-076/18 July 2001 which states in its first article that 'co-operative societies are societies of a particular type founded on the principles of union, solidarity, mutual self help whose members join together voluntarily with the goal of common economic and social development by setting up a business which they manage democratically for their own benefit and/or at their joint risk and in the running of which they undertake to participate actively'.

These formal organizations can be placed in two categories:

- Organizations of a community nature set up

by villagers themselves. Some lack specific direction while, in contrast, others are created around particular activities (farm animal breeding, market gardening, trade, improving living conditions, etc).

- Organizations created by an outside impetus (the state or development bodies). This category includes cotton growers' cooperatives (CPC), community health associations (ASACO), school management committees (CGS) and parents' associations (APE).

ASACOs were set up with the aim of involving the population in the maintenance and improvement of its own state of health. They fall within the scope of the sectoral policy of health and population in Mali, which designates the ASACO as the chief administrative body of the community health centres (CSCOM).

Created in 2005, CPCs replaced the Village Associations (VAs) which had for so long been influential in the areas of Mali controlled by the CMDT. The lessons learnt from the now-defunct Village Associations are illuminating. First seen during the 1973–4 growing season, the VAs were set up by peasants in protest against a lack of transparency and the misappropriation of funds amongst cotton buyers. Their creation was endorsed by the CMDT as part of its policy of self-development during the 1974–5 season.<sup>2</sup> Seen as prototype cooperatives in the Malian cotton villages, the VAs sought to organise and lead rural people. They took charge of three basic activities which had previously been conducted by staff from the company: providing farmers with capital goods, granting and administering agricultural loans and the initial marketing of produce. The motivation behind the organisation and development of the VAs was ideological (to bring progress through union), economic (to generate income), social (to invest in a collective concern) and educational (to bring functional literacy).

In contrast to VAs, which never had legal status although they were recognised by their exclusive partner the CMDT, CPCs have a legal grounding. From their conception, the CPCs have had two general objectives:

- To increase the living conditions of cotton growers.
- To improve the cotton growing system in a sustainable way by working towards the professionalisation of the sector.

CPCs are founded on the principles of solidarity and mutual self help, and are involved in production, supply, marketing and training. In order to accomplish their work, the CPCs have to improve the capabilities of individual farmers.

The APE and the CGS associations work within the decentralised school administration system; their role and responsibilities were defined by a national forum in February 2003.

## CHRONOLOGY OF CHANGES AT VILLAGE AND NATIONAL LEVEL AND VILLAGERS' PERCEPTION OF THEM

Establishing a chronology of change in the villages studied enables the identification of events which villagers have lived through and which have had an effect on them.

The elements which emerge most strongly from the collected historical profiles are: years of drought in Mali (1972–3, 1984–5), cases of flooding, plagues of locusts, epidemics of measles and cholera, the destruction of villages by bush fires, the battle of Sikasso, the demands of the militias under the First Republic (1960–68) and the military coup d'état in 1968.

It is clear from the analysis of these events that those which have affected villagers most deeply are natural disasters. Major political or economic events or institutional changes, even the most recent, are ignored or obscured, such as the war between Mali and Burkina Faso (1984), the return of Mali to the CFA zone (1984), the Northern Rebellion (June 1990), the devaluation of the franc in 1994, the democratic revolution of March 1991 and the establishment of a multiparty political system, decentralization and the creation of new Communes (1999); even the African Nations Football Cup held in Mali in 2002 and the crisis in the Ivory Coast in September 2002 were not mentioned. Villagers were aware of these events, but did not cite them as having affected them. They are thus concerned above all with events that impinge upon their survival and their immediate environment.

## VILLAGERS' EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

This evaluation is a collection of villagers' opinions on the institutions and organizations which influence them. It was a participatory evaluation making use of an institutional matrix. The criteria in use were:

- The importance of the institution for the villagers.
- The effectiveness of the institution in reducing poverty.
- Their knowledge of the institution and the way it works.
- Their confidence in the institution.
- Villagers' assessment of their participation in the institution.
- Their opinions on the institution's durability.
- The improvements that they would like to see made at institutional or organizational level.

