

Thematic Learning Visit – Mali Jan/Feb 2012

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1. Background

CISU (previously PATC) is a Danish umbrella organisation that has around 280 members among Danish civil society organisations, all working with international development. The focus area of CISU is capacity building of the Danish CSOs through training and advisory services and the administration of a Project Fund on behalf of DANIDA (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Besides, CISU advocates on behalf of the member base regarding the general framework for Danish civil society organisations and attempts to stage relevant debates and discussions among the members and Danish civil society in general.

In order to understand the context that CISU members and their Southern partners are working in, CISU attempts to build up country context specific knowledge, relating this to an area of interest for members in Denmark, their partners in the Global South and CISU.

Thematic Learning Visits and reports

So far advisors from CISU have carried out seven Thematic Learning Visits (TLV's) – to Bolivia, Tanzania, Nepal, Nicaragua, Kenya, Uganda and Vietnam. Each visit has looked at the specific context of civil society in the particular country. This has been done in order to build capacity within CISU to enter into dialogue about the implementation of the Danish Civil Society Strategy¹ with CISU members and their local partners and the Danish Embassies in the visited countries.

Experience from the seven visits reveals that there is a need to sharpen the focus of the visits, to concentrate on one or two relevant issues in the particular context and to plan the visits as part of an inclusive and participatory process, where the participation and the dialogue form an important part of the eventual outcome.

Factors of relevance for choosing Mali include:

- Mali is a DANIDA Partner Country
- 13 CISU member organisations work in Mali 5 active projects are financed through CISU's Project Fund and implemented by the following Danish organizations and their Mali partners: KULU/FEMNET, Børnefonden/ASDAP, Vedvarende Energi/MFC Mali, International Kontakt/Groupe d'Amphari
- Projects and programmers through DANIDA's Single funding mechanism: IMCC/APS + ASDAP

The visit took place from 4th January to 5th February 2012.

2. Objectives and outputs for the Thematic Learning Visit (TLV):

Objectives

Enhanced knowledge in CISU including her members working in Mali on the context for CSO operations in Mali

Shared understanding in CISU, including her members, CSO partners in Mali about how CSOs operate in Mali.

¹ The Civil Society Strategy – Strategy for Danish Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries, Danida Dec. 2008.

Outputs

- Initial mapping of Danish organisations' activities in Mali, including organisations that work with own funds and Danish Frame-organisations
- Mapping of the status of Mali civil society and emerging Civil Society including:
 - Overview of existing civil society analyses
 - Available basket funding mechanisms for civil society organisations
 - The general organisation of civil society, including existing civil society networks in Mali.
 - The Danish Embassies engagement with civil society, including support to basket funds, use of local grant authority and support to Civil Society Organisations through various bilateral sector or programme modalities.
- Visits and meetings with a number of Malian CSO's (primarily partners to members of CICU), networks and platforms in order to identify and discuss potentials and challenges on how to ensure the dynamic function of the networks/platforms.

Methodology

The TLV included visits to 12 (and 4 field-visits outside Bamako) Malian CSO's (mostly partners to Danish CSO members of CISU) and one network; FEMNET and a platform; 'Forum de la Societe Civile au Mali' (FOSC), The Danish Embassy, UNDP office, EU delegation and meetings with the Danish representative from The Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) in Mali.

Thematic focus of the TLV visit

The thematic issue functions of networks/platforms were selected according to the findings from the advisors initial visit to Mali in 2010.

In international cooperation there is a tendency that organisations, big as well as small, attempt to forge alliances and networks to enhance outcome and impact. This is also the case In Mali, where several civil society platforms/networks have been established over the last years. Some years ago, the four major platforms took part in the creation of a common platform 'Forum de la Societe Civile au Mali' (FOSC) with the purpose of being better coordinated and represented as civil society towards various developments actors and the Government.

The experience of CISU is that there is little knowledge of **the functions of the networks**

Hence the focus of the TLV were on establishing an understanding of the life of FOSC as a civil society network in the context of Mali and on how the local CSO partners effectively can participate in, influence, manage and act in these networks.

But the context during the visit changed dramatically as described below. As a consequence many visits and meeting were cancelled due to the security situation. New threats were faced by the Malian CSO's, and the general Human Rights situation took over much of the agenda.

