

Municipalities in figures: needs and realities

The experiences of
SNV Mali and PACT/GTZ

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assisted by **Florence Dumont**

Foreword

According to a Bambara adage, 'He who knows all will not die.' By sharing with readers some of the experience and learning from 'the evident desire, in all our countries which have launched decentralisation reforms since the 1990s, to try out new approaches and new methods of cooperation to build local monitoring and evaluation capacity',¹ the aim is to make a modest contribution to the knowledge available on this subject.

This publication is for all actors in development, working in the field of decentralisation and local governance, especially practitioners and policymakers working on issues connected with capacity building in the area of monitoring, evaluation and democratic control of local governance structures. It has been prepared in the context of an exercise that aimed to document, analyse and learn from experiences with different approaches and instruments for building the capacities of different actors in decentralisation and local governance, and in particular, the capacities of local government to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of these complex reform processes.

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

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

This case study, 'Municipalities in figures', has been prepared by Elsbet Lodenstein and Ulrich Caspari.

¹ Taken from the welcome speech given by Mr Ibrahima Sylla, decentralisation adviser at the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government (MATCL) of Mali, at the sub-regional seminar 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning'.

² For more details see <http://www.snmali.org/actus/redlinfo0606.pdf>. The REDL members taking part in this learning exercise were SNV-Mali; the Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales (PACT), a project in support of local government run by German Technical Cooperation (GTZ); l'Aide de l'Eglise Norvégienne (AEN), Norwegian Church Aid; CARE International in Mali; the Programme d'Appui aux Acteurs de la Décentralisation (PAAD), a development programme of HELVETAS-Mali; the Swiss Association for International Cooperation; 'Solidarité, Union, Coopération' (SUCO), a Canadian NGO; the Association of French Volunteers (AFVP); and the Programme Gouvernance Partagée (PGP), a programme financed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

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

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

The facilitators of the joint documentation, analysis and learning exercise would like to thank the members of the Malian REDL network and the organisations working in other West African countries who have supported and co-financed the preparation of the different case studies. Through the generous support of these organisations and the Swedish International Development Agency/Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these case studies are being published in both French and English and will also be included in a more comprehensive publication, bringing together all the case studies and the results of the regional seminar held in May 2006. We would also like to express our gratitude to Mr Ibrahima Sylla, senior advisor on decentralisation in the Malian Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government, for his indefatigable support for the success of this joint initiative. Last but not least, we would like to thank Valerie Jones for her language editing work and David Harris for translating this document to English.

Christiane Loquai (ECDPM) and Sonia Le Bay (SNV Mali)

³ In particular: Diarra et al. (2005) *Decentralisation in Mali: Putting Policy into Practice*, SNV/Cedelo/KIT, 88 pp, and *Dynamiser la santé communale*, SNV/KIT (2005), 44 pp.

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Introduction

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

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

These questions, often connected with basic municipal services, are often faced by the actors in local governance during municipal planning processes. The mayors and councillors then have to decide how the problems of their area can be resolved. On what basis? They can draw on the policy guidelines of the municipal council, the technical expertise of local sector service workers, and/or the opinions of the local population. In most cases, however, baseline data, guidelines, and other points of reference (*référentiels*) are not available in Mali at the municipal level. Municipalities, which are now responsible for their own development, do not have access to detailed studies (*monographies*),⁴ and sector information is aggregated at the higher level of the circle or the region.

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

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

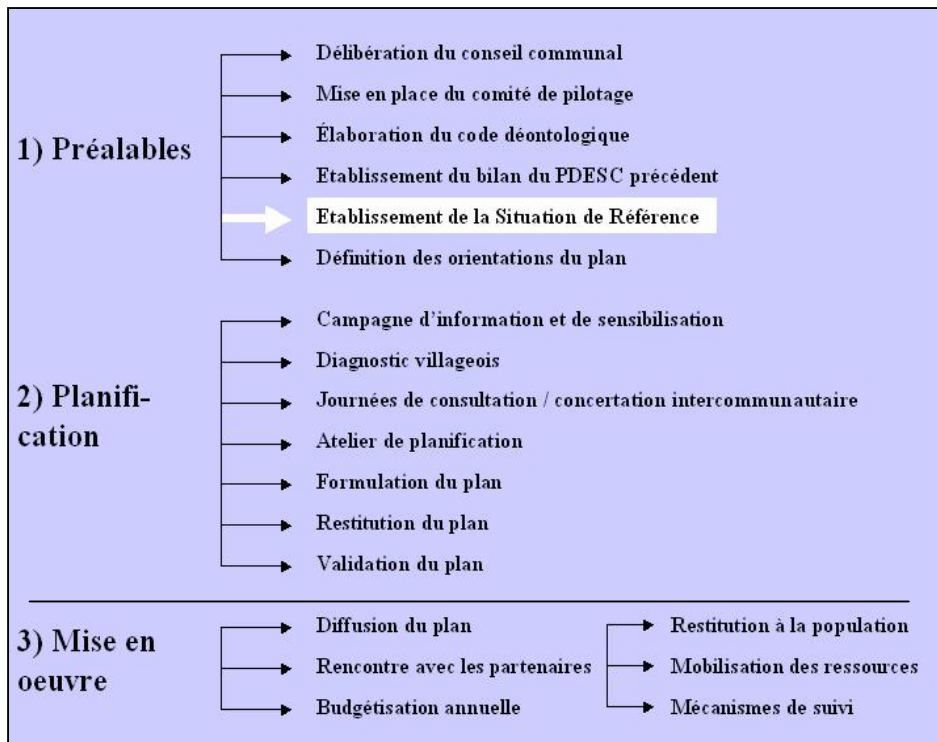
- the lack of financial and human resources on the part of local government;
- the transfer of a host of responsibilities from the state to local government, without the concomitant transfer of the resources and means needed to exercise these new competencies;
- the responsibility for designing, planning and implementing development measures now incumbent on local governments;⁵ and
- parallel sector planning unconnected with municipal planning, and vice versa; and
- the insufficient decentralisation of state technical departments.⁶

⁴ In our case, the study provides a snapshot of the features of the municipality – history, demographics, economy, natural resources, infrastructure, etc. – that can be used as reference points for planning future actions.

⁵ Law 93-008 setting out the conditions for the freedom of administration of local government, as amended by Law 96-056 of 16 October 1996.

⁶ MATCL and UNDP (2005). p. 7.

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



Translation **Box 1:**

- 1) *Preliminaries*
 Decision by the municipal council
 Creation of a steering committee
 Drafting of a code of ethics
 Drafting of the review of the previous PDESC
 Drafting of the Reference Situation
 Definition of planning policy
- 2) *Planning*
 Information and awareness campaign
 Village diagnosis
 Consultation days / consultation between communities
 Planning meeting
 Drafting of the plan
 Feedback on the plan
 Validation of the plan
- 3) *Implementation*
 Dissemination of the plan
 Meeting with partners
 Annual budgeting
 Presentation to population
 Resource mobilisation
 Monitoring mechanisms

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

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

This case study summarises the process by which the RSs were drawn up in the areas covered by SNV and PACT. Methods of documenting and assessing the experiences gained in the use of these RSs are briefly reviewed in Chapter 1. The context, objectives and approach of the RS are discussed in Chapter 2. The stage-by-stage process by which the RS was drawn up is reviewed in Chapter 3. Technical issues are put to one side in Chapter 4 which highlights the development of cooperation between local government and technical departments in the process of drawing up the RS. The impact on local government capacities for data collection and analysis is also examined. The lessons to be learned from this experience are discussed in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 offers the actors involved some recommendations and prospects for further progress with the RS.

