

# **Building partnerships for urban waste management in Bamako**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ALPHALOG	Association Libre pour la Promotion de l’Habitat et du Logement <i>(Independent Association for the Promotion of Habitation and Housing)</i>
COFESFA	Coopérative Féminine pour l’Education, la Santé Familiale et l’Assainissement <i>(Women's Co-operative for Education, Family Health and Urban Waste Management)</i>
COGIAM	Collectif des Groupements Intervenant dans l’Assainissement au Mali <i>(Urban Waste Management Collective of Mali)</i>
CPAC	Coordination des Partenaires intervenant dans l’Assainissement en Commune IV <i>(Committee of partners involved in Urban Waste Management in Commune IV)</i>
DP	Diagnostic Participatif <i>(Participatory diagnosis)</i>
GESCOME	Gestion Communautaire de l’Environnement <i>(Community Environmental Management)</i>
GIDD	Gestion Intégrée et Durable des Déchets urbains <i>(Integrated and sustainable urban waste management)</i>
GIE	Groupement d’Intérêt Economique <i>(Profit seeking group)</i>
MARP	Méthode Active de Recherche et de Planification Participatives <i>(Participatory appraisal and planning)</i>
MPE	Micro- et Petites Entreprises <i>(Micro- and small businesses)</i>
OCB	Organisation Communautaire de Base <i>(Community-based organisations)</i>
ONG	Organisation Non Gouvernementale <i>(Non-governmental organisation)</i>
UWEP	Urban Waste Expertise Programme

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## INTRODUCTION

Bamako has grown enormously since the 1960s, when it had around 80,000 inhabitants living in a dozen or so districts. Since then, rural exodus and a high birth rate have driven the population up to its current estimated level of 1,200,000. The city has expanded into about sixty urban and outlying districts, most of which face severe problems caused by the fact that the urban infrastructure and amenities have not developed at the same pace as the population. The rural exodus that has sent so many into Bamako is partly due to the failings of development policies, and the liberalisation of the economy that began in the 1980s. The public domain has become increasingly democratic since the process of decentralising began in 1991, and civil society and elected local governments now play a much greater and more active role in managing local affairs (Toé, 1997).

In 1992, the municipality, small businesses involved in waste disposal, NGOs and community-based groups in *Commune IV*, one of Bamako's districts, started collaborating on an urban waste management initiative. Involving people from disadvantaged areas and focusing on the cultural aspects of urban waste management, an approach to sustainable local development and improving the urban environment was developed. This successful exercise has now been institutionalised.

This paper presents the approach followed, starting with an analysis of the case of *Commune IV* in Bamako. It goes on to outline the most important aspects of the processes, methods and tools used, and highlights some of the most important results and lessons learned. Finally, a more systematic approach to stimulate sustainable development within the context of decentralisation is then proposed, taking account of the need to provide basic social services and address issues related to natural resource management.

### **Waste management in Bamako**

The volume of solid waste produced each day in Bamako increased from 1,500m<sup>3</sup> in 1992 to 2,200 m<sup>3</sup> in 2000, of which only 60% is collected on a daily basis. Although it is estimated that some 1,200m<sup>3</sup> of sludge needs to be removed from latrines on a daily basis, the limited resources available to the District mean that it can only remove a maximum of 150 m<sup>3</sup> of this waste each day. Water that has been used for domestic and small- or large-scale industries

is simply emptied into the street, gutters, sewers or waterways. These practices have contributed to a considerable decline in the quality of life in the city (TECSULT, 1994).

Individual operators have always been active in this sector, emptying cesspools and reprocessing and producing organic fertilisers, etc. Because the public technical services are clearly unable to deal with the problem, the municipal authorities are increasingly calling upon NGOs, small businesses and community-based organisations, to become formally involved in primary waste collection. Bamako District initiatives in this sector coincided with a whole series of other, more or less similar initiatives taken by different ministries, NGOs, and bi- or multi-lateral aid agencies<sup>1</sup>, starting towards the end of the 1980s. Taken together, these initiatives have strengthened the progressive democratisation of society at community level.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSEHOLD WASTE SECTOR**

### **Policies on urban waste management in Bamako**

In the 1960s, shortly after Independence, the refuse collection department had just three vehicles that were mainly deployed in the administrative districts and the military camp at the air base (UWEP, 1997). The first legislation on municipal refuse collection was only passed in 1980, when the Bamako District technical services were set up. In 1986, the newly-created Department of Urban Waste Collection and Management (DSUVA) took over the management of refuse collection in Bamako District, and still covers the six decentralised *communes* established in the area after the first council elections in 1999.

