

## AEN MALI - PADDECK EXTERNAL EVALUATION

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document is the report of the external evaluation of the project "Support to decentralized development in Kidal region, Mali" - PADDECK. This evaluation took place at Norwegian Church Aid's (NCA) regional representation's request, who elaborated the terms of reference. The scope of the review is the nine years of the project intervention: Phase I (1999-2002) and Phase II (2003-2007) - since no external evaluation was carried at the end of Phase I. The external evaluation (EE) was also requested to assess the institutional mechanism of NCA in Kidal, with three structures: PADDECK, ASSADDEC (Sahelian association for decentralized development) and CCC (Advising centre for communes).

The review took place from November 14 to December 15 in Mali. The report was finalised later in France by the team leader. The external evaluation team (EE) involved three consultants: head of mission, a woman generalist with an experience in Sahelian pastoral post conflicts zones, a national consultant (man) with a good expertise in organisations management, decentralized institutions and education, and a woman national consultant, tamasheq, with an extended experience in women's organisations support in North Mali. 18 days were devoted to the field work in Kidal region (1540 kilometres from Bamako), where six out of the eleven communes<sup>1</sup> of the area of PADDECK intervention were visited; more than a hundred persons were met, representative of the vast diversity of the local actors partners of PADDECK: Government, local councillors, traditional chiefs, women, young, other donors (NGOs, projects) working in Kidal region. Thanks to the quality of NCA support in Bamako and Kidal, the EE was able to work in the best conditions of security and independence, under the insecure circumstances still prevailing in Kidal region. The EE would like to thank all of them warmly for this.

EE's methodology was aimed to come within the scope of participatory learning and shared thinking about the future - the third phase of PADDECK. The entry point was the commune: selection criteria were elaborated on a participative basis with PADDECK team. While exchanges have been permanent with PADDECK, EE was always able to preserve its independence in the contacts with different actors - external or internal to NCA. Two events marked the review process: i) a first debriefing in Kidal with the participation of NCA institutions in Kidal : PADDECK ASSADDEC and CCC, NCA Gao and PADDECK supervisor from Bamako - which enabled a first sharing and ownership of the main findings; ii) a final debriefing in Bamako with the R.R. team, which allowed the validation of the findings, recommendations and orientations for the third phase.

The objectives of PADDECK, both in Phase I and Phase II, aimed at producing changes in the following domains:

- Decentralisation : supporting the process and capacity building in decentralized management
- Sustainable development : promoting a shared dynamics on more solid bases
- Reinforcement of peace : supporting the reconciliation process and democracy through more accountable citizens

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<sup>1</sup> By "commune", we mean the new decentralized communities (about 700), urban and rural, created through the decentralisation process in Mali; all have an elected council and mayor; the Kidal region includes 11 communes within a territory of 260,000 square kilometres and about 100,000 inhabitants. As a result, decentralized management of local affairs is extremely recent in Mali: the first local elections took place in 1999, the second ones in 2004

The assessment of relevance showed that PADDECK in Phase I as well as in Phase II is a fully relevant project: it addresses the general problems of Kidal region, is in line with the big national policies - with a special accent on Decentralization linked with Poverty Reduction Strategy; it addresses the priorities of local actors with real answers, especially the new communes, and vulnerable women and young facing critical situations; it is in the scope of NCA commitment in Northern Mali. The approach was iterative, based on an in-depth review of the Kidal region which is now a reference, and other thematic studies anticipating future involvement in the domains: civil society, education, livestock, and hydraulics. For these nine years the rise of NCA intervention in Kidal region has been the fruit of both its own initiative and relevant responses to external events which led PADDECK to work progressively in the eleven communes of the region.

In 2006, a pastoral programme started in Kidal, executed by NCA (through PADDECK) and financed by SIDA, for two years. The same year, in order to bridge a gap after the previous NGO in charge departed, NCA supported the CCC in the districts of Tinessako and Kidal for two years (2006-2007). It is to be kept in mind that NCA has supported a local NGO, ASSADDEC since 2000, aiming at building their capacity to run PADDECK in early 2008. ASSADDEC, through NCA funding, works mainly in the health sector (HIV-AIDS) and income generating activities (IGA) for the benefit of women and young. NCA rise in Kidal was relevant and PADDECK scheme of intervention (logical framework) fairly adapted to this significant extension.