1 Methodology of stock-taking and assessment

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

Stage 1, defining problems: All of the support organisations involved in the National Support Programme for Local Government, and local governments themselves, identified several shortcomings in the first generation of Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plans (PDESCs). These included lack of consistency in municipal plans, gaps in the starting data and low-level links with national objectives, PRSP indicators and the MDGs). The same findings were also set out in a national study of local planning in Mali conducted by the National Local Government Directorate (DNCT) of the Ministry of Local Governance and Territorial administration and by the Ministry of Planning and Regional Planning (MPAT).⁷

Stage 2, mobilising the available knowledge: Joint stock-taking and analysis with actors in governance took place chiefly through working sessions at regional, circle and municipal levels. A wide range of actors were involved: local municipal planning actors, decentralised state technical departments, providers, municipal advisory centres (CCCs)⁸ and their support organisations (SNV and PACT).

Stage 3, drawing the strands together: Thinking about the knowledge to be shared started at the municipal level and continued at the national level. At the local level, a panel of actors, representing cases of both successful and unsuccessful use of the tool, took part in a final survey and in the working sessions. At the national level, the core municipal planning group⁹ organised a discussion of the tool's relevance to other planning tools. Finally, at a sub-regional seminar, 'Capacity building for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning', the tool was compared with other initiatives and the lessons learned were fleshed out.

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

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

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

- The first is connected with the inherent dynamics of the municipal planning process. The RS tool was initially designed in practice to fill a gap within a

⁷ PRECAGED (2004).

⁸ The role of the CCCs is to provide local government with advice on the drafting of the PDESCs and support plans and to lead the local policy committee (CLO).

⁹ The core municipal planning group of practitioners and decision makers was set up in 2002 to foster exchanges of experiences in the context of decentralisation in Mali. The group includes representatives of support programmes such as SNV (Koulikoro Local Governance programme), PACT, Decentralisation Support Programme in the Koulikoro Region (PADK) and the National Local Government Directorate (DNCT), the National Coordination Unit (CCN), municipal advisory centres (CCCs), the central services of the Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development: the National Territorial Development Directorate (DNAT), the National Population Directorate (DNP), the National Planning and Development Directorate (DNPD), the National Statistics and Informatics Directorate (DNSI), and the National Capacity Building Programme for Strategic Development Management (PRECAGED). PACT & SNV/EGLK (2004, 2005).

multi-stage planning process (see Box 1). Analysis of the data collected was therefore to be used as a starting point for further stages following on from the RS process. It was difficult, however, to pinpoint observations on the process to draw up the RS within the local environment, where there are constraints on the time and resources available for the planning process as a whole.

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

2 Context, objectives and approach

2.1 Decentralisation, devolution and municipal planning

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

Very slow progress is being made with devolution and increased decision-making powers on the part of local staff. The 2005 GOLDD¹⁰ study showed, among other things, that almost no devolved state services are to be found at municipal level. Moreover, those services to be found at circle level are not really functional, as they lack even the most basic operational requirements.

Local authorities have a mandate for planning and implementing development measures.¹¹ When the first planning process was run (2000), the 684 new rural municipalities used the methodological guidelines disseminated by MATCL, their supervising ministry.¹² Proposed improvements to these very simple and comprehensible national guidelines in 2004 took the form of a preliminary draft training module for CCC advisors on PDESC drafting.¹³ Unfortunately, however, these proposals have never been adopted. New national guidelines are not yet available, and ways of improving the second municipal planning process, between 2004 and 2005, were therefore left to the discretion and capacity of local actors and support organisations.¹⁴

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

2.2 The area covered by the case study: the Koulikoro region

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

Consisting of seven circles and 108 municipalities, the Koulikoro region covers an area¹⁵ of 90,677 km². The urban municipality of Koulikoro is the capital of the circle and the region. Bamako, the national capital with six urban municipalities, forms an enclave within the region and the specific administrative entity of the District of Bamako.

¹⁰ Local Governance and Decentralisation Programme (GOLDD) study, MATCL & UNDP (2005).

¹¹ Law 93-008 setting out the conditions for the freedom of administration of local government, as amended by Law 96-056 of 16 October 1996, and Law 95-034 establishing a local government code in the Republic of Mali, as amended by Law 98-066 of 30 December 1998.

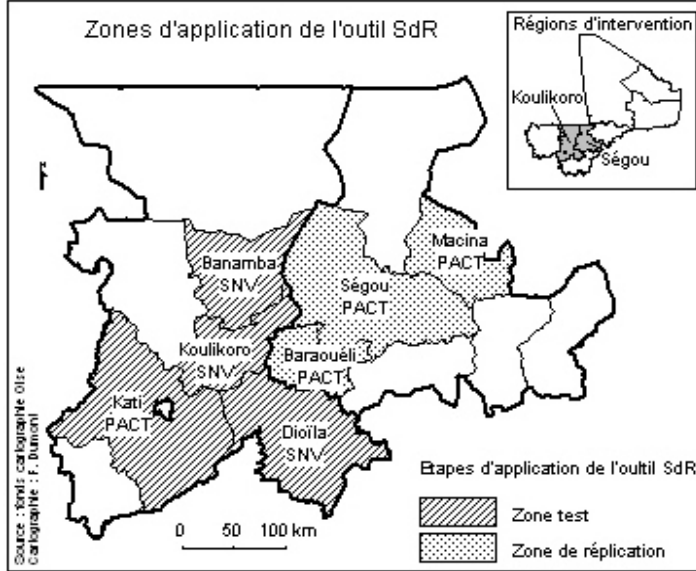
¹² MDRI (2000). For a summary of discussions of municipal planning in Mali, see also Nassire, Mamani (2001) in MATCL/DNCT (2001), p. 16-31.

¹³ DNATCT (2004).

¹⁴ PACT (2004).

¹⁵ Calculated from OISE mapping.

Box 2: Area of coverage of the RS tool



SNV led the CCCs of the circles of Banamba, Dioila and Koulikoro and thus assisted 41 municipalities and three circle councils in the Koulikoro region.

PACT, currently the support and assistance organisation for the CCC of Kati and its 37 municipalities, led the CCC up to 2005.

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

Translation Box 2

Zones d'application de l'outil SdR	= Areas of use of the RS tool
Régions d'intervention	= Areas of action
Etapas d'application de l'outil SdR	= Stages of application of the RS tool
Zone test	= Test zone
Zone de réplication	= Replication zone

Source: OISE mapping; cartography: F. Dumont

With an estimated population of 1.7 million in 2001,¹⁶ the Koulikoro region covers four climatic zones, ranging from arid near to the Mauritanian border in the north, to humid near the Guinean border in the south. Some 80% of its multi-ethnic population work in agriculture.

The problems faced by municipalities in obtaining advisory support from technical departments and statistical data on the municipality can be seen from the extent to which technical departments have been devolved in the region: 23 regional directorates (devolved state services) are represented in the region's capital, 11 are to be found at circle level and only five at municipal level, where they represent the sub-sectors of agriculture and livestock, nature conservation and health.¹⁷

2.3 Motivations and objectives

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

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

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

¹⁶ DRPS Koulikoro (2003).
¹⁷ MATCL and UNDP (2005), p. 37-38.

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

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

- support organisations – the municipal advisory centres (CCCs), SNV and PACT – steered the design of the tool and provided backup for local government;
- the comités de pilotage communaux (CPCs, municipal steering committees) applied the tool. Each CPC is a streamlined working group that is not subject to any administrative formalities.¹⁸ Each CPC is chaired by a member of the municipal executive (the mayor or a deputy mayor) and includes a municipal councillor, the town clerk, representatives of local technical departments (health, education, agriculture) and a representative of civil society. It can also call upon resource persons if specific expertise is needed. The CPC supervises municipal planning on behalf of the municipality, and facilitates ownership of the tools used by local actors. Its mandate is specific and limited in time;
- the users of the end product, the RS document, are the municipal council and staff and local technical departments at circle level, the supervisory authority, the CCCs, support organisations, providers, members of the local policy committee (CLO),¹⁹ and the circle council.