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<sup>1</sup> Local development, as it became known in the official terminology of the 1980s, (see ENDA, 1988) ranged from the liberalisation of the economy and privatisation of sectors deemed to be strategic for the State, the appearance of national NGOs as important actors in the battle against the effects of drought, the policy of decentralising state technical and administrative services, attempts at sectoral reform (health, education, agriculture, environment), to efforts to stem unemployment among young qualified people.

## Emergence of micro- and small businesses in the waste disposal sector

Micro- and small businesses, which are also known as GIEs,<sup>2</sup> first became formally involved in urban refuse collection in 1989, with a pilot project run by COFESA. This co-operative, which was set up by a group of unemployed young women who had just completed their education, successfully proved that private initiatives can help resolve environmental problems. SEMA Sanya, which was established in October 1991, was the first of a whole series of GIEs and co-operatives created specifically to tackle urban waste management. Today, they can be found in every major town in Mali, and there are over sixty such organisations in Bamako alone.

The positive relationships that have developed between Bamako's refuse collection department (*la voirie*) and GIEs have been actively supported by national and international development partners working to strengthen civil society. In 1991, World Education supported an initiative to clear gutters across the whole of Bamako, enlisting the collaboration of NGOs from each district, as well as community-based organisations. This successful undertaking extended into refuse collection, composting and the construction of sinks, latrines, etc. Other development organisations such as UNDP, la Caisse Française de Développement, and many other agencies were also active in this area. Although their various operations were not co-ordinated, they shared similar aims: reinforcing the action of national NGOs, stimulating the creation of waste disposal micro-enterprises that would provide self-employment for young people, and mobilising city-dwellers to do something about their unhealthy living conditions. These interventions successfully demonstrated that it was possible effectively to link the fight against youth unemployment with support for community-based initiatives and local attempts to make the city a healthier place to live.

Acknowledging both the failings of its technical services and the enormous development potential of a well-organised civil society, the Bamako District then introduced circular letter No. 0010, authorising the municipalities to impose terms and conditions on GIEs and co-operatives involved in waste management, but without obliging them to offer contracts. This letter, in fact, formalised the involvement of GIEs in waste management and they now work

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<sup>2</sup> Groupe d'Intérêt Economique (GIE) represent a form of private business that was recognised in the 1980s as a way of facilitating self-employment. The legal status of GIE does not require any financial capital, the only constraint being the formalisation of the activity.

in tandem with the Bamako refuse collection department, insofar as the former take on pre-collection work, while the latter carries out secondary collection and disposal, depositing waste in cereal fields in the outlying localities.<sup>3</sup> Together, they remove about 60% of the waste generated by the capital, particularly in the more built-up municipalities.

There is also a wide range of small private operators involved in salvaging and recycling various types of rubbish, improving and maintaining green spaces, flower and market gardens, and even provide most city dwellers with drinking water (see Champetier et al., 1999). The informal sector provides many basic services to the urban population, creating considerable employment opportunities in the process.

### **Problems in collaboration on household waste collection**

The four main problem areas in urban waste and environmental management lie in the competition between service providers; erratic refuse collection; the difficulties micro-enterprises have in communicating with their clients on the one hand and the town hall on the other; and the use of waste from the city in urban and peri-urban agriculture.

The presence of a large number of GIEs in the same zone creates fierce competition and conflict (ENDA, 1998; COGIAM Round Table, 1996), while elsewhere some operators with a monopoly in their zone are actually unable to satisfy the demand in that area. There is no demand for refuse collection in the outlying districts of town, as most of the people living there are farmers and sometimes market gardeners during the dry season, who use their waste as organic fertiliser.