The analysis of different matrices at village level gave some interesting results.

2. See p.38 of Sall and Abdoulaye (1989) *L'Organisation du Monde rural au Mali (1910–1988)*, 1 – *Evolutions et Perspectives*, 2 – *Principaux Textes Organiques*. Bamako: Editions Imprimeries du Mali.

### *Importance*

The institutions and organizations most important to peasants are those which play a part in village life (services for agriculture, livestock, microfinance, the Commune headquarters and the CPCs). The peasants valued these institutions because they offered services which improved their wellbeing or affected their activities.

### *Effectiveness in reducing poverty*

In their own concept of poverty, the villagers paralleled the three forms of poverty defined by the CLSP in 2003: poverty of living conditions, poverty of money or income and poverty of potentiality. Their conceptualization was explained in terms of shortage, inadequacy and inability: shortage of food, shortage of agricultural equipment, shortage of oxen, shortage of work during the dry season. The study was conducted in a region when the proportion of poor people (65.6%) is slightly higher than the national average (63.8%). In the opinion of the villagers who took part in the survey, the institutions most effective at reducing poverty are CPCs, tons, CSCOMs, schools, the town hall, technical services for agriculture, animal breeding and conservation, and the BNDA.

The CPCs are regarded favourably by villagers and seen as effective in helping to reduce poverty for the following reasons: they lend equipment to peasants (agricultural equipment, oxen, etc), they provide agricultural input (seeds, fertilizer and pesticides), they are the source of profits coming from the sale of cotton and they contribute to food self-sufficiency. Thanks to the intervention of the CMDT there is an increasing emergence of social differentiation in villages because of cotton growing (more comfortable living conditions, improved means of production).

As for the tons, their status as cultural associations gives them an important role in the reduction of poverty. They are 'at the same time self-help and mutual aid groups, work co-operatives, youth and leisure societies. They combine productive activities with civic and cultural education for young farmers'.<sup>3</sup> Ton members do some work in the fields for which they receive payment, and also take part in public works building projects (the construction of community health centres, classrooms, and so on). The ton therefore constitutes an available and useful workforce which helps to alleviate the problems caused by the lack of a waged agricultural workforce (employing wage labour is rare).

Community health centres (CSCOM) have brought health care closer to people, who no longer have to travel great distances to receive treatment, thus lowering the cost of good health.

The importance of schools is understood better and better by villagers in their work to reduce illiteracy, fight ignorance and bring access to knowledge. This encourages the villages to get involved in the construction of new classrooms in order to combat the loss of education.

In the villagers' eyes, the Commune office contributes to the reduction of poverty in the following ways:

- Administrative procedures are made easier – citizens are now physically closer to the seat of local government, and so less time is lost when dealing with cases.
- The creation of Communes has enabled the relatively rapid establishment of certain socio-economic infrastructures that would not have otherwise been possible (schools, wells).
- Commune offices are involved in the provision of school equipment and to some extent bear the cost of salaries for the contracted teaching staff not employed by the state, and those of medical staff (nurses, matrons, auxiliary nurses).
- Town halls act as intermediaries between villagers and certain development agencies.

The livestock service contributes to the fight against poverty as villagers can earn income from the livestock they raise.

### *Knowledge and confidence*

Although villagers understand how the institutions of their own creation work, this is not the case for the formal institutions. Their knowledge of how the latter work is limited, and consequently the part they play within these institutions is also limited.

On the question of whether the villagers trust the institutions that impact upon their lives, it was noted that they have most trust in those institutions and organisations within which they have a representative.

### *Desired improvements*

On the subject of desired improvements to organisations and institutions, many villagers mentioned numerous delays, therefore it can be seen that achievement and performance is important to them.

Opinions on the CSCOMs concerned the consolidation of skills and knowledge in the areas of reproductive health, family planning, vaccines, preventative medicine and combating disease, as well as improving the quality and capacity of health care. Solutions need to be found to the recurrent problems of shortages of staff and equipment, poor attendance at health centres and the non-payment of contributions.

As for schools, the problems mentioned by villagers were shortages of classrooms and teaching staff, a lack of transferable skills and the slow speed with which PRODEC resources are deployed.