3. Mali National context (as per July 2012)

Mali in a vulnerable situation; a coup, a counter -coup and ...?

As documented in news letters (www.cisu.dk) the unstable situation of Mali was escalating during the visit and especially the partner-seminar (2 February 2012) With representatives from Malian partner CSO's and networks, Danish Institute of Human Rights and the EU delegation was influenced by protesters marching in the streets of Bamako².

In Mali on March 22 2012 a coup d'état eased the way for Tuareg separatist rebels to seize an area in the north larger than France, which they consider their homeland.

The Ansar Dine group later seized the upper hand. Openly allied with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), they have since pushed the Tuareg rebels from all positions of power. The rebels drove out Malian government forces from the three large administrative regions (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal) as well as a part of the Mopti region. Six months later they're still ruling the north and it's unclear whether or when they will be driven out. The Malian military does not have the capacity to reunify the country on its own.

The situation in Bamako has remained generally stable since the coup, despite episodes like the April 30 "counter-coup" and the May 21 storming of the presidential palace.

The coup has definitely had an impact on Mali. President Amadou Toumani Touré, Mali's democratically elected president was ousted just a few weeks from the end of his second and final term of office. It is unclear whether or when elections might be able to take place (scheduled for late April 2012).

The junta handed over power to an interim civilian government, but it seems to continue holding sway over key areas (notably the media and the justice system), and the civilian authorities have proven either unable or unwilling to confront the junta.

Economically speaking, Mali has lost millions of dollars in bilateral aid on which Mali is utterly reliant. The World Bank assistance has now been suspended and the Government revenues are down, to the point that there is a real danger of the state failing to pay salaries on time. The tourism sector is now dead and Mali as a 'hot spot' of international festivals and events has vanished³.

DANIDA bilateral aid (75%) has been suspended too. All types of civil society support will continue e.g. within sectors of water, sanitation and education including humanitarian aid.

² The protest movement of Malian women erupted in the town of Kati on **January 30**. The women were mostly "war widows" of Malian soldiers recently killed in fighting against the (Tuareg) National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). The women were protesting the lack of government support, in particular the shortage of weapons and food, given to Malian soldiers. And they were enraged to hear reports that their husbands, sons and brothers had been massacred in the most dishonorable way by MNLA forces. As the movement gained steam, the women began marching on Bamako, burning tires along the 12 km road from Kati, and heading for the presidential palace overlooking the city on the "hill of power." February 1 and 2, the movement evolved into a more broad-based march in Bamako, soon spreading to Segou, the country's second city.

³ See <http://crossedcrocodiles.wordpress.com/2012/03/28/analysis-of-the-coup-in-mali/>
www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/.../mali/

See blog, which provides a good overview and analysis' <http://bamakobruce.wordpress.com/maliweb.net>

According to DANIDA, the future CS support will be focusing on how CS can support the process towards peace and democracy for example on how CS can ensure activities that can promote dialogue between the religious and ethnic parties to the dispute.

CSO response to the coup

There has been an active civil society response to the coup. Both political leaders and civil society activists have warned against extremists using the situation in the north to stoke inter-ethnic tensions. Amnesty International accuses security forces of doing nothing to prevent attacks on houses and property belonging to Tuaregs, Arabs and Mauritians.

Forum des OSC (FOOSC) has also responded to the coup see www.societecivilemali.org.

4. Civil Society analyses

The civil society has developed rapidly since democracy was introduced in the beginning of the 1990s. Today at village level more than 50.000 associations exists, but with no official/formal status for example of the traditional women's, hunters and elders associations. Newer types of associations are school-parents, health and water committees etc.

In 2009 around 12.000 associations have legal status and 2150 CSO's (Danish Embassy has an estimate of around 4000) have signed an agreement/partnership with government.

Only 500 of the registered associations/CSO are considered active⁴.

There are few analyses, studies and evaluations of the civil society / non-state actor situation in Mali. The following gives a reasonably updated overview as per July 2012.