The inefficiency of the secondary collections also needs to be addressed. Even when household waste is properly disposed of in authorised holding depots, the failure of the refuse collection department regularly to remove it causes considerable nuisance to the people living around these sites. Late payment of service providers' fees is another problem, partly caused by the straitened financial circumstances of most of the families concerned, particularly in disadvantaged districts, and partly by the erratic primary and secondary services provided by private and municipal operators. However, we believe

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<sup>3</sup> CEK is involved in a research project on the development potential of urban and peri-urban agriculture in relation to urban waste management in West Africa (APUGEDU), which is financed by the European Union.

that the problem is mainly due to poor communication, for although the carters and rubbish collectors working for GIEs are in daily contact with clients, they receive virtually no training in customer relations.

Many cereal growers in the outskirts of Bamako are becoming increasingly vocal about the declining quality of the waste delivered by the municipal refuse services. This unsorted rubbish contains both organic and inorganic matter, causing considerable nuisance to people, animals and pollutes the soils. Urban and peri-urban farmers are joining a working group in *Commune IV* in their efforts to improve waste management procedures (see below).

### **Collaboration between GIEs and the council in *Commune IV***

The *Commune IV* councillors and the NGO ALPHALOG have been looking for a sustainable solution to these problems since 1992 (Keita, A., 1999), through the "Commune IV Urban Development Programme" (PDUC-IV) implemented by ALPHALOG at the request of council. Using a process approach, this initiative supports GIEs and co-operatives involved in urban waste management, providing institutional and financial support, training, advice and monitoring. To do this, it regularly consults with the Refuse Collection and Urban Waste Management Commission of the council, which is particularly concerned about improving the insalubrious conditions in the *Commune*.

### **Initiating dialogue**

Through their contacts in the town hall, and with GIEs and co-operatives, the PDUC-IV team realised that attempts to co-ordinate waste management activities were seriously hampered by the total lack of any systematic consultation, either among community-based organisations or between these organisations and the council. It was thus possible for a group working on waste management to approach the town hall with project proposals or requests for space to carry out a project, and come away empty-handed, even though they fulfilled all the conditions for a successful application, and could produce a feasibility study, full documentation, evidence of engaged members, close contact with local people, funding for the project and support from an NGO. The impression that the council had little interest in youth initiatives was confirmed by fact that the Refuse Collection and Waste Management Commission was unaware of the activities of GIEs in the *Commune*.

## The emergence of the CPAC

The situation was not encouraging, as consultation was precluded by the competition between GIEs fighting for the same patch, and it was impossible effectively and clearly to allocate zones of intervention to the GIEs and co-operatives without the involvement of the council. Left to themselves, the GIEs could not agree on a sustainable arrangement.

In 1993, as a result of their investigations into the achievements and problems of the different partners working in waste management, ALPHALOG organised a three-day round table. One of the main outcomes of this meeting was the constitution of a council-level platform for GIEs and co-operatives involved in this sector, the "Committee of partners involved in urban waste management in *Commune IV* (CPAC)".<sup>4</sup> As part of its remit, CPAC manages conflicts between its members and acts as technical advisor to the council, is involved in conducting technical studies and information campaigns, and prepares and executes pilot projects within the framework of an agreement with the town hall (Keita, A., 1999). The CPAC has become an indispensable partner for the town hall in *Commune IV*, and two of its members were recently elected as district councillors, so that they could more effectively support urban waste management (Traoré, 2000).

## **INVOLVING DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE IN WASTE MANAGEMENT**

It was in this context that the council, the CPAC and ALPHALOG, now working in partnership, invited the UWEP programme<sup>5</sup> to test an innovative approach to getting local people involved in waste disposal activities. The pilot project "Involving disadvantaged people from *Commune IV* in urban waste management" was developed, using an approach based on action-research. The programme consisted of four main phases: exploration, participatory diagnosis, pilot activities, and evaluation and capitalisation. This action-

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<sup>4</sup> CPAC was composed of "GIEs, co-operatives or other partners involved in urban waste management, heads of district or their representatives, the District representative and representatives from the municipality", (Statutes, Article 6).

<sup>5</sup> The first phase of the Urban Waste Expertise Programme (UWEP) was from 1995-2001 working mostly in Costa Rica, India, Peru, the Philippines and Mali. UWEP is funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Netherlands and coordinated by WASTE. A second phase began in November 2001.

research confirmed some of the hypotheses that had informed its inception (see Box 1). It also produced some important results in terms of environmental management that will be discussed later in this paper.