PADDECK demonstrated efficiency in Phases I and II. A lot was done with relatively modest human, physical and financial resources, in a very difficult - some say hostile - environment. The project was able to cope with an unexpected extension to three more communes in 2005, resulting in a covering of the whole region. NCA financial aid in Kidal region was up to 3 billions of FCFA in nine years, which is remarkable for an NGO; this aid was used efficiently by PADDECK, working through a very restricted team (three persons in all in the beginning), and supported by the same seasoned "process consultant" every year. Physical resources (vehicles, equipment, rent premises) are limited, and tend to be insufficient for PADDECK with the extension of area and scope of activities. The weak points lay i) in the monitoring system, especially from the second phase, both for quantitative and qualitative information, and ii) some dysfunctions linked to an unclear sharing of responsibilities and competences between PADDECK and NCA bureau in Gao, installed in 2005 after the closing of Gossi (OADS).

Another important problem is linked with NCA late planning and disbursement system: budgets are annual, planning takes place at the beginning of the next calendar year and first disbursements are available only in April or May. As a result, field activities start late in the year, at the peak of the hot dry season, and are to be executed in a too restricted time space of 6 to 8 months. November and December are overloaded periods: all this is counter performing. Bridge budgets were allowed to bridge this gap, but according to most people point of view, this is not satisfactory.

Effectiveness assessment showed that PADDECK is an effective project, getting positive impacts under way, keeping in mind the especially difficult context of intervention : a very remote and vast area, with no tarmac road at all and terrible dirt tracks, harsh climate conditions and recurrent insecurity, in a post conflict zone. Armed rebellion resumed in 2006 and 2007. Nevertheless, thanks to an efficient strategy, adapted approaches and a packet of complementary and synergic activities, most expected results were reached. Planned activities were completed, some beyond previsions - with an unexpected extension to three more communes in 2005.

The most convincing results are:

- Contribution to a new dynamics of development in the Kidal region

- Support to emerging decentralisation, in all eleven communes of the region, and all their sectors<sup>2</sup>, aiming at a permanent balance between physical achievements in the short term (like infrastructures) and longer term support activities like training, capacity building, consolidation of peace
- Valuation of local culture, especially through literacy in tamasheq language
- Progressive change from isolated management to shared and collective management
- Persistent support to schools with a slow but constant raise in school attendance, even for girls
- Specific support to most vulnerable women and youth (like female heads of households, sometimes with children, jobless young men) resulting in an improvement of their livelihoods, through a poverty alleviation approach in the broad understanding of it: economic, financial, in status, in education, etc.

Some expected outputs were not attained for relevant reasons: PADDECK enforced penalties for communes or communities deceiving the code of good behaviour with the project : non respect of equity, poverty alleviation, decentralisation principles, bad governance of local funds. PADDECK commitment to get ethic rules observed is right, in a spirit of learning what good governance is in practice at local level.

The less convincing results deal with the improvement of collective management of the commune assets and the supply shops (revolving funds, non recovered credits, etc.) : progress is slow, effects of training hardly visible yet, but it is well known that such changes in behaviour require time, and turn to be visible in the long term.

Fair results deal with:

- Real integration of women in the development momentum: PADDECK did a lot to help most vulnerable women through supporting their income generating activities and capacity building (literacy, management training) and it did it well ; nevertheless, women have still a very restricted access to decision making; this reflects the dominant situation of the traditional social context, highly sensitive to gender issues, and all the more since it is influenced by fundamentalists groups openly hostile to women's promotion.
- Creation of a literate citizen environment, based on a decisive number of persons at commune level. Effective literacy has not attained the expected results, (maybe too ambitious) and the quality of knowledge is not confirmed by an appropriate monitoring.

Results aiming at the consolidation of peace, conflict mitigation and changes in behaviour are not verifiable in the present context of Kidal region: insecurity has resumed for two years; it is yet obvious that a process of dialogue was launched, the best example of it being the success of the participative diagnosis implemented by the pastoral programme, which implied more than 2000 persons, an absolute record in a pastoral area like Kidal.