‘Etude preparatoire au Programme de renforcement des Capacites de la Societe Civile du Mali ‘ Type Fonds Commun (Septembre 2009) By Gefrad and Niras

Only available by request from Danish Embassy in Mali www.um.dk

The purpose of the pre-study is to set up three models of support modalities for the Civil Society basket fund and hence provide a document for the bilateral, multilateral stakeholders as well as for the Malian Government to decide upon.

The study applies a typology of CSO's divided into 4 levels (see chapter 5) and has been leading to

‘Document du Programme Thematique d'appui a la Bonne Gouvernance au Mali (PTAGMA 2009-2013)‘ Septembre 2009 by Gefrad/NIRAS

<http://mali.um.dk/da/danida/god-regeringsfoerelse/>

The document is a thematic programme of ‘Good Governance’ (DKK 75 millions and 9 donors) and provides an overview including chapters on the human rights situation, the fight against corruption and of the state of the Civil Society.

The Good Governance Program consists of three elements as described in point 5.

⁴ DANIDA funded pre-study from September 2009 on civil society funds: ”Etude preparatoire au Programme de Renforcement des Capacites de la Societe Civile du Mali.By Gefrad/NIRAS

“An Evaluation of Malian Civil Society’s role in Governance” by African Development Bank and RTI International (March 2007). Open Society Institute, African Governance Monitoring & Advocacy Project.

[http://www.afrimap.org/english/images/paper/Mali_Civil_Society_\(fin\).pdf](http://www.afrimap.org/english/images/paper/Mali_Civil_Society_(fin).pdf)

The short and interesting evaluation is viewing the Malian Civil Society in relation to four major functions:

- As an **advocate** for representing interests of their constituencies
- In **service delivery** in education, health and other sectors
- As a **partner** with the Government (GO) in development planning, in promoting understanding of the decentralization system and in other areas.
- As a **Watchdog** over GO

The conclusion is that Malian civil society has seen progress since 1991. The strongest performance has been as an advocate for representing interests and in service delivery. The weakest area has been in the role of a watchdog over GO especially at regional and commune level.

“Civil society Participation and the Governance of Educational Systems in the Context of Sector-Wide Approaches to Basic Education” (March 2006) Ontario Institute for Studies in Education by Suzanne Cherry and Dr. Karen Mundy

<http://www.academia.edu>

The study provides a thorough introduction to the civil society in relation to education and the 10 year educational reform program (PRODEC= Programme Décennal de Développement de l’Education) that Mali launched in 1999. The study describes how Mali as the first West African country developed a widespread community schools movement. Between 1995 and 2002, the number rose from 176 to 2344, representing more than ¼ of all primary schools. External donors supported this rapid expansion of INGO and community led schools. The Mali Government called upon NGO’s to incorporate their educational innovations into the education system and to participate in the design of the PRODEC program.

The study argues that though civil society actors played a part in the initial design of PRODEC in the late 1990s, their capacity to play a coordinated policy role at the national level needs to be strengthened.

Concluding remarks on the overall Civil Society context of Mali

The overall consensus expressed in studies, reports among various stakeholders is that Mali is a favourable context for CSO activity. In comparison to other West African countries such as Niger and Senegal, Malian CSO’s have a much easier official process to follow for registration. For example the government must complete a NGO registration within 3 months of application or it becomes automatic.

CS in Mali has various roles and functions during the 1990s and 2000s.

Many reforms within health, education and decentralisation were introduced and these reforms have expanded policy space for civil society. One of the important functions of CSO’s has been as a **partner/ or collaborating with GO** in for example understanding and building capacity for decentralisation, involvement in the Malian PRSP and being part in the design of the education sector programme PRODEC.

CSO’s have increasingly participated in the implementation of multilateral donor-financed GO programs for example in relation to HIV/AIDS control.

In light of recent turmoil in Mali, it is relevant to stress the vital role that civil society played in **promoting national reconciliation** in relation to the Northern Tuareg rebellion. In 1994 *concertations nationales* were held throughout the country that helped form the basis of the 1996 Peace of Timbuktu. CSO's, having an established reputation for their contact and collaboration with grassroots populations, were used to organize and facilitate these consultations.

Since 2000s many CSO's have build **coalitions** amongst themselves with support from funds. Many of them to gather sufficient strength to address state authorities and donors, but as the partner-seminar revealed, their establishment should also be seen as a bottom-up consensus building effort.