### **Box 1: Assumptions on urban waste management**

The four main assumptions informing our work in *Commune IV* are outlined below:

- a) The insalubrious state of the districts in *Commune IV* seems to generate social consensus and political willingness to take any initiatives likely to clean up the environment on a sustainable basis, provided this was done democratically, transparently and in a way that respected local cultural norms. People living in disadvantaged districts can play an important role in the process. Although these hypotheses would have seemed absurd before the revolution of 26<sup>th</sup> March 1991, democratisation and the strong trend towards the decentralised management of public affairs since 1991 now make it a more realistic proposition.
- b) The current situation in Mali is characterised by political turmoil, with a new multi-party political system, a persistent economic crisis, popular confusion between "democracy" and "liberty" and a trend towards social anarchy. The only culturally legitimate social force enjoying both popular trust and the confidence of the executive organs of the State is represented by the traditional powers invested in the neighbourhood chiefs, religious authorities (Muslim and Christian) and their respective advisers. Their help and support is therefore needed to put in place mechanisms that will represent different social groups, take account of the diversity of interests at stake, and facilitate an innovative approach to urban waste management.
- c) Proven models for organising urban development already exist, and could serve as reference points for new initiatives to overhaul waste management practices. When they can demonstrate broad popular support, these initiatives will receive assistance from the technical, administrative and political authorities in the newly created decentralised administrative units.

African women are seen as symbols of cleanliness, and it is therefore important that they are consulted and involved in all future initiatives. Once motivated, they could play a leading role in promoting innovative waste management practices.

### **Channels of social communication**

The participatory diagnosis was originally supposed to cover a limited number of test areas, but on the recommendation of neighbourhood chiefs and other resource people, the diagnosis was subsequently extended to cover the whole of *Commune IV*. The initial plan to exclude six or seven of the neighbourhoods could have serious social repercussions, causing friction and resentment between members of the "Collective of neighbourhood chiefs from *Commune IV*". The action-research conducted in 1997 tapped into existing

social assets, such as channels of communication, social platforms, links between socio-professionals, and management bodies (Diarra, 1997). Insofar as they played a progressive role, these are useful and necessary elements in effecting change which must be done in a way that respects the existence of a wide range of social equilibriums.

### **Conducting participatory diagnosis in the neighbourhoods**

All eight neighbourhoods of *Commune IV* were thus included in the participatory diagnosis. Based on PRA, its key stages involve collecting, analysing and interpreting data, and drafting a provisional report on each neighbourhood. A summary of the results was presented to the neighbourhood chiefs, their advisers, and representatives from the town hall and its technical services. Supplementary information and amendments made during this workshop were incorporated into the summary reports, which were presented for a second time at a general meeting for people living in the district, so that the reports could be endorsed in the presence of all local actors. The proposal by the neighbourhood leaders to create waste management associations in each locality was democratically accepted at general meetings held in each neighbourhood (see also Boukraa and Bechraoui, 1995). Six neighbourhoods did indeed establish their own association.

### **Pilot activities and the influence of gender analysis**

For the action-research, the core activities were programmed to allow a certain amount of flexibility in implementing the project. This worked well with participants often instigating activities on their own initiative, without informing the research team. Some activities undertaken are: spending one day a month cleaning up public areas in the neighbourhood, particularly religious sites and community health centres; organising household Information-Education-Communication (IEC) campaigns; monitoring locally agreed standards and sanctions; and pushing for greater decentralisation to make their associations more accessible and relevant to householders.

The research team used brainstorming sessions as a kind of exploratory process before embarking on any major innovations, such as the plan to set up a centre for ongoing education (*Centre de Formation Continue*) to give disadvantaged people in *Commune IV* access to basic and professional training. Various studies were carried out for this, such as market research and an evaluation of the supply and demand for existing ongoing education (Kéita and

Maïga, 1999). To gain a better understanding of why women are reluctant to pay for ongoing education, and generally explore the ways that different sectors of the population perceive development, the team used various gender analysis tools, to analyse the practical needs and strategic interests of the potential beneficiaries of the proposed centre. Detailed investigations revealed that the expectations of the newly created neighbourhood associations focused on meeting daily needs and earning an income.