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

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

2.4 The approach

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

¹⁸ Article 35 of the Local Government Code (Law 95-034) on working groups. In contrast to the working groups, CPCs do not need the approval of the supervisory authority.

¹⁹ See Decree 269/PM-RM of 8 June 2000 creating the National Policy Committee (CNO) on technical support for local government. The remit of the CLO at circle level is to draw up, steer, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the technical support needed for the implementation of local government development programmes in the circle. The CLO is composed of the Prefect, one elected officer per municipality and the representative of the Chambers of Agriculture and Trade and may be extended to include technical services.

3 Drawing up the Reference Situation

3.1 Stages

The drafting of the RS took place in three stages: the design of the tool, the drafting of the municipal RS, and the use of the RS document (see Box 3). The three stages were structured as follows:

Stage 1: Design of the RS data collection guide

In order to draw up the RS data collection guide (stage 1), the CCC network of the Koulikoro region,²⁰ PACT and SNV drew on their own experiences of planning and data collection. The RS was designed as a technical diagnostic tool with conventional content. Advisors drew on Malian planning sectors and planning tools such as the draft DNATCT guide (2004) and the guide for the drafting of development schemes.²¹ They also consulted sector programme indicators, the Malian Poverty Assessment Survey (EMEP),²² Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The first draft version of the RS tool included 40 or so tables covering four development sectors (see Box 4). The source of the information was given below each table. From the point of view of the types of information, the qualitative data were on a par with quantitative data. This particular method made it possible to understand the problems and potential of each sector, and to supplement statistical information that was of mediocre quality or not available.

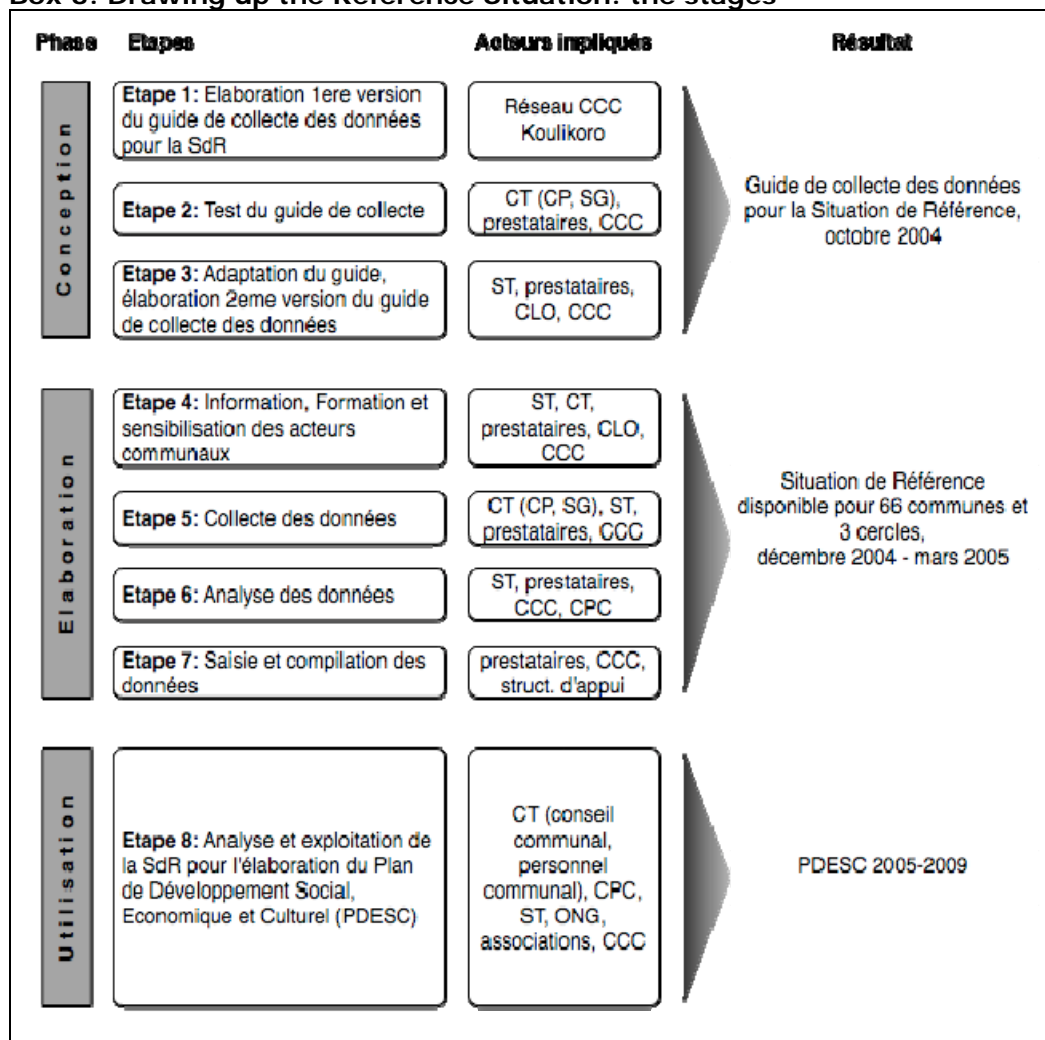
This first draft version of the data collection tool was adapted after trials (stage 2) in six municipalities of the circles of Banamba, Koulikoro and Dioïla (SNV). In the circle of Kati, the tool was adapted by the supervisory authority, technical departments, mayors and town clerks at a two-day working session of the local policy committee (CLO).

²⁰ The seven CCCs of the Koulikoro region formed a network to pool experiences in carrying out their remit. In 2004, they decided to draw up the data collection guide for the drafting of the RS.

²¹ PRECAGED (2001).

²² Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development – National Statistics and Informatics Directorate: Malian Poverty Assessment Survey (EMEP), Principal findings, Bamako, 2004.

Box 3: Drawing up the Reference Situation: the stages



Translation Box 3:

Phase	Stages	Actors involved	Outcome
Design	<i>Stage 1:</i> Drafting of the first version of the RS data collection guide	Koulikoro CCC Network	Data collection guide for the Reference Situation, October 2004
	<i>Stage 2:</i> Testing of the collection guide	LG (CP, SG), providers, CCC	
	<i>Stage 3:</i> Adaptation of the guide, drafting of the second version of the data collection guide	Technical departments (TD), providers, CLO, CCC	
Drafting	<i>Stage 4:</i> Information, training and awareness-raising for municipal actors	TD, LG, providers, CLO, CCC	Reference Situation available for 66 municipalities and three circles, December 2004-March 2005
	<i>Stage 5:</i> Data collection	LG (CP, SG), TD, providers, CCC	
	<i>Stage 6:</i> Data analysis	TD, providers, CCC, CPC	
	<i>Stage 7:</i> Inputting and compilation of data	Providers, CCC, support orgs.	
Use	<i>Stage 8:</i> Analysis and use of the RS for drafting the PDESC (Social, Economic and Cultural Development Plan)	LG (municipal council, municipal staff), CPC, TD, NGOs, associations, CCC	2005-2009 PDESCs

Box 4: Planning sectors and types of information

Planning sectors:

- *Human resources*: population, health, education, political environment, voluntary sector, private sector
- *Rural economy*: agriculture, livestock, fisheries, horticulture, forestry
- *Infrastructure and equipment* : public buildings, roads, communications
- *Industry*: crafts, commerce, industry, tourism

Types of information

- *Statistical*: demographics, election results, education, health, agricultural output and equipment, livestock, forestry, infrastructure, roads, energy, industry, craft sector, tourism, commerce
- *Qualitative data*: socio-cultural fields, organisation of professional and agricultural structures, service providers and basic services, natural resources management (use, potential, constraints), ecology. 'Gender' relations were described for each sector.
- *Indicators* (norms, standards, values): education, health, water, forestry, agriculture, livestock.