Major successes are due to a smart strategy liable to adapt to changes while ensuring continuity between Phases I and II. PADDECK is implemented by a local team, immediately efficient and accepted by the milieu tamasheq, supported by the same "process adviser"<sup>3</sup>, based on in depth reviews, and always in phase with NCA/PADDECK

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<sup>2</sup> Sectors : communes in pastoral areas are very extended and inhabited by mobile herders groups, scattered with their cattle and tents; as a result, communes were divided into sectors - whose focus point is a permanent well - where herders meet when watering their animals. This is also the place where shops were created, to help addressing basic needs in food, tea, matches, batteries, etc. Sectors are managed by traditional leaders or "chefs de fraction" (heads of tamasheq groups)

<sup>3</sup> André MARTY (IRAM) sociologist and pastoralist with more than 20 years experience in Northern Mali

commitments: good governance, securing pastoral livelihoods, education, equity and poverty alleviation.

Main weaknesses are originated in the fact that the project is somewhat victim of its own success and of the rapid rise of NCA involvement in Kidal region development, especially from 2006 on: too many demands, extension of area of intervention to the whole region, making close monitoring very difficult - the opportunity costs at risk of turning counter efficient versus the cost of the activities. As a result, the monitoring and learning systems show weaknesses; insufficient documentation of qualitative results during the two phases, and both in quantity and quality in phase II. Existing documentation (both on hard and soft supports) is scattered and not easily available. Valuation of experience and lessons learned is not what it should be, putting at risk the institutional memory of the project. Lastly, communication and information circuits are to be enhanced, with the communes and with CCC and ASSADDEC, and above all with NCA Gao, as well as with regional partners.

Most significant changes (MSC) are to be seen with the progress of decentralisation in Kidal region. Communes are born and do exist, local councils started working, turned to become real partners of a development project, respecting the rights of the diverse sectors they are made of. Gradually, isolated or individualist management of problem is transforming into a collective thinking and planning and shared decision making. Right in the middle of nowhere, lost among the endless sands of the Tamesna plain, a commune was born in 2001: Intedjedit, and it is growing. School attendance is raising, even for girls, a première! Perception of school is slowly changing, though there is still a long way to go to the achievement, everywhere, of a literate and citizen environment. Women start literacy courses and are committed to make progress by themselves, for them and for their children. Yet this is assuredly far from a critical mass of women for decision making, but a momentum is launched, putting obstacles in the way of ideologies hostile to women's progress, and which will turn much more visible with the next generation. Young men are more and more committing themselves into the development of their commune or of their sector, deliberately embracing options different from armed rebellion or crime.

These changes are significant, and due to the fact that PADDECK knew how to involve a large family of diverse actors concerned by the development of their region; PADDECK was deliberately inclusive, with a strong determination to ensure equity while respecting the local context, working with mayors and councillors, traditional leaders in the sectors, vulnerable women and youth, herders, other development partners. Though ASSADDEC does not feel ready yet to relay PADDECK, the association built solid capacities along the years, especially in STD-AIDS and women's activities support. Synergy with CCC was disappointing.

PADDECK is a project offering good opportunities of sustainability, since it is rooted in both regional and national context, in the progressive ownership of the approach by the actors, appropriate technologies and is complementary with other developers in the region.

The institutional mechanism proved efficient when only two structures PADDECK and ASSADDEC were implied in Kidal. Situation grew more complicated and less efficient when the regional bureau of NCA in Gao was installed and above all when the institutional scheme got more and more complex with the extension of NCA intervention in Kidal : CCC operator plus pastoral programme (also called "pastoral PADDECK") came in addition to "ordinary PADDECK" and ASSADDEC without a sufficiently clear sharing of competences to accompany this evolution.

Eventually, EE estimates that the objectives targeted by PADDECK have been attained in the domains of support to decentralisation and dynamics of sustainable development; it is not easy to assess definitely progress in terms of consolidation of peace, but obviously

positive changes are on the way, supported by progress in decentralisation: dialogue takes place inside and outside the communes - for instance between the two communes of Intedjedit, Kidal region, and Alata, Gao region ; good governance of pastoral resources is a widely shared issue and objective. PADDECK is acknowledged as an institution of influence for the return of peace, and through the project, NCA is a respected added value in Kidal region.