There is no doubt that Mali has a vibrant and diverse civil society, but also a very young one and that it is playing an important role in the shaping of a democratic society.

The Malian CSO's self-assessment of strengths-weaknesses-opportunities and threats (SWOT)

In continuation of the above description of the Malian CSO's a presentation of the Malian CSO partners to Danish CSO's participated in a **partner-seminar on 2nd Feb.** where a SWOT exercise was conducted among the 21 CSO participants.

The three groups presented the following **strengths of the Malian CSO's**:

Diversity, openness, good representativeness, good anchoring among local communities since staff is living among the people and thereby integrated in their reality. There was an overall consensus that they were good at establishing dialogue among various stakeholders.

The following **weaknesses** were presented:

A growing concern was expressed for the increasing competition amongst the CSO's, lack of administrative and technical capacity as well as lack of leadership capacity i.e. engagement of and access to leaders in the CSO's. Unclear structures were mentioned in particular in relation to the lack of division between board/political leadership and management/staff/implementation level. Legitimacy (relations to constituencies) was another challenge. Difficult for CSO's to mobilize to doing voluntary work. A general view expressed by all participants was lack of financial, material and institutional resources.

The larger, national CSO's expressed that their capacity to play a *coordinated* policy role at the *national level* needs to be strengthened.

The following **opportunities** were presented:

The CSO's are enjoying the freedom of assembly. Our efforts are acknowledged by the government, CSO's have a 'voice' in relation to the GO, CSO's have new opportunities with regard to the CS funds, Mali is a democracy, and CSO's enjoys a good, solid judicial foundation in particular in relation to the ratified human rights conventions.

The below mentioned **threats** were furthermore presented and heavily discussed:

Security situation is the biggest challenge, the Islamic lobby increases the pressure, and the frustration among especially young people is big due to poverty and lack of employment. Mali suffers from bad political leadership, much corruption, climate change, pressure from donors to ensure results within a too short timeframe and finally the lack of alignment or coherence between the leadership of the Civil Society Fund (PAOSC) and the prioritizations of donors.

After the presentations a discussion took place. Here are some key points in relation to the major challenges confronting CSOs in Mali:

- There was a consensus among all of the 21 CSO participants that the general short period (2-3 years) of project/programme implementation is a constraint in fulfilling the often high expectations of donors/partners especially because the majority of them rely on voluntary staff. This, together with the donor's often very rigid focus on delivering outputs and results was a major challenge. The need for more core-funding of the operations of the CSO's was mentioned over and over again.
- Several of the Malian CSO partners faces problems of conflicts when working in the local communities especially in relation to working with sensitive issues like FGM and gender issues in general. Most CSO's experienced deep conflicts of interests in the communities and in particular the discrimination against women was considered a challenge.

The representative from **DIHR** presented their **experiences with human rights CSO's in Mali:**

- Human rights CSO's rarely live up to the principles and values as the basis of their missions, such as good governance, democracy, transparency and accountability.
- Several organisations suffer from the 'charismatic leader' who often is the founder of the CSO: he/she does not delegate, often monopolizes all contacts, trainings and extern missions in such a way that when he/she disappears the organization disappears with him/her. There is no 'alternance' (magtskifte) at the top.
- Information is often not transmitted properly within organisation and only a few around the leader, the bureau, are informed.
- Many CSO's forget their missions and field of expertise when important funding is allocated to 'new fields of interventions': human rights organisations working on civil and political rights will suddenly develop projects on AIDS or Climate Change because funding is suddenly available there. Therefore institutional capacity is very difficult to build up within CSO's because of lack of long term planning and the race after financial resources.
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The representative from DIHR, who collaborates with and builds up the capacity of two Human Rights organisations in Mali, also presented the following **Key Human rights challenges** in Mali:

- **Impunity** (straf-frihed) is a key challenge in Mali. Human Rights violations are not properly sanctioned, especially when perpetrators are authorities or economically well off.
- **Access to justice** is very limited because modern justice inherited from the French is expensive, difficult to understand and scary (many judges are corrupted)
- **Informal justice** (the Koran and traditions is always interpreted by men, which brings women, especially poor women, at a disadvantage.
- Another challenge is **public participation**: large groups in society are excluded from participating in public life, especially women and nomads.
- **Public education** is in a very poor state, about 80% Malians are considered illiterate today.
- The right to health is not very effective. One of the worst violations is **female genital mutilation** (FGM) which touches over 90% of Malian women and has a negative impact on women's health.