Comparison of new groups with the more experienced shows that once they have met these basic needs, people become motivated, wanting to "achieve something", and prove themselves. The groups that took pride in good results seemed better to understand the strategic importance of ongoing education to sustain their achievements: they stopped asking for material or financial rewards (*per diems*) for attending training, and even said that they were prepared to contribute towards the cost of improving their technical skills (Kéita and Maïga, 1999).

This indicates that disadvantaged social groups do not set much store by the broad strategic visions dear to development programme or project managers. It seems that the process whereby a culture based on survival evolves into a culture of development, can only be effected through the participatory resolution of their daily subsistence problems (Kéita and Maïga, 1999; Jones, 1997).

### **Working towards a common vision of urban waste management**

It was fascinating to watch the urban waste management associations in the neighbourhoods of *Commune IV* gradually develop their own vision of how waste could be managed in their locality. Representatives from neighbourhoods in the outskirts were particularly good at fighting their quarter and demanding that the municipal waste department deliver organic refuse free of plastic, medical and biomedical items. The associations also questioned some of the standards and sanctions prescribed by official legislation, which are often confused and contradictory. When they put forward their own proposals, the relevant technical services would only accept them as "customary rights" with the status of measures additional to the law, a compromise that was accepted by local people, who seem extremely enthusiastic about the prospect of taking control of their environment.

Because there were various conflicts of interests between key actors, a communication plan was developed, and in 1999, a consultative committee headed by the mayor, was set up to promote constructive dialogue between the waste management associations, technical services and other organisations in *Commune IV*. One of the first things the Local Waste Management Network (*Réseau d'Assainissement de Base*) did was to encourage the municipal technical services and waste management associations jointly to conduct a diagnosis of each neighbourhood, to find out more about them and be able to take account of the concerns expressed by residents. Conducted between February and April 2000, these exercises revealed significant shortcomings among most of the municipal technicians involved in waste management. A widespread lack of knowledge about the methods and techniques used to support community development meant that they found it difficult to write summary reports, design projects, or propose innovative and realistic activities (see also Kéita, M., 1999).

Increasingly, people are asking themselves how they can make waste management work in their neighbourhoods, and which complementary activities are needed to do so. A common vision of urban waste management is starting to emerge in *Commune IV*, one that is shared by all actors, from the municipality and its technical services, waste management associations and businesses to development partners, including NGOs and local projects and programmes. This is the start of a movement towards the institutionalisation of policy by the council in favour of integrated and sustainable waste management. The fact that two newly elected councillors have participated intensively in the CPAC has been a great advantage.

The political agenda of the municipal council now includes defining the complementary roles of different actors in decentralised administration, in order to tackle household and public hygiene, the productive use of organic waste in urban and peri-urban agriculture, and the disposal or elimination of solid and liquid waste produced in the *Commune*. The *Comité de Pilotage des déchets urbains en Commune IV* (COPIDUC IV) was set up as a working group on waste management of the urban council, municipal refuse collection department, micro-enterprises, community associations, and urban and peri-urban farmers.

Whilst the political leadership of the municipality is not called into question, it should not itself try to implement activities relating to environmental management and protection but delegate these to civil society organisations (the private, associative and community sectors). Technical services and

development partners should help civil society organisations deliver a professional service within the framework of integrated and participatory local development. The next section of this paper will suggest ways in which the new decentralised administrations can try to strike the right balance, which must surely be a pre-requisite for harmonious and sustainable progress (Keita, M., 1999).

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT**

In Mali, the policy of decentralising is a key factor that must be taken into account by future sectoral development programmes. This section of the paper will suggest how mechanisms for co-ordinating such activities could be put in place under the leadership of local government.

It is worth taking some time to consider the suggestions by Work (1998), who sees decentralisation policies as a means of achieving sustainable, people-centred development. Seen in this light, the most important characteristics of decentralisation are:

- Its capacity to counterbalance an international tendency towards globalisation, by redefining the relationships between actors from a global to a local level;
- Democratisation, which is an integral part of the process whereby local people have the power to influence the form of representation, policies and services;
- Greater accountability and transparency and the transfer of responsibilities to enable a range of stakeholders to achieve self-determination.