**General recommendations for a third phase are the following:**

- NCA mission must continue and reinforce in Kidal region : PADDECK is an added value to be preserved in the regional landscape
- PADDECK approach is rooted in a process of positive changes which are to be supported by NCA within a vision at 2020 horizon : thus a cycle of 20 years would be completed, allowing to measure changes at a generation scale of time
- Within this long term vision, PADDECK Phase III is viewed as a new step of 5 years (2008-2012) and is designed as one programme, resulting of the consolidation of NCA interventions in Kidal region. The programme would consist of various components, different in sectors of intervention, duration, operators and partners, sources of finance, etc.
- PADDECK III programme is under the aegis of a managing facility (management, monitoring and capitalisation component) - CCDP -, directed by a coordinator based in Kidal. CCDP is the executive representation of NCA in Kidal - or the NCA bureau in Kidal, directly responding to the regional representation in Bamako.
- PADDECK III should elaborate a coherent strategy of intervention reflected in a consolidated logical framework of the programme type, clear and flexible, elaborated with the full participation of the main actors, internal and external to NCA.
- Together with the re thinking and re designing of its institutional mechanism in Bamako, Gao and Kidal, NCA should elaborate a partnership strategy, aiming to reinforce and secure relationship with partners, and especially with seasoned partners, on a peer basis. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) could be elaborated and established with those partners - for the duration of the programme or component for instance - , and contracts signed yearly according to the disbursing system in NCA.
- Continuity in commitment and approach is the best force of NCA and PADDECK. As a result, PADDECK III resolutely confirms this continuity, based on the same three pillars and the same synergy :
  - Resolute support to decentralisation, with priority given to capacity building in management and good governance of local affairs, and in the consolidation of a literate and citizen environment at every commune level
  - Reinforcement of bases for sustainable development in Kidal region : during phase III, less importance is to be given to big infrastructures than to capacities in adequate planning and management for the benefit of the whole community
  - Consolidation of peace, with a new role for PADDECK in the elaboration of the regional scheme of territory and pastoral resources, for an equitable and sustainable management of natural resources, in a even more marked involvement in the dynamics of exchanges and dialogue inter communes.

The seven big types of activities conducted during phases I and II are to be continued: specific recommendations should be thought over, and activities should be clustered into 4 to 5 main domains within the scope of the same component, this hopefully putting them in better conditions for implementation, monitoring and synergy.

### **Proposals for the organisation of a PADDECK III Programme**

The programme could consist of five to six components, interactive but relatively independent in duration, financing, operators, etc.

**1. Management Component** - CCDP: this component is the executive organ of NCA in Kidal. It is in charge of the steering of the program: planning, implementation, coordination, management, administrative and financing management, monitoring and capitalisation, communication (including reporting and publication) development of the programme, external relations and representation at regional level. The coordinator is under the direct supervision of the NCA R.R. in Bamako. He maintains good peer relationships with NCA bureau in Gao. He is the supervisor of all the heads of components, and ensures local partners' empowerment, with a special attention to ASSADDEC.

Duration: 5 years

**2. Pastoral Component** : this component should aim at the accountable and decentralised governance of pastoral resources and to securing pastoral livelihoods in Kidal region. It would be in fact the second phase of the pastoral programme financed through SIDA and executed by NCA.

Duration 2 years (SIDA programme phase II) in a perspective of at least 5 years

**3. Commune Support component** : this component should take the relay of the previous support to CCC ; together with other partners in Kidal region, it would work to the transformation of ex CCC facilities into real inter communes shared services of the "SECOM" type.

Duration: 2 years at least (third local elections to take place in 2009)

**4. Formal Education and Capacity Building Component:** this strong / cross sectoral component would target the constitution of a literate and citizen environment in every commune, and eventually, in every sector. It would focus PADDECK support to the schools, aiming rather at "better school" than at "more schools"; it would reinforce PADDECK effort in adults' capacity building: literacy, management, qualifying trainings, etc.

Duration: 5 years

**5. Equity and Poverty Alleviation Component** : this component should aim at the inclusion of the most marginalised groups and poverty reduction. It would target women and youth in priority, through income generation activities. ASSADDEC could be the operator of this component, since it already leads this kind of activities in three communes.

**6. Improving base health services and fighting STD/AIDS** : health sector was little covered by PADDECK, but the demands are important. ASSADDEC has so far developed a good experience in this sector with STD/AIDS programmes financed through NCA. This expertise could be extended to improving the basic health services. The set up could be similar to the one proposed for the component Equity/Poverty alleviation.