The criteria for the choice of the trial municipalities were the number of villages they contained, and their areas, so that the time and resources required could be evaluated and compared. Local actors in the circle of Koulikoro then met at a workshop at which technical departments, providers, NGOs, local authorities and municipal staff gave their views on the quality of the tables. Internal consultations within SNV and PACT also made it possible to improve the content of some tables. A second version of the data collection tool emerged from the trials and consultations (stage 3). At present, the tool is still a working document. The CCCs of the region are discussing its content, as well as the process and the roles and responsibilities of the various actors, and the support they need. At the national level, the tool has been presented and discussed at two meetings of the core planning group.

Stage 2: Drafting of the RS

In the circles of Banamba, Dioila, Kati and Koulikoro, the CCCs organised a training course on municipal planning, with a module on the use of the data collection guide when drawing up the RS. Town clerks, municipal officers and providers participated in this course. After this training, the CCCs in the circles of Dioila and Kati provided municipalities with individual counselling and support, particularly at working sessions with the steering committees.

In all the circles, the local policy committee was a very good vehicle for raising awareness among mayors and for monitoring how the stages were progressing. At these CLO meetings the administration (the Prefect) could be informed and persuaded to make technical departments available to the local authorities. In the circle of Kati, an additional meeting was held with elected officers, technical departments and town clerks to conduct a mid-term review of the application of the tool.

Following this stage of awareness raising, information and training (stage 4), the actual data collection was launched. For this, SNV and PACT used different methods (see Box 5).

In both cases, the CCCs coordinated data collection and analysis (stages 5 and 6). They systematically monitored the work of the providers or CPCs, checked the extent to which the tables had been completed, and assessed the availability and quality of the data collected. They identified any gaps and worked with technical departments and providers to make corrections so that a satisfactory result could

be achieved. Finally, they computerised the data (stage 7). Paper versions of the RS documents were then made available to municipalities and the other actors.

Box 5: Data collection approaches

SNV: a provider-based approach

One of the findings that emerged from the trials of the data collection guide was that the workloads of local authorities and CCCs, and their lack of human and financial resources, could slow down the process of drawing up the RS and affect the quality of the results. As a result, SNV asked a group of providers to collect these data. These providers came from the Regional Coordination of NGOs in Koulikoro (CR-ONG), which brings together NGOs, researchers and private consultants, most of whom had considerable experience in the area of decentralisation and were aware of the realities facing the municipalities. SNV set up a fund to coordinate and organise their travel and for centralising the data input process. The RS exercise was also intended to provide information for an SNV study of poverty in Koulikoro region.

These providers, often assisted by technical departments and town clerks, began data collection in those municipalities that possessed basic registry data, old reports or other project documents. To supplement these data, visits were made to villages, community facilities and technical departments. After the municipal RSs were prepared, SNV drew up a summary document for the circle council.

PACT: 'learning from experience'

Limited financial resources and the desire to strengthen cooperation between local government and technical departments were factors that ruled out a provider-based approach. PACT therefore used a different strategy for applying the tool in the municipalities of the circle of Kati.

In this circle, the CLO had opted to make the CPC responsible for applying the RS tool. The task of the CPC was to facilitate data collection and to draw up reports on and summaries of the work conducted. Two-thirds (25) of the 37 municipalities of the circle of Kati drew up their RS using the process steered by the CPC.

Stage 3: Using the RS for municipal planning

The municipal planning module made provision for the RS to be 'used' to draw up the PDESC. However, there were no standard methods for analysing the RS, so that the CCCs, PACT and SNV had to try out various data analysis tools. Approaches then had to be developed to translate the results of the analysis into policies, objectives and indicators for the municipal council.

In general, the RS data were analysed before or during municipal council planning meetings. The analysis took the form of a presentation of the quantitative and qualitative data by sector and sub-sector, followed by a discussion of their strengths, weaknesses and challenges. Interpretations of details were validated, where necessary, by technical departments. Following the discussion, the participants drew up five-year global and specific development objectives for each sector. These objectives were then compared with regional sector plans to check whether the objectives set by the municipality were in keeping with national development policy.

In the circle of Kati, the steering committee had the task of analysing the data and proposing strategic guidelines and policies. Members then had to explain these outcomes to the various municipal councils at their planning meetings.

3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of the Reference Situation

Data accessibility and availability

Initial experiences with the diagnostic technique used to draw up the local government RSs provided much food for thought on the accessibility of statistical data at municipal and circle levels.

From the point of view of data *availability*, data, indicators and standards with regard to basic social services (health, education, water) were available at the higher levels (national and regional) of the respective central departments (see Box 6).

Box 6: Examples of existing databases

- the SIGMA II database of the water authorities;
- National Statistics and Informatics Directorate database;
- Health Information System (SIS);
- the Ministry of Public Health's DESAM (Malian Health Development) database;
- the 'school statistics in basic education' yearbook of the Ministry of Education's Planning and Statistics Unit, updated locally by the educational support centres.

These are recent data, either aggregated to the regional, circle or former *arrondissement* level, or broken down to the municipal level. However, these statistics are often not disseminated beyond circle level. Paradoxically, they are not made available to devolved state departments at circle or municipal levels, whose main partners are local actors, even though they are the first link in the data collection chain. It continues to be difficult for municipalities to gain access to exhaustive data on the environment, commerce, transport and natural resources, forestry and fisheries.

Breaking down the data for many sectors is problematic if the data are available only at a higher administrative level (circle) or cover geographical entities other than the municipality (agricultural areas, health units, former *arrondissements*, etc.). Data on the agriculture and livestock sub-sectors, for instance, are still processed for the former *arrondissements*, which include a number of municipalities. Although an initial effort was made to 'municipalise' the data for the RS, i.e. to make the data for all the development sectors available at municipal level, data breakdown continues to pose a challenge for technical departments in some cases.

This was not a problem for the circle RSs, as all technical departments are to be found at this level. Thus the circle RSs are more complete than the municipal ones.

The Reference Situation is available – what next?

This first completed exercise provided a 2004 inventory for the various municipalities, with raw data. As the sources of the data were provided, updating the RS in the future should be straightforward.

The RS document has been appreciated by the actors. Elected officers take the view that they need to keep an inventory of their municipality and are convinced of its usefulness for planning. Even though some data are still not available, they feel that the RS is the reference tool for the municipality. At the same time, it is felt that, in its current form, the tool is too 'cumbersome'. Elected officers consider that too many tables need to be completed, and that some data are not very relevant.

The use of the RS to draw up the 2004-2009 economic, social and cultural development plans (PDESCs) took place in an improvised way as there were no standard tools. There is still no RS user guide that is accessible and

comprehensible to council and municipal staff. The stages of data analysis and translation into objectives need to be improved to take account of the capacities and needs of the various actors. It will then be important to examine whether the technical diagnoses (the RS) complement the participatory village diagnoses for which elected officers are calling. Moreover, specific analytical tools will need to be developed if the RS is to be used for matters other than municipal planning, such as for sector planning and monitoring and evaluation.

To date, therefore, the main task has been to simplify the content and use of the RS tool in cooperation with technical departments and municipalities.