For Work, decentralisation is based on the need for effective governance. Priorities are balanced according to the relationships between, and roles and responsibilities of, the government, the private sector and civil society. Because decentralisation draws the various actors into new types of relationships, it goes far beyond a simple reform of the public sector: it is a long-term process, which must follow an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, logic.

Administrative decentralisation in Mali is based on Law No. 98-066<sup>6</sup> and has two main objectives (Diakit , 1999):

- Reinforcing the democratic process in order to redefine the roles and responsibilities of the State and civil society, and give existing and future local and regional institutions powers and certain responsibilities that were previously centralised;
- Promoting local development by facilitating initiatives at different levels within civil society and fostering development that is controlled by local people (see Box 2).

**Box 2: The different elements of decentralisation (Diakit , 1999)**

*Technical decentralisation*

This involves public services managed by bodies enjoying a certain amount of autonomy: state companies, and public, administrative, industrial and commercial institutions, etc.

*Administrative decentralisation*

This bestows a legal status and financial autonomy on a social community within the State, that has jurisdiction over part of the national territory and is united by a recognised collective identity (*Collectivit  Territoriale*).

*Self-determination*

Communities take on responsibility for managing their own affairs, either independently or with the support of state services or NGOs, becoming increasingly autonomous. This community-driven shift towards self-determination is known as ‘bottom up’ decentralisation, complementing the different dynamic of the other two ‘top-down’ types of decentralisation, where management powers are formally transferred from the State to newly created entities.

*The critical juncture* between bottom-up and top-down decentralisation occurs in the development arena, at the level of local government such as urban municipalities, rural *Communes*, and district and region assemblies. This forum creates an opportunity for consultation, dialogue and negotiation on local development with community organisations becoming the genuine partners of local government, and participating in making decisions - hence the need to develop good governance in the management of local affairs.

Good decentralisation is always accompanied by *devolution*.

The recommendations made at a series of workshops on the relationships between sectoral development policies and administrative decentralisation suggested a scenario in which local government can play an active role in

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<sup>6</sup> Code des Collectivit s territoriales en R publique du Mali

integrated development. To tie decentralisation and devolution more effectively into sectoral approaches, development partners must be in agreement about objectives, and in a position jointly to manage activities in the following areas:

- adapting legislation and regulations;
- planning and funding local development;
- ensuring the viability of infrastructure;
- strengthening local capacities and increasing professionalism among staff;
- ensuring that local and community development management bodies are representative;
- consulting and co-ordinating activities at national, regional and local levels in order to implement the measures adopted.

### **Common development objectives**

The advent of elected, local government bodies with a legal status and genuine financial autonomy has created the conditions for participatory community-based development. It will help local people achieve self-determination which is an institutional objective in itself. This potential is only attainable if all their administrative, technical and financial partners adopt procedures aimed at achieving a common goal: the setting-up of local infrastructure (such as health centres and schools, and waste and natural resource management) which works well.

From now on, these decentralised administrations will be responsible for harmonising local development institutions, and integrating sectoral and multi-sectoral development activities, often with differing technical approaches, into an effective and harmonious whole. In order to achieve the objective of integrated development, they must identify, mobilise and organise key participants, without stifling the diversity of approach that enriches local communities.

### **Legislation and regulations**

State, council and private actors have to deal with the fact that sectoral and inter-sectoral regulations do not conform with legislation on decentralisation in

many areas of activity<sup>7</sup>. It is important to agree on the interpretation of the primary laws in every domain relating to decentralised, sustainable development, and to define the roles, skills and responsibilities of all actors. Key activities will include reviewing sectoral laws on natural resource management, education, health and other sectors vital to the *Commune*. This will entail setting up cross-sectoral commissions drawn from the relevant technical departments, the Ministry of the Interior and representatives from civil society, and should also involve Parliament.

In the past, the sectoral development policies adopted by different ministerial departments were designed and co-ordinated in the capital. Now that this has changed, there is considerable potential for tension and conflict with the newly elected, decentralised administrations, as they use the management powers ceded by central government to defend the interests of their constituents. There will doubtless need to be a period of transition to allow decision-makers in central and local governments to get used to the new situation, and start working together to make decentralisation a reality.