5. The Royal Danish Embassy

Bilateral cooperation between Denmark and Mali focuses on poverty reduction through economic growth. The total aid budget is of 800 million kroner (about 70 billion FCFA) for the period 2006-2011.

In 2006 opened the Danish Embassy in Mali and the two countries have now established a long-term cooperation.

Based on objectives and priorities in the strategic framework for growth and poverty reduction (Cadre Stratégique de Croissance et de Réduction de la Poverty; CSCRP 2007-2011) the bilateral cooperation focuses on **three sectors**:

- Agriculture (20 to 25%)
- Promotion of employment in the private sector (20 to 25%)
- Water and sanitation (25 to 35%)

In addition to the sector programmes shall also be granted:

- Thematic support for good governance (10%)
- General budget support (15 to 18%)

Good governance

The thematic programme on support for good governance in Mali (Programme d'Appui à la Thématique Gouvernance au Mali=PTAGMA) was approved in 2009 (Government agreement in September 2009) with a budget of 75 million kroner (around 6.6 billion FCFA) for the period 2009-2013.

Among the priority areas in Mali's poverty reduction strategy is the promotion of democratic governance, strengthening of the judicial system and capacity-building of civil society.

The programme has the overall aim of strengthening Mali as the **rule of law**.

The aid comprises **three main elements**:

- Strengthening Mali's Parliament
- Reinforcement of Mali as the rule of law through support to the Justice Ministry's strategic plan for the judiciary, support for the Government's fight against drug trafficking and organised crime, and finally through support for human rights organisations.
- Capacity building of civil society with a view to active participation in public debate

Goals in 2011 were:

- To prepare the Malian parliamentary administration and secretariat to be better able to assist the Parliament after the 2012 elections. To ensure that the parliamentary committees have access to a more qualified service.
- To initiate a process whereby democracy and human rights organization made prior to that and so being prepared to continue to receive non-targeted Danish aid.

- To continue to support the Malian State with the promotion of an effective and credible legal system (PRODEJ)

The relation with Danish CSO's working in Mali and the Malian partner organisations

Danish Embassy informed that no formalized 'National dialogue forum' (evt. note fra CSS) has been organized due to lack of human resources internally at the embassy.

According to the majority of Danish CSO's and their Malian partners, they find it easy to access the Embassy when visiting the country/Bamako.

6. Funding mechanisms

Local Grant Authority (LGA)

The LGA has an amount of DKK.10 millions a year. The Embassy informs that they don't have a set up to handle smaller grants. Since human resources are lacking they try to engage in as few projects as possible. When assessing who should receive funding they screen the overall portfolio and decide according to 'gaps' identified. Not only CSO's receives funding.

On website there is no information on LGA.

See <http://mali.um.dk/da/danida/>

Support to basket funds

Cooperation with CS is increasingly channelled through multi-donor funds and can be administered by CSO's, management consultancies or multilateral organisations. Denmark is currently supporting 18 civil society funds in 14 countries in the context of thematic **governance programmes** with a total 390 millions d.kr. This should be compared with a Danish global engagement of DKK.900 millions. Denmark is in other words a large donor and there is reason to believe that the support will increase in coming years (as expressed by Minister of Development in Jan.2012 in Aarhus)

The Danish embassy informs that civil society funds have been developed to promote donor harmonisation and aid effectiveness as well as to improve donor coordination and reduce transaction costs. It is argued that the CS funds are in line with the human rights based approach and that they have the potential to engage with smaller CSO's - also in remote, rural areas.

However, the general point of view expressed during the TLV was that significant human and financial resources will need to be invested in order to engage CSO at local level and build their capacity since there are some indications that funding mostly has benefitted larger and better established organisations.

In Mali the support to civil society fund is called **PAOSC** (Programme d'Appui aux Organisation de la societe civile). The structure of the fund rests upon a pre-study financed by DANIDA where civil society is being divided into 4 levels.