3.3 Relevance of the RS for planning and monitoring/evaluation

The initial objectives of the RS were, first, to provide a 2004 inventory and, second, to improve the PDESCs. The knowledge provided by the inventory, and its analysis and synthesis, were intended to provide a basis for municipal councils' strategic policy making over five to ten years, and to enable monitoring and evaluation indicators to be drawn up. The PDESCs would be more coherent as they could take account of all the available data. The extent to which these objectives were achieved is examined below.

Planning municipal development

One of the main outcomes of the process is that 66 communes now have a 2004 RS. The quality of the PDESCs has improved; the second-generation PDESCs, drawn up since 2004 using the municipal RS, reflect a better knowledge of what is happening than those of the first generation drawn up in 2000/2001.

First, development measures are better identified in many PDESCs. The first-generation PDESCs tended to present a list of infrastructure to be built (*quantity*), while the new ones contain measures to improve the overall performance of sectors through investments in human resources and equipment (*quality*).

Moreover, by comparing the figures within local government areas it is possible to pinpoint areas that are less 'well-off', and to gear measures to those areas. For instance, the cattle vaccination coverage per agricultural area is now known from the RS, making it possible to target vaccination measures rather than simply planning to 'increase vaccination levels in the municipality'.

Second, the level of investment in basic social services has increased. Now that elected officers are aware of the indicators and the causes of poor social service performance, they are making more of an effort (see Box 7). These sectors are also key fields in which local government is required to make considerable efforts to achieve the MDGs. Thus, the use of the RS tool has made it possible to integrate the MDG framework into the PDESCs (see Box 8).

Now that elected officers have access to information, they are better able to take action to assist neglected sectors, or to address problems that had previously been unknown or concealed. For instance, the municipal RS contains information on human resources, education, health, associations and community life, migration, employment, working conditions in technical departments, and dispute settlement. As a result, many PDESCs now include a wider range of activities involving capacity building for local actors, awareness raising, and consultation with and participation by associations in the running of municipalities. The inclusion of 'gender' has also made the PDESCs more coherent. The availability of data broken down by gender and information on the roles of men and women in the various sectors has meant that 'gender' is now playing a greater role in the activities planned.

Box 7: Comparison of the 2001 and 2005 PDESCs: investments in health and education

- In the municipality of **Dinandougou** (circle of Koulikoro), the planned investment in health in 2001 was XOF 20,783,673, compared with XOF 74,325,000 in the new 2005 PDESC.
- In the municipality of **Nyamina** (circle of Koulikoro), the planned investment in health in 2001 was XOF 21,630,000, compared with XOF 81,600,000 in the 2005 PDESC.
- Also in **Nyamina**, the planned investment in education in 2001 was XOF 59,524,000, compared with XOF 168,615,000 in the 2005 PDESC.

Box 8: The Reference Situation and the MDGs

The MDG framework is at present a global framework for development. Applying the RS tool made it possible to take the first steps towards translating national goals into local goals by:

- raising awareness, through information sheets and feedback from technical services, which helped to improve understanding of national policies (MDGs and PRSPs). The MDGs are no longer seen as the 'business' of the national government or ideals to be discussed at international conferences. Rather, the actors have been made aware that much of the work of local government is already connected with the MDGs and that this framework may make it easier to draw up policies and help to flesh out goals;
- integrating the MDG/PRSP indicators into the RS, especially in the areas of education, water and health. An analysis of the current situation and comparisons with national and regional targets have made it possible for municipalities to pinpoint what measures would be needed to achieve them.

These initiatives led to PDESCs that were much better geared to the fight against poverty since they:

- pinpointed the less advantaged areas of municipalities and circles;
- contained a greater commitment to basic social services, as reflected in increased investments and measures to improve the ways in which services are run; and
- made it possible to monitor each municipality's progress towards achieving poverty reduction goals.

The MDGs provided a general framework for the RS exercise. However, while the MDGs provide a framework for action, more detailed analysis by sector and by indicator is needed. This type of work is not possible at present as a result of the ways in which the PDESCs are drawn up. Moreover, the inclusion of a 'monitoring and evaluation' chapter in the PDESCs, including the key indicators of the RS, may help with monitoring and evaluating the MDGs in relation to the specific needs of the municipality, the population and the local context.

Monitoring and evaluation of municipal development

The RS tool has considerable potential for monitoring and evaluation. From the point of view of basic municipal social services, objectives, standards and targets are now known, so that trends in development indicators can be monitored in the long term. This initial application of the tool offers some pointers for monitoring and evaluation:

- First, in our experience with the RS, the indicators are seen in *diagnostic* rather than in process terms. However, the RS tool may be used for evaluation purposes after a period of time. If so, the information contained in the RS will need to be reviewed every three or five years, a comparative analysis carried out and conclusions drawn.
- Second, the RS contains only a few specific monitoring indicators, except in the health, education, water, agriculture, forestry and livestock sectors. In practice,

these performance indicators²³ may be monitored more regularly (every year). A weakness of the tool at this stage is that it was not possible to draw up numerical targets for each indicator at the planning meetings.

The tool may therefore have a part to play in monitoring and evaluation, and may also be used to monitor the MDG indicators (see Box 8). At present, however, the frequency, methods and actors involved in updating the RS have meant that the comparative analyses have not yet been drawn up. Updating the RS is a prerequisite for monitoring and evaluation, but little support for this is available, and as yet no guidelines or methodology have been compiled.

²³ Enabling the achievement of a standard, such as the number of inhabitants per modern water point (MWP). In Mali, the standard for drinking water supplies in rural areas is one MWP per 400 inhabitants.

4 Impact of the approach on the capacities of actors and the institutional environment²⁴

4.1 Capacity building and improving relations between actors

From the local organisational and institutional points of view, the RS drafting process had three effects:²⁵

- increased interest in data management;
- improved capacities for data collection and analysis on the part of local government; and
- improved cooperation between technical departments and local government.

Shared interest in data management

The RS drafting process increased the interest in and demand for municipal data management tools. All the actors were aware of the importance of a single database amalgamating municipal data. The fact that local authorities put pressure on technical departments to make data available is a good example of this. At the same time, technical departments understood the importance of data broken down to municipal level, not just because such data were needed by municipalities, but also for their own planning and overall monitoring of trends in each sector. All actors felt that the quality of the data needed to be improved, and that they need to be kept up to date. The RS drafting stage therefore became a key stage for any kind of planning or monitoring and evaluation.

Local government capacities for data collection and analysis

Data collection capacities

The data collection process had little impact on the capacity of elected officers and municipal executives, particularly in the SNV area where a provider-based approach was chosen. Elected officers tended to be passive actors. However, in all areas, town clerks mastered the approach needed to draw up a municipal RS, i.e. the collection of data, checking of survey records, compiling and drafting the document. The mayors tended to regard town clerks and technical departments as 'RS technicians' and often delegated the tasks of data collection and updating the RS to them.

Data analysis capacities

First, the RS drafting exercise gave elected officers a better knowledge of national policies. The PRSPs and MDGs were discussed and used in the analysis of the indicators, and were linked to national policies and translated into local goals (see Box 8).

Second, elected officers felt that the RS had helped them decide on the main outlines of the PDESCs, especially in the education and health sectors.²⁶ Discussions of the figures and interpretation of the data were the most important factor. Elected officers therefore discovered that statistical data could enhance qualitative village diagnoses. They found that the RS made it possible to pinpoint shortcomings and opportunities that had not been identified during participatory diagnoses. Comparative analysis enhanced the municipalities' overall knowledge of the situation and highlighted specific opportunities/issues in the various fields for which they are responsible.

²⁴ Source: surveys, working sessions and evaluations with local actors.

²⁵ 'Effects' = changes that can be directly or indirectly attributed to the design and drafting of the RS.

²⁶ Survey among mayors, March 2006, Dioila.