### **Planning local development**

In order to achieve an integrated development approach, council development plans should take account of sectoral planning, and vice versa. However, in reality, it has often been observed that:

- sectoral maps used for the distribution of health centres, schools or agricultural extension services do not conform with the new local government boundaries.
- an uncontrolled and ill-planned development of infrastructure (such as health centres, dispensaries, maternity clinics, village schools) constitutes a tangible risk as well as the over-exploitation of natural resources.

The first situation may create problems when government support for rural areas is not properly co-ordinated. Sectoral development plans for a municipality, district or region should be jointly drafted, and care taken to ensure that they are followed. The second highlights the need to minimise the risk of creating unviable development infrastructure, without denying local government the right to set up amenities as they see fit. Actors should, wherever possible, check the accuracy of pre-project market research and/or

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<sup>7</sup> This concerns many areas, from health and education to waste and natural resource management and taxation.

feasibility studies. However, there will always be a risk that development in economically disadvantaged, isolated or under-populated areas will be unviable, even although it provides an important service. Development zones with particular cultural, ecological, or other characteristics, which are spread across several municipalities, districts or regions should be jointly managed by the councils concerned. Appropriate training and information for decision-makers should be provided at council, regional and national level.

Environmental impact assessments should be incorporated into development projects to monitor the effects on the environment of the activities and technologies proposed (Chisha, 2000). Suitable approaches for environmental impact assessment need to be developed, and disseminated among all municipalities, districts and regions to ensure strict compliance by development partners.

### **Funding**

The crucial problem with funding for local development is clarifying the division of roles between the State, local government, the community and local level development partners. Realistic local planning and sustainable funding for basic social services, such as health, education, the provision of drinking water and natural resource management, must be based on a balanced budget. As the strategic objective is for municipalities to become the primary managers, it is important to foster their involvement in procedures for funding local level development activities. Money will need to be raised locally to run and service infrastructure, with the amount determined by each municipality, in consultation with the district council and other interested parties. Infrastructure straddling several *Communes* should be jointly funded and managed by the administrations concerned.

### **Viability of infrastructure**

Whatever their status, each municipality is meant to guarantee its constituents access to all basic services, offering the highest quality at the lowest possible cost - in other words, delivering efficient and effective services. They should also aim to guarantee the economic and financial viability of community facilities and all basic social services. Managers of community-based operations and social services can act as independent service providers, as non-profit-making associations, NGOs, public or semi-public bodies, or as GIEs or some other form of private enterprise.

The greatest hindrance to sustainable local development is the fact that there are no guarantees of the structural viability of infrastructure and community amenities, for various reasons. Unfavourable internal factors include the unreliability of technical studies, feasibility studies and market research, and working methods used by managers that are either not participatory or not felt to be appropriate by beneficiaries (Kéita, M., 1999). Negative external factors include the difficulties faced by economically disadvantaged areas and underfunded local government, unregulated markets and competition from other service providers, or lack of political and financial support from state and local traditional authorities. These factors need to be dealt with by creating the conditions for financially sustainable operations. It is also important to encourage women to participate in the management of community-based operations and social services, helping them negotiate the necessary room to manoeuvre.

### **Building professional capacity within local organisations**

The primary objective should be to develop professional capacities within the management structures of community-based organisations, and of staff in the decentralised technical services and local government, who will take a certain amount of time to assume their new responsibilities.

The main problems seem to occur at two levels: firstly within local government, which seems to lack the capacity to manage the technical aspects of local development in the short term; and secondly, with the staff in different technical departments, who know very little about the management tasks that can realistically be transferred to these new administrations. People working in local government must build up a professional skill base, and one of the keys to achieving this is by training actors from all sectors - state, council, community and private - to help them perform better. This can be done through cross-disciplinary themes, such as organisational development, the use of participatory development techniques and communication, as well as through joint learning on technical issues.

The internalisation of a participatory culture by the community and social actors is both a condition and a guarantee of the success of environmental management activities and the general development of local government (EHP, 1996; Toé, 1997). The capacity of different actors to collaborate is a sign of the dynamism and vitality of the neighbourhood, the village and the

municipality. All actors should be involved in and contribute to this process, with each area developing a very specific local profile that will depend on the creativity of its leaders. The municipality, NGOs, associations, the private sector, development partners, etc. can all, at some time or another, play a key role in ensuring the provision of the basic services required for society to function.