Concerning the CMDT, villagers strongly condemn the very high cost of agricultural input. A farmer may spend around FCFA 69,850 solely on inputs in order to grow two hectares of cotton while, at the same time, the price of cotton never ceases to fall, and the uncertainty of the weather can at times endanger the harvest.

3. Leynaud E. *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, N° 21, Vol. 6, pp.41, cited in JACQUEMOT Pierre Jacquemot (1981) *Le Mali: Le Paysan et l'Etat*. Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, pp.41.

Decentralization, bringing with it the establishment of new Communes and their offices, has not only narrowed the distance between local government and citizens but also created work and socio-economic infrastructures. However, there are still numerous problems to solve, namely:

- the vast training requirements for town councillors
- the inadequacy of resources
- delays in the collection of taxes
- problems associated with bearing the salary costs of headquarters staff
- the inadequacy of state subsidies for Communes (such as subsidies for starting up projects, or specifically intended for investment)
- high VAT in Communes
- the low investment capacity of the Communes

In the case of formal organizations (associations and co-operatives), it seems that official associations created by a community initiative are characterized by: their lack of organization, a lack of training, available resources limited by members' subscriptions, problems with accessing funding. On the other hand, organizations created by the state with the goal of supporting national policies, or by an NGO or development agency (ASACO, APE, CGS, CPC, and so on) benefit from the support of their sponsor organizations which use them as tools to achieve their goals. They are consequently subject to the rules imposed by such organisations.

## THE CURRENT LAND TENURE SYSTEM

In Mali, the current Land Code (ordinance no. 00-027/P-RM/22 March 2000) makes national land ownership the fundamental principle of land management. It gives the State ownership of all land. According to this principle, state-managed lands include, by extension, public property owned by the State, private property owned by the State (lands registered in the name of the State, unregistered lands), unoccupied land and land which has never belonged to anyone (*terre sans maitre*, for which the State sees itself as owner and manager), and customary lands (*terrains coutumiers*).

What is legally the case and what is actually happening form the two sides of the land management coin. The Land Code clearly recognises the existence of customary rights and makes provision for their formalization. In the Code, customary rights are recognized as the simple right of usage and cultivation of land. This recognition makes land the heritage (*patrimoine*) of the community that use it. The appropriation of this land-heritage by a community is based on traditional rules. In contrast to private ownership, this de facto land ownership relies on neither legal statute nor title deed, but instead on legitimate and organised customary institutions.

The legitimacy of customary rights varies from one place to another. In the Sikasso region of this

study, land management is characterised by the predominance of traditional land uses and customs alongside statutory law. Land is held or occupied by:

- Those who call themselves customary 'owners' because they were the first to settle that land, and are recognised as such. In the area studied, these people are called in *Sénoufo tarafolo* or *kulofolo* and in Bamanan *dugukolotigi*.
- Those to whom land has been loaned by the village founders for them to cultivate in a variety of ways with certain restrictions (short term harvests, medium to long term investments, the right of use without commercial activity, and so on); they are land-users or 'borrowers'.

Land is thus entrusted to the *tarafolo*, who manages it according to rules and practices accepted by the whole community. Sanctions may be imposed on those who do not abide by these customs. He is the landholder who assigns land to other inhabitants in exchange for kola nuts, chickens, cowrie shells and so on. The authority of the *kulofolo* is becoming weaker as in some cases he can not longer make people respect his commands – one elderly *kulofolo* said that 'in the past, there was no problem, our decisions were not open to discussion; now we are sometimes opposed when we make our decisions' (interview, 16 December 2005). However, the weakening of the *kulofolo's* power is not enough to explain all the land tenure problems in the area. These include:

- Insecurities of land ownership linked particularly to smallholders' possession rights (verbal contracts, disputes and conflicts between smallholders).
- Pressure on land and natural resources (population growth, increase in numbers of livestock, the settling of certain transhumant groups, intensive farming techniques, immigration of people coming from dry regions).
- Weakening of use rights (*droits d'usage*) and cultivation rights and the intermingling of populations (sudden incidence of larger families, immigration).
- The difficult coexistence of statutory law and customary law.
- The lack of precisely defined land boundaries is a latent source of conflict.