Third, when analysing the data, local actors discovered that it is difficult strictly to apply the sector and sub-sector classification. They discovered the 'intersectoral' (see Box 9).

Box 9: The 'intersectoral' in the PDESCs

The 'human resources' sector of the RS gives figures on school access to drinking water. During the planning process other water-related issues were included in the 'rural economy' and 'infrastructure' sectors. The RS showed that there were strong links between various sectors and thus encouraged an integrated and more coherent understanding of development, a principle that was not applied in the first PDESCs.

Elected officers became aware that data analysis was not solely the work of technicians.

One of the initial objectives of the planning process was to pave the way for a longer-term vision and to integrate the monitoring and evaluation indicators into the PDESCs. While the RS ought to foster such objectives, analytical tools are still not good enough to enable forward thinking or planning for a five- or ten-year period. Local government monitoring and evaluation capacities have not been adequately strengthened and additional work is needed by sector or sub-sector (see, for instance, SIEC, section 4.2).

Finally, as the approach focused on municipal planning it did little to meet the capacity-building needs of technical departments, even though these were known.

Improved cooperation between technical departments and local authorities

Technical departments were not very involved in the drafting and implementation of the first generation of municipal plans. Often, they were invited only at the final stage, i.e. to the planning meeting. The drafting of the RS made it possible to involve technical departments from the outset, and in particular from the data collection stage. As a result of a period of information exchange, training and discussions in the local policy committees, most of the technical departments undertook to provide and correct data and indicators. The direct, intensive exchanges between technical departments and local authorities during all the planning stages led to the development of mutual trust and a spirit of cooperation. The planning meetings became a real forum for concerted action where technical departments explained the indicators to elected officers and provided advice for decision making. The concrete outcome of this was improved cooperation. Local governments and technical departments now invite one another to participate in joint activities such as sector planning, preparing case files or implementing municipal projects (see Box 10).

Box 10: Using the RS for sector planning

At a meeting organised by the Kati education authority (17–19 November 2005), all the municipalities of this circle played an active part in drafting municipal action plans for education by providing the data from their RSs and the list of activities set out in their PDESCs.

Local data and information management is now much more open and transparent, and the various actors are more aware of where to find data and how to access it.

Finally, the negotiating skills of elected officers have been improved, leading to improved dialogue between local governments and technical departments. The result has been to reduce the information gap between them – elected officers now understand what the technical departments are saying – with the result that communication is now on an equal footing.

4.2 Ownership and replication

It would seem that elected officers do not as yet own the process. All elected officers are calling for technical support when the exercise is repeated, even though data collection has been mastered by town clerks and technical departments. This is probably due to the problems of data accessibility and the intensive nature of the collection work. Data interpretation and analysis require technical assistance especially if they are to be used for planning and for monitoring and evaluation. It would be preferable for assistance to be provided by the service provider commissioned to carry out the data collection and analysis for the first RS.

External assistance will also be needed when the approach becomes more widely disseminated as a result of its institutionalisation. In this case, technical departments will have to be involved as the main mentors for local actors. Some examples of the replication of the RS tool are presented in Box 11.

Box 11: Examples of replication

The RS tool is being replicated in other circles. In the PACT area, for instance, the members of the Réseau Synergie Décentralisation (SYNDEC)²⁷ used the RS tool as a starting point for the drafting of municipal RSs. The tool was modified as the collection of qualitative data has been abandoned in order to streamline the process. The modified tool was then used in the planning processes of 11 municipalities of the neighbouring circle of Barouéli.

SNV has introduced a further municipal planning and monitoring and evaluation tool – the 'Système d'information essentielle de la commune' (SIEC, Essential Information System for the commune) – which can be seen as a continuation of the RS for the health sector. Its aim is to improve the way in which municipal health service performance is monitored. With a view to the transfer of skills, municipalities analyse problems, rank them and identify monitoring indicators in order to evaluate the impact of the proposed solutions. This process is taking place in conjunction with the services concerned and the community health associations.

For the purposes of their geographical information system (GIS), PACT and SNV are transferring some information from the RSs to municipal databases. The GIS can be used to compile thematic maps and efficiently process and analyse the mass of information collected for all municipalities.²⁸

²⁷ SYNDEC is a working group formed by decentralisation support structures in the circle of Ségou. It was set up in 2004 to enable concerted action to support municipal planning in the 30 municipalities of this circle. It includes ten or so support organisations, including the CCC and PACT. See Réseau SYNDEC, circle of Ségou (2005 a, b).

²⁸ The sub-regional seminar 'Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation of decentralisation and local governance in West Africa: exchange of experience and learning', Bamako, 17-18 May 2006, provided an opportunity to assess the SIEC and the GIS.

5 Lessons learned

5.1 Managing differing interests

Managing such diverse actors and interests was obviously difficult. While support from SNV and PACT helped to improve cooperation between technical departments and local governments, it did not manage to resolve some of the problems resulting from their different points of view. Data management is, in practice, a question of power. Those in possession of information are not always keen to share it. If the RS is not to the liking of technical departments, associations and NGOs, they may not want to validate it. Both cases arose, raising problems from the point of view of the quality of the tool and its institutionalisation.

We learned that it is important to discuss data accessibility and quality with all stakeholders at the outset. An ideal solution would be a database that all the actors contribute to, share, use and in particular validate, and which is managed by a structure appointed by mutual agreement.

5.2 Finance or capacity building?

In the area of organisational capacity building, a key assumption is that ownership and strengthening of organisational capacities would be undermined when financing is made available for projects. Another assumption was that a provider-based approach (SNV) would be more expensive than a municipality-based approach (PACT).

With regard to these prior assumptions, during the assessment of the experiment, however, two findings emerged:

- The two approaches had the same effects on the capacities of elected officers and on improved cooperation. In all municipalities ownership was limited, and only town clerks were able to replicate the exercise (chapter 4). The impact of the municipality-based approach (implemented and financed by the municipality) on capacity building does not seem to be any greater. It would nevertheless be interesting to compare data quality and the municipalities' satisfaction with the results to gain a more detailed idea. We also consider that factors such as leadership and the quality of external facilitation are just as important.
- Contrary to our expectations, the provider-based approach did not prove to be much more expensive than the municipality-based approach (see Box 12). The total cost of an SNV RS was some XOF 300,000 (€458), compared with XOF 250,000 (€380) for a PACT RS. As a result, this cost, which had played a major part in the choice of the strategy, is therefore not as important as had been assumed.

As the various options did not have the effects envisaged, it would therefore be more interesting to try to find out which option is preferred by municipalities, and which is most satisfactory from the point of view of results.

5.3 Prerequisites

For the application of the tool and, in particular, when mentoring a multi-actor process, some conditions have to be met:

Box 12: Costs of drawing up a Reference Situation

The following figures only partly reflect the efforts of the stakeholders to facilitate the process, but give an idea of the range of expenditures and the different budget items to be considered.

SNV estimates the total expenditure to prepare the RS in 44 local authorities (41 municipalities and three circle councils) to be:

Item	Costs in XOF (for 44 RS)
Data collection providers	8,000,000
Providers (data processing)	500,000
Assistance from a CCC advisor at municipal offices in order to help with analysis and synthesis of the RS	2,640,000
CLO technical services and costs	2,200,000 approx. XOF 50,000/authority)
Total	13,340,000
Total cost per RS	300,000 (458 Euros)

PACT estimates the costs of the municipal/circle RS as follows:

Factors	Municipal RS (XOF)	Circle RS (XOF)
Steering committee (operation)	50,000	200,000
Technical services (XOF 4,000/day)	75,000	75,000
Provider (data collection and processing of the document)	250,000	1,000,000
CCC advisor	-	-
Support structure	-	-
Mid-term meeting	25,000	75,000
Feedback workshop	100,000	150,000
Total cost per RS drawn up with a provider	500,000	1,500,000
Total cost per RS drawn up without provider	250,000	500,000

Costs of drawing up a circle RS

The municipal data have to be aggregated to the circle level, corrected and supplemented where necessary at feedback meetings with technical services.