PAOSC 1: Phase 1 from 2010 -2012 has been administered by **UNDP**. It was supposed to last for 18 months before the initiation of PAOSC 2. But UNDP informs that the period had to be extended due to delay in the implementation, reporting and auditing of the approved grants/projects.

Global budget (USD): 3,125.000 USD. Danish commitment: 456.000 USD. PAOSC 1 is an initiative where PTF (donors), CSO's and state join effort in strengthening the institutional and organizational capacity of the CSO's.

Type of support provided by PAOSC 1:

The program aims to build the institutional and organizational capacities of Mali's civil society organizations in order to prepare them to effectively carry out their role as the main stakeholders in the second phase of the program, the Civil Society Organizations Support Program (PAOSC II). Its objective is to improve the development programs and policies of the government, and of its technical and financial partners in order for them to better respond to the population's needs, specifically of the most vulnerable groups. The program is intended to strengthen the vitality of apex organizations, platforms, regional consultation frameworks, and of the Forum des organisations de la société civile (FOSC) (Mali's civil society organizations forum), so they can play an active and long-term role in development and social change.

PAOSC 2: Phase 2 from 2011 to 2015 is administered by the **Delegation of EU** and it is co-funded by Canada, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Delegation of EU. Global budget: 26,281,618 USD. Danish commitment: 7,500,000 D.kr

The objective of the programme is to provide support to capabilities and involve CSOs at all levels in policy formulation, implementation and evaluation linked to poverty reduction.

The following **description of PAOSC 2** builds on the introduction from the Delegation of EU at the partner-seminar

The strategic leadership is a **Board** consisting of **COS** (Comite d'Orientation Strategique) and **CNV** (La Commision Nationale de Validation)

COS consists of: 3 representatives from the state, 3 from civil society and 3 donor-representatives and 1 EU representative as an observer. Denmark is not directly represented in the governance structure.

COS approve the budget, review the draft and the final decision belongs to the EU-delegation.

CNV under COS consists of 5 members reflecting the civil society, the state and the donors.

The structure of PAOSC was illustrated by the Delegation of the EU representative as a triangle including the following 4 levels:

Level 4 Platforms: (practically non-existing since lack of formalization/coordination amongst members prevails). Consists of much formalized larger faitieres. Established in order to defend common interests towards for example the public authorities.

Level 3 Large faitieres: coalitions, networks etc. established by several CSO's. Exchange of knowledge, experiences and communication around commonly agreed issues in order to build up capacities or defending common interest.

Level 2 More formalized constituencies and structures often acting on behalf of beneficiaries from level 1. Professional development CSO's receiving external finances like for example human rights org., trade unions, faith-based org. etc.

Level 1 Grassroots' organizations: cooperatives, socio-economic org, farmers movement/unions, women's, youth, sports cultural associations etc. Often less formalized and self-reliant based on contributions from members. Important role performed at local level.

In Feb.2012 a total of **43 projects received grants**. UNDP informs that the major part of the grants has gone **to level 3 and 4 CSO's**. See list <http://societecivilemali.org/>

Selection of projects takes place upon selection of eligible CSO's.

(Unfortunately it was not possible to receive the guidelines, criteria's of selection etc, since meetings were cancelled due to the conflict)

During the partner-seminar some issues were raised in relation to PAOSC:

- Whether the involvement of government in boards and steering committees limits the ability of funds to support advocacy that is independent of government.
- Lack of alignment or coherence between the leadership of the Civil Society Fund (PAOSC) and the prioritizations of donors.

Some critical points and questions were raised during meetings with UNDP, Danish Embassy and the Malian CSO's towards the function of the civil society fund.