## THE PROMOTION OF NON-AGRICULTURAL WORK BY INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Agriculture is by far the biggest occupation in the area, although livestock production, fishing, trade and crafts are practiced there.

Livestock production here is of the sedentary type and is extensively practised by the Fulani community (an ethnic group whose main activity is livestock production), which is gaining in importance. Livestock producers' organizations are at an embryonic stage of development. Livestock production is also marked by the withdrawal of the State from the areas of production, processing

and marketing, to be followed by a handover to private contractors. The work of technical services at a local level has been restricted to giving advice, managing resources and controlling the business of the sector.

The villagers interviewed in this study saw the problems as:

- Inadequate water reserves to keep their livestock watered in the dry season.
- Poor availability and high price of animal feed during the dry season.
- The proliferation of disease vectors during the wet season.
- Lack of professional organizations for livestock producers.
- The private sector is not very dynamic.
- The difficulties of moving animals by foot to the Ivory Coast such as high customs tariffs and harassment at checkpoints, which force traders to conduct their business in secret. These problems have been aggravated by the crisis in the Ivory Coast.
- Recurring disputes between livestock producers and crop growers.

Artisanal production<sup>4</sup> is traditionally dominated by blacksmiths, shoemakers and small-scale carpenters. January 2002, saw the beginnings of an organisation with the creation of the Chamber of Trades. More than 5,000 artisans and 52 artisan associations were identified by the Chamber. The traditional artisanal categories are: food, building and trade, various arts (painting), hygiene (braiding, hairdressing, dentistry, household waste processing), clothing and leather, and metalwork. The problems in this sector are: lack of training (a shortage of qualified artisans), absence of a training structure, funding problems (a shortage of financial partners), shortage of equipment, the inability of artisans to grasp the real potential of this sector.

The business sector is dominated by the marketing of agricultural produce. There are also those who trade in essential and miscellaneous goods; they are currently suffering from the fallout of the crisis in the Ivory Coast, paralysed by the breakdown in trade between the two countries. Imports and exports are affected by the slowing down of traffic on the RN7 road, which links Bamako, Sikasso and Abidjan, a key route along which more than 70% of Mali's external trade used to travel as freight before conflict broke out in the Ivory Coast. This has had a knock on effect for the Malian population in terms of the supply of basic foodstuffs, and other miscellaneous goods (sugar, flour, bananas, pineapples, palm oil, kola nuts, fuel, cement, wood, iron, and so on).<sup>5</sup>

With respect to mining, there is one gold mine in the area of this study (Siama, in the *commune* of

Fourou). It has been closed since 1999, and local people are looking forward to its reopening.

## FUTURE LINES OF RESEARCH FOR THE IPPG PROGRAMME IN MALI

At the end of the study, several questions have been identified which could form the basis of deeper research within the scope of the IPPG programme.

- How have the multiple restructurings of institutions within the rural sector affected local people? How have villagers dealt with the institutional instability within the rural development sector?
- How does the coexistence of traditional community structures alongside new types of organisation affect lives?
- What impact does the withdrawal of the State from the business of marketing, production and services have on the villagers?
- How capable are decentralized local community groups of managing, running and improving the structures which are now under their jurisdiction (socio-economic infrastructures)?
- To what extent has decentralization established itself within village communities?
- How involved are grassroots organizations in the decision-making process concerning the transfer of State authority to that of local bodies?
- How will the organization and activity of the CPCs survive the privatization of the CMDT?

4. 'Artisanal' and related terms have a slightly broader connotation in French, covering not only traditional crafts but also other small and less formal enterprises.

5. Coulibaly, Bakary Lamissa (2005) *Conséquences de la Crise Ivoirienne : Cas de l'Insertion Socio-économique des Migrants maliens rapatriés de la Côte d'Ivoire dans le Cercle de Kadiolo*. BamakoL Mémoire de Maîtrise, Faculté des Lettres, Langues, Arts et Sciences Humaines (FLASH), pp. 59-60.