### **Representativity of community and local development management structures**

Work needs to be done to enable community-based bodies to function more efficiently, build their credibility, and establish an appropriate legal framework. The main concerns are the extent to which the management structures of community-based organisations and local NGOs represent their members; the need to clarify the roles of these structures and those of the municipalities; and ensuring that they complement each other.

The relationship between local government and the different bodies managing infrastructure and community amenities needs to be clearly defined. This will require:

- Changing the status of community-based organisations from registered associations to associations that have a recognised public utility, or another status requiring transparent management and public control;
- Providing advice and support for local, regional and national committees and federations to ensure that the statutes and internal regulations of community-based organisations are respected.

### **Consultation and co-ordinating activities**

The main technical departments, civil society representatives and development partners involved in the process should follow a timetable of activities, with a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating progress. This will involve some kind of master plan that all participants should endeavour to adhere to. This could be achieved by organising consultations between technical departments operating in the same municipality, district or region. This consultative process would probably best be initiated at ministerial level, among political decision-makers who also have the authority to allocate decentralised departmental bodies the means required to implement decisions. If this is not possible, the process could be started at a "lower" regional or local level, or between municipalities.

We have seen in *Commune IV* how various sectoral and community approaches to waste management have been integrated into the municipal development plan, stimulating local development, by getting different people to work together and take responsibility for improving the urban environment.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The action-research conducted in *Commune IV* enabled us to learn more about encouraging social action and improving urban waste management in Africa. Decentralised, participatory management is the only viable strategy for tackling environmental degradation. This participation presupposes mutual respect and close collaboration between all actors: the municipality and its technical services, intermediary structures, private service providers and community-based organisations. Methodological approaches that will facilitate this type of collaboration include action-research, process-centred approaches, PRA, gender analysis and various other participatory methods.

It is possible, even in disadvantaged neighbourhoods of West African cities, to involve local people from urban and semi-urban localities in managing their environment. This can be done by using iterative processes that take individuals such as neighbourhood chiefs, and social groups such as households as well as the municipal council as their point of entry. The main condition is that the group chosen subscribes to a culture of progressive development. This requires knowledge of and respect for local culture, and the use of work and communication techniques that are inspired by both local and universal values. Our experience in *Commune IV* showed that local people are eager to find out about these methods and tools, and try them out for themselves.

These measures are more likely to be successful if all participants are prepared for their roles through training, and consulted about their individual expectations, what the various groups and administrations are expected to achieve, the priority problems to be resolved and the methods, tools and activities to be employed. Throughout the entire process, care should be taken to ensure that information and ideas on indicators of success are discussed and made available to all concerned.

This process includes several types of network that organise consultation and co-ordinate activities at various levels. What is most important is that the

elected councillors and mayors should assume political leadership in order to ensure integrated local development; and that networks interact vigorously from local to national level.<sup>8</sup> This dynamism should be supported by reliable tools and mechanisms for planning within and between councils.

## CONCLUSION

To find sustainable solutions to the environmental problems affecting West African towns, process-centred approaches and action-research can be used to explore, understand and use local energy, knowledge and expertise. The initiatives in *Commune IV* in Bamako confirm this assertion. Starting with the straightforward aim of increasing the involvement of disadvantaged households in activities undertaken by micro-enterprises collecting household refuse, the action-research programme created a whole series of social dynamics centred around a new type of local actor: men and women of modest means who play an increasingly important role in redefining the standards and practices for hygiene and waste management in their neighbourhoods. It is important to note that their role has been recognised, thanks to the support of the municipality and neighbourhood leaders (UWEP, 2001).

This paper has shown that sectoral approaches are necessary but not sufficient to sustain administrative decentralisation. It is important that local government has the will and capacity to provide the political momentum to guide different people and organisations towards the same vision, and work towards integrated local development in which different approaches interact and complement each other.

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<sup>8</sup> An elected representative from the rural council of Kalabancoro, in the Kati District, stated that he was convinced that there are no concepts of human development that couldn't be translated into Bambara (one of the national languages in Mali) and made accessible to elected councillors!

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