SNV's experience (data collection at the circle level assisted by a provider using a tool in keeping with this local government level) shows that the average costs are comparable with those of an RS. PACT's trials in the circle of Kati are estimated at some XOF 1,000,000 over a six-month period.

The time needed to draw up a municipal RS in the SNV area (with a provider) was 1 to 2 months. In the PACT area it took 2 months (with a provider) and 4 months (without a provider).

Specifying the roles of the actors involved

Field experience has shown that the roles of local actors in data collection, the provision of the resources needed for the exercise and data management needed to be better specified.²⁹ Civil society organisations and NGOs have information that can be put to use in data collection and interpretation. Cooperation between municipalities and technical departments should be specified and formalised in a protocol. In Mali, this cooperation is set out in the laws and decrees on

²⁹ Local actors need to be involved in any prior communication on data collection, and in the compilation of the data and its subsequent provision to the municipal steering committee and in the analysis of the data with this committee.

decentralisation,³⁰ but it would be better to opt for low-key administrative management of this cooperation and to involve the local government supervisory authority.

Considered choice of data and indicators

For a reliable database, the choice of data and indicators required has to be shaped by the information that is available. A complicated database is difficult to manage, especially by local actors who are not technicians. Consequently, needs have to be met while taking account of the actual situation in the field. For this reason, our advice is to focus on an inventory of existing data. When starting data collection, the first step has to be for technical departments to draw up an inventory of the official information available and to gain agreement on the approach. Prior definitions of indicators should also be drawn up with technical departments.

Analysis of existing capacity

In order to avoid institutional problems from the outset, the support organisations mentoring the approach should make particular efforts to ensure compliance with the principle of involvement of the local government supervisory authority (the Prefect) and the higher hierarchical level of local technical departments (the heads of unit of technical departments at the circle level and the department responsible for planning).

Over and above municipal planning, external mentoring is needed from the point of view of capacity building. We recommend a prior analysis of existing capacity, followed by drafting of a specific capacity building strategy based on the results of this analysis. On the basis of our experience, we recommend that the following areas be included:

- communications and improving professional relations (lobbying, presentation, argument);
- on-the-job mentoring/follow-up for local actors (elected officers, town clerks and technical departments), possibly supplemented by targeted training. Mentoring of this type is needed to develop expertise in local data management and analysis; and
- mentoring of the local government support and advisory process for staff of technical departments.

³⁰ Decree 96-084/P-RM on the conditions and methods under which devolved state services are supplied to local government.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

Since the process was started in 2004, the Reference Situation has been discussed at local, regional and national levels. It has been discussed and sought out by elected officers, municipal staff, doctors and municipal school staff, support organisations, planners, researchers, technicians from technical departments, partners and donors, etc.

The RS – referred to in this case study as a ‘technical diagnosis’ ‘review’, ‘database’ or ‘reference document’ – has been used to draw up municipal plans and development plans involving transfers of skills in the fields of education, health and water. It is also starting to be used to manage municipal equipment and resource mobilisation since the RS inventories existing infrastructure and makes it possible to find out what aspects need to be taken into account for tax purposes.

The RS has become the only document of its kind in municipalities that includes a substantial amount of data on all development sectors. It is able to satisfy the information needs of a wide range of actors with different specific objectives. This outcome is encouraging, even though the initial objectives were not all achieved.

The process of joint stock-taking, analysis and exchange made it possible to gather advice from the stakeholders on how the RS could be progressed. We also took account of comments and advice given at the sub-regional seminar in Bamako on 17 and 18 May 2006.

The stakeholders are keen to improve the tool and the approach, the quality of the data collected and the role of users. Representatives of local actors (decentralised technical departments, town clerks, CCC advisors, providers, NGOs and support organisations) put forward various suggestions after the municipal planning process,³¹ the most important of which were as follows (for further details, see Annex II):

- developing an application manual for the RS tool to provide the actors with better guidance;
- streamlining the tool by eliminating information that is of no use for technical diagnosis and for monitoring and evaluating municipal development;
- taking steps to break down data to municipal level;
- making data more reliable by conducting surveys and polls to flesh out the available data; and
- envisaging the joint management of future municipal databases by municipalities, under the responsibility of mayors, and technical departments.

SNV and PACT recommendations concerned the regular use of the tool and monitoring of PRSP and MDG indicators. We have put forward specific measures for local actors, national actors and the municipal advisory centres, and options for improvement and consolidation (see Annex II).

The other case studies presented at the Bamako seminar convinced us that the involvement of technical departments is paramount in ensuring that the approach is actually applied, since local authorities already have a full workload and their technical capacities are not always adequate.

While exercises to draw up reference situations, monographs or poverty profiles (see the case studies on the Cameroon and Ghana) have played an important,

³¹ PACT (2006): the survey was conducted in December 2005 in 10 municipalities in the circles of Kati, Barouéli and Ségou with a working session in Koulikoro on 10 February 2006 organised by SNV.

even essential, part in planning, they still, as in the case of the RS, have to prove their worth for monitoring and evaluation.

The monitoring and evaluation system of the new European Union *Programme d'appui à la réforme de l'administration et à la décentralisation* (PARAD, Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation), under which budget support has been provided for the state reform and decentralisation process in Mali since 2006, drew our attention for two reasons. On one hand, this tool involves specific indicators from the point of view of skills transferred. On the other, although these indicators are few in number (four) they can be seen as an attempt to harmonise the monitoring and evaluation of municipal development. As municipal performance will play an important part in gaining access to the local government investment fund, municipalities will have to focus their efforts on the PARAD indicators.

This new context helped us to pinpoint what potential there was for the future of the RS in the local authorities concerned. First, the 2004 RS may continue to be a reference document or inventory that covers all sectors of development. Ongoing updating and management are necessary if the information needs of users are to be met. Our wish to institutionalise technical diagnostics at the municipal level is underpinned by the PARAD monitoring and evaluation system. Support from the CCCs and support organisations could be concentrated on achieving the PARAD indicators and possibly other indicators that they or municipalities consider to be relevant. The aim, as mentioned above (section 4.1), is to build the capacities of elected officers to carry out detailed sector analyses, and to plan and monitor and evaluate basic services (see the example of the SIEC). This policy could at the same time help to streamline the RS by focusing on some key indicators. Experience of the RS in the Koulikoro region has undoubtedly created a climate in which these proposals could be put into practice.