- First and foremost the general view expressed is that it is mainly the larger, Bamako- based CSO's that receives grants (level 3 and 4). The locally anchored CSO's (level 1) often neither have the knowledge of the existence of the civil society funds nor the capacity (language, technical etc) to go through the long and demanding process of applying. (Confirms findings from the previous 6 TLV). The field visits to Mission Africa, Dooni Dooni partner, ASDAP and Spor Media confirms that they didn't know of the existence of the CS Fund. KULU partner, FEMNET (level 3) has recently signed a contract with PAOSC. They claim that the process of applying has been very demanding and with a very short deadline for applications. Therefore they had to hire a consultant.
- When a structure like a civil society fund once is established a new 'logic' occurs. The CSO's who doesn't receive grants criticize those who gets, and those who manage the fund is criticized by all. It somehow becomes everybody against everybody.
- The establishment of legitimacy and ownership of PAOSC is a debated issue.
- Lack of capacity of CSO's needs to be addressed; the Danish Embassy suggested (like during the visit in 2010) that a capacity building unit like CISU should be established.
- Revision/auditing is a challenge in Mali and deserves proper attention.
- A strategy (including roles and responsibility) for the inclusion of level 1 CSO's in PAOSC should be developed by FOSC.
- A major concern expressed by the CSO's during the partner-seminar was how CSO's can reach a consensus.
- More focus on legitimacy of CSO's is needed. How to ensure inclusion of all vulnerable groups in society in all activities regardless ethnicity, religion, gender, age etc.

7. Observations on thematic issue of networks/platform

With a relatively young civil society in Mali the number of umbrellas, networks, platforms, associations, coalitions etc. is amazing. According to the Danish Embassy and UNDP some of the platforms in general exists more in name than in actual fact and they are suffering from lack of capacity and good governance.

During the visit it appeared that in particular two major Platforms have some political influence: Le Conseil National de la Societe Civile (CNSC) which is a government appointed council and Forum des OSC (FOOSC). They are both equally called upon by GO when issues of CS concern are to be discussed. As FOOSC plays a major role and function in relation to PAOSC, FOOSC is further analyzed below.

History of creation of Forum des OSC (FOOSC)

This is a revised version from [www. societecivilemali.org](http://www.societecivilemali.org)

Following the implementation of the Ariane⁵ program (2006-2007), national consultations on aid effectiveness have been opportunities for CSOs, donors and the GO to build a dynamic partnership. The first initiative, funded by the European Commission and the second by cooperation Canadian, French, Dutch and the Aga Khan, were among others, triggered the desire to unite CSOs beyond their diversity, within the tripartite partnership State/CSO/PTF (donors).

These initiatives have highlighted the strong need for CSOs to build cohesion within them that would contribute to improving their participation as actors in multiple and diverse but united in action alongside the state and donors. The construction of the dynamic led independent CSOs to drive various processes dialogue internally and externally including:

- **The shared vision** that led CSOs led by the platforms/networks: CNSC, the CNPANE, CNOP and FECONG to better understand their roles and values according Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 of CSOs and issues development which they must wear the most attention
- **CSO internal dialogue through meetings** which is rotating proved to be the most appropriate approach for the identification of themes and CSOs wishing to be carriers
- **The CSO consultations / PTF in a dialogue** process that laid the foundation for collaboration between these types of players on the participation of CSOs in different sectoral and thematic groups of PTF.

Thus, in September 2007 (at the end of national consultations on the effectiveness of aid) and in September 2008 (at the end of the process shared vision), Malian CSOs and their partners PTF reached two fundamental results:

Firstly: Malian CSOs have managed to build in consultation, logic of "self" which expresses the will of the majority of CSOs of 3rd and 4th levels to collaborate beyond the diversity of opinions or positions on specific development issues. This space for collaboration, consultation and mutual support is now unifying framework and coordination actions to strengthen capacity of CSOs.

This space called the **Civil Society Forum**, which brings together all organizations umbrella 3rd and 4th level, is open to organizations that are already members of these platforms in the Forum.

Secondly, in this unity of action and not position, CSOs have demonstrated forcefully and arguments and they are still best placed to assess their capacity building needs to be able to contribute effectively to development efforts.

This commitment to innovation has led CSOs and donors to provide a program National capacity building of CSOs on the basis of a mutual fund managed within the framework of the Civil Society Forum. And by mutual agreement, the State, TFP and CSOs have established a **joint commission** to

⁵ ARIANE ; Programme d'Appui et Renforcement des Initiatives des Acteurs Non Etatiques au Mali

develop the program. The **Joint Committee** is specifically responsible for formulating the program document and its control mechanisms.