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Annex I: Acronyms

AMM:	Association des Municipalités du Mali / Association of Malian Municipalities
ANICT:	Agence Nationale d'Investissements des Collectivités Territoriales / National Agency for Local Government Investment
CAP:	Centre d'Animation Pédagogique / Educational Support Centre
CCC:	Centre de Conseil Communal / Municipal Advisory Centre
CCN:	Cellule de Coordination Nationale / National Coordination Unit
CLO:	Comité Local d'Orientation / Local Policy Committee
CNO:	Comité Nationale d'Orientation / National Policy Committee
CPC:	Comité de Pilotage Communal / Municipal Steering Committee
CP:	Comité de Pilotage / Steering Committee
CR-ONG:	Coordination Régionale des ONG / Regional Coordination of NGOs
CSO:	Civil society organisation
DED:	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst / German Development Service
DNAT:	Direction Nationale de l'Aménagement du Territoire / National Territorial Development Directorate
DNATCT:	Dispositif National des Appuis Techniques aux Collectivités Territoriales / National System for Technical Support for Local Government
DNCT:	Direction Nationale des Collectivités Territoriales / National Local Government Directorate
DNP:	Direction Nationale de la Population / National Population Directorate
DNPD:	Direction Nationale de la Planification du Développement / National Development Planning Directorate
DNSI:	Direction Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Informatique / National Statistics and Informatics Directorate
DRPS:	Direction Régionale du Plan et de la Statistique / Regional Planning and Statistics Directorate
DRPSIAP:	Direction Régionale du Plan, de la Statistique, de l'Informatique, de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de la Population / Regional Planning, Statistics, Informatics, Territorial Development and Population Directorate
EMEP:	Enquête Malienne sur l'Evaluation de la Pauvreté (2001) / Malian Poverty Assessment Survey (2001)
GOLDD:	Programme de Gouvernance locale, Décentralisation et Déconcentration / Local Governance and Decentralisation Programme
GTZ:	Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit / German Agency for Technical Cooperation
LG:	Local Government
MATCL:	Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales / Ministry of Territorial Administration and Local Government
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
MDRI:	Mission de Décentralisation et des Réformes Institutionnelles / Decentralisation and Institutional Reform Mission
MPAT:	Ministère du Plan et de l'Aménagement du Territoire / Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
ODHD:	Observatoire du Développement Humain Durable / Observatory of Sustainable Human Development
OISE:	Outil Informatisé de Suivi Evaluation (base de données) / Computerised Monitoring/Evaluation Tool (database)
PACT:	Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales / Local Government Support Programme
PARAD:	Programme d'Appui à la Réforme Administrative et à la Décentralisation / Support Programme for Administrative Reform and Decentralisation
PDESC:	Plan de Développement Economique Social et Culturel / Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan
PNACT:	Programme National d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales / National Support Programme for Local Government
PNIR:	Programme National d'Infrastructures Rurales / National Rural Infrastructure Programme
PRECAGED:	Programme de Renforcement des Capacités nationales pour une Gestion stratégique du Développement / National Capacity Building Programme for Strategic Development Management

PRSP:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
REDL:	Réseau de réflexion et d'échanges sur le développement local / Local Development Think Tank and Discussion Forum
RS	Reference Situation
SAD:	Schéma d'aménagement et de développement / Development Plan
SIEC:	Système d'information essentielle pour la commune / System of Essential Information for the Commune
SIG:	Système d'information géographique / Geographical Information System
SIGMA:	Système informatique de gestion des ressources en eau au Mali / Computerised System for Water Resource Management in Mali
SNV:	Organisation Néerlandaise de Développement / Netherlands Development Organisation
SYNDEC:	Réseau Synergie Décentralisation SYNergy DECentralisation
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program

Annex II: Stakeholders' recommendations on further progress with the RS

SNV and PACT recommendations on further progress with the RS

For local actors

In relation to the regular use of the tool and the monitoring of PRSP and MDG indicators, we recommend that elected officers, town clerks and CSOs:

- regularly update, for instance on an annual basis, the RS document in order to provide an up-to-date picture and gradually to discover other reliable sources of information;
- carry out this updating and data analysis work prior to the annual municipal programme review and before the new annual programme is drawn up;
- regularly request the involvement of technical services in updating work in order to show a long-term interest in the compilation and provision of municipal data;
- share the updated documents with the actors involved and disseminate them on request;
- refer, in the management of municipal business, to the data collected in order to make decision-making mechanisms transparent;
- test the relevance of data on a daily basis and retain a critical spirit as regards the reliability of data;
- compare each local government RS with those of other municipalities or circles, and share analogies or disparities;
- follow up, or even become involved in the discussion of the fine-tuning of the PRSP and MDG indicators in order thereby to assess the pertinence of the municipality's own indicators.

For national actors

With regard to the central, regional and local services of decentralised state departments and the provision of data at municipal level, we recommend:

- promoting long-term internal technical capacity building, down to the local level, for the management of the data required by the remit of the respective service;
- promoting the breakdown of data to municipal level and regular data updating;
- giving local technical services access to the statistics available at national level and training them to process and interpret these data;
- obtaining regular information on the statistical services of the respective service.

For CCCs

With regard to the CCCs and their role as intermediaries between local government and their environment, we recommend:

- assisting, through practical examples and simple exercises, local government to update and interpret data, in particular town clerks, CPCs and working groups;
- facilitating the dissemination of information (sector programmes, PRSPs, MDGs), initiating discussions at the CLO level and strengthening local government and technical service communication strategies;
- organising exchanges between CCCs on data management and successful cases (see 'link with other tools');
- attaching particular importance to building the capacities of local actors in analysis and long-term planning;
- facilitating exchanges and sharing data between technical services, local government, NGOs and local associations.

Options for improving and consolidating the RS

Replication and improvement

- apply the RS in the circles of Ségou and Barouéli and apply the SIEC tool in the circle of Dioïla (under way). A process of stock-taking and analysis is planned;
- produce an RS user manual;
- streamline the RS tool and break down the data;
- draw up RS documents at the circle level and specify the role and content of the RS.

Institutionalisation

- at municipal level: specify how the RS is subsequently to be used in the planning process and improve the municipal development monitoring and evaluation system based on the regular updating of the RS tool;
- at circle level: reach a stage where the structure (format, content) of the RS is finalised so that it can be validated by the supervisory authority and technical departments (see the example of the circle of Kati);
- involve the Association of Malian Municipalities (AMM) with their resource centres;
- involve the circle councils in the management/supervision of municipal databases;
- at regional and national levels: include municipal data management and the contribution of the RS in discussions of the monitoring of PRSPs and MDGs.

Strengthen links with other tools

With a view to harmonisation at national level and learning at sub-regional level, we have planned for regular exchanges with the organisations involved in monitoring and evaluation that have drawn up similar or complementary tools:

- DNCT/CCN DNAT (National Territorial Development Directorate): PDESC drafting guide;
- REDL Mali, SNV Niger, Bénin (ANCB, GTZ, Helvetas), Burkina Faso (GTZ, MATD/DEP): self-evaluation tool for local government performance;
- DNAT: drafting guide for the Development Scheme (SAD) at circle and regional levels;
- local government/support organisations/treasury: municipal resource mobilisation strategies;
- GTZ, SNV Mali and other structures: geographical information system (GIS);
- SNV Mali: Essential Information System for the Commune (SIEC) – HEALTH;
- CCN: Computerised Monitoring/Evaluation Tool (OISE);
- sector and ODHD databases.

Annex III: Resource persons, documents and useful addresses

Elsbet Lodenstein, e-mail: elodenstein@snvworld.org

Ulrich Caspari, e-mail: korkv.mli@cefib.com

Florence Dumont, e-mail: dumontflo@yahoo.fr

Consultation documents on the RS

- Collection guide for the drafting of the Reference Situation (CCC network, July 2004)
- Reference Situation drafting guide (PACT)
- Collection guide for the drafting of the RS (SNV, 2004 version)
- RS analysis tools (SNV Mali, October 2004)
- 41 RS of the communes of Koulikoro, Dioïla, Banamba (available from SNV Koulikoro, CCCs and municipalities)
- 3 RS for the circles of Koulikoro, Dioïla, Banamba

The documents are available from the SNV-Koulikoro and PACT offices (as electronic files or printouts). The RS are also available from the CCC and authorities (see addresses below).

Useful addresses

PACT (Programme d'appui aux collectivités territoriales – Planification de Développement)

BP.: 100, Bamako, Mali

Tel: (+223) 223 62 63

SNV-Koulikoro

BP.: 20, Koulikoro, Mali

Tel: (+223) 226 24 71