Today FOSC has 63 (46 according to the webpage) members, which comprise CSO's from level 3rd and 4th. Every year a board and President are elected as well as the placement of the secretariat. FOSC is divided into 9 national and regional offices of which the national office is now placed in FECONG in Bamako. The secretariat have 3 employed staffs, but somehow only salary for 6 month? Only around half of the regional offices are running due to lack of staff and to much competition among other regional offices.

The management of FOSC is based on the interviews carried out during the TLV, considered to be very democratic. The fact that the function of the secretariat is working by turns every year is considered crucial for the trust and ownership among members. A monthly meeting takes place with often up to hundred participants.

FOSC is divided into 13 open thematic groups for members e.g. FEMNET (KULU partner) is part of a gender equality group. Other thematic groups are e.g. health and environment. Only half of the groups are 'alive' since all work is on a voluntary basis. The groups are supposed to deliver an annual report to the board.

FOSC are facing some challenges:

- It is only the CSO's from level 3 and 4 that are actively involved in the thematic groups.
- In general only few are active since everything is on a voluntary basis. It is tough to facilitate and manage a network.
- It is a challenge to find the balance of giving and taking in the activities of FOSC. Only few are taking responsibility and the few they are in danger of burning out.
- Far too few resources in FOSC administration (staff, capacity etc)

8. Recommendations

We know that networks depend heavily on trust and voluntary contributions from its members, and that hierarchy is lacking in the sense that nobody can force people into doing what they are supposed to do. The culture of delivering specified products in an effective and efficient way is replaced by a need to motivate people to engage in a process of change.

This also reflects the need for another type of management. While 'management' usually refers to organisations and projects, the dynamics that matter are by far not confined to such institutional boundaries.

So how CS networks should be managed? How should they be facilitated? How to measure the networks' results and enhance upward and downward accountability and HOW does networks actually take place in terms of results and processes!!

It is furthermore important to establish an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of networks – how to build up sustainable structures (in relation to constituencies, members and donors)? What is the need for building up the capacity of networks – what is donor role, and how to support development of networks? How to avoid (party) polarization of networks?

The focus of the TLV are on establishing an understanding of the life of a civil society network in the context of Mali and on how the local CSO partners effectively can participate in, influence, manage and act in these networks.

In light of the above analysis the TLV has led to the following recommendations:

To Danish CSO's

- Inform properly on your values, role and expectations throughout the period of partnership with your Malian partner
- Discuss the division of role and function in relation to advocacy in North and South including definition of which input is relevant and realistic
- Make use of the synergy to reach others who work within the same thematic issue e.g. FGM, climate, health etc.
- Discuss openly the context that influences CS e.g. the consequences of the coup d'état in relation to Human Rights etc.
- Discuss what could be the role of partners in relation to issues like corruption
- Discuss and plan for the improvement of LTA

To CISU:

- Consider country specific reporting to HCP (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs-MFA). This could make the results visible to Danish CSO's and their partners and to the MFA
- Develop more country specific profiles and make them public on CISU homepage as to facilitate that CSOs have access to information about national contexts in the countries where they work
- Develop and deliver more courses to CISU members on network formation and functioning with a particular focus on advocacy
- Consider that CISU (together with NGO Forum) take upon a responsibility to argue and push forward the need for enhanced capacity building of Danish CSOs and their partners to engage themselves in networks
- Promote for the inclusion of capacity-building of CSO's alongside the administration of grants through PAOSC in order to ensure outreach of the CS Fund and to strengthen the level 1 and 2 of Malian CSO's.

9. Dissemination

Experience from the TLV will lead to the following dissemination activities for our members:

1. Presentation of perspectives and discussion on possibilities with Danish member organisations
April 2012
2. Follow up and presentation of findings in Denmark, February 2012
3. The final report of the learning visits, as well as an oral presentation, will be part of the systematisation of experiences in the board of CISU, the secretariat, and the Project Fund's Assessment Committee.
4. The experience from the TLV will furthermore feed into development courses on network formation and functioning

5. The data collected from the TLV will furthermore be made public as a country profile on www.cisu.dk

Annexes

1. TOR
2. List of CSO's with grants from the Project Fund
3. People met
4. Background documentation – see blog www.cisu.dk.