



Report from third Commission Meeting

The Commission on Development and Climate Change held a successful meeting in and around Bamako, Mali, over 27-30 October, refining its messages and getting a better, first-hand understanding of the difficulties poor countries face in adapting to climate change.

The Commission enjoyed both the hospitality and frankness offered by its Malian hosts, who ranged from government ministers and officials to representatives of international organizations, NGOs and villagers during this its third meeting.

The Government

Government officials involved in adapting to climate change told the Commission that the isohyets (lines on a map connecting spots with the same amounts of annual or seasonal rainfall) had moved 200 km southwards in the past 35 years; the government was providing farmers with meteorological information and with rain gauges, and was even experimenting with seeding clouds. They added that Mali suffers from a lack of coordination in dealing with the climate change, a complaint that the Commission was to hear often.

The National Action Program for Action (NAPA) was developed through polling the wider population. In fact, much of Mali's climate change strategy followed the "grassroots" approach that the Commission has been exploring and developing. The country has embarked on a multidisciplinary exercise on capacity building for disaster management, the Commission was told.

The Commission also heard from an array of representatives from international organizations and European development agencies. While these groups expressed satisfaction with their own coordination efforts and engagement with government bodies, they noted that lack of government coordination made it difficult for them to take action. Also, while the government had been working for some years to devolve power out to the communes and villages, it had not been as successful in devolving resources (or the training to manage such resources). Thus the international organizations felt trapped between an uncoordinated government and an under-funded – and thus not operationally efficient – hinterland.

The Village

The Commission's fieldtrip to the village of Bougoula was organized by *Mali – Folkecenter*, a national NGO. The village is only about 40 km from the capital, but much of that is on dirt roads. We met members of an extended family, about 50 in all in a collection of huts. The people included the elders, the children and the children's mothers. Another 60 family members – mostly the young men – had left the village to find work elsewhere: in Bamako, on cotton and rice plantations in wetter parts of the country, in West African capitals, or in Europe.

Climate change is usually described either in terms of gradual changes or increased numbers of – and more disastrous – disasters. But there is also an increased variability and unpredictability of weather that makes farming much more difficult, especially when margins of error are already small. A young farmer told us that they used to know when to plant based on the return of migratory birds or the flowering of tree species. Now these signs provide no guidance. Not only is seasonal rainfall more unpredictable, but also increased heat can rob the soil of the little moisture it has.

The people of Bougoula have diversified, relying less on rainfed farming and more on irrigated garden crops. These they sell at a Wednesday market, with people bringing their produce in by donkey, bicycle or on foot from up to 15 km away. The bulk buyers come by truck from the capital, and can drive hard bargains as they have the transport, and the sellers have only the one day a week to sell their mostly perishable produce.

The local mayors complained that while they were now, given diversification, responsible for running such things as schools and health clinics, they have no money to pay teachers or medics and buy equipment.

The local women raise money for village activities by growing cash crops such as peanuts (groundnuts) and making shea butter. The Commission visited the active and well-organized Sinsibere Women's Cooperative, which had bought its own shea butter press.

The deliberations

By the time of the Mali meeting, the Commission's report was far advanced in the area of the human dimension of climate change. In Mali, attention was focused on the financial aspects and the institutional architecture.

In a discussion on financing, the Commission concluded that adapting to climate change requires virtually all of the activities of development, but done faster and more effectively, with extra resources available for disasters and other surprises. While official development assistance (ODA) must reflect climate change realities, funding for adaptation must go far beyond ODA. A first,

confidence-building step would be for all donors to honor their ODA commitments of 0.7% of GDP.

Additionality should be thought of in terms of additional funds and sources of funds, not as additional activities, as so many of the activities required for adaptation resemble those required for development. A 'front-loading' funding mechanism would help, perhaps through bonds, ultimately financed through auctioning, such as the proposed EU Global Climate Financing Mechanism.

Another early step would be to expand the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to include not only saving lives but also rebuilding livelihoods destroyed during the recovery phase to create a more resilient society. We may need to consider new ways of replenishing an expanded CERF – through assessed contributions or donor guarantees.

For the Least Developed Countries, NAPAs should be recognized and supported by donors as an entry point for dialogue toward an integrated, mainstreamed approach to adaptation; effective, peer-reviewed NAPAs should be quickly funded.

Affected countries must own their adaptation programs as part of sustainable development. Donors should coordinate and agree on the division of labor in providing support in accordance with the Paris Principles, and help increase the absorptive capacities of partner countries.

The discussion on institutions noted that success in adaptation is much harder to measure than success in mitigation (measured in parts per million of greenhouse gasses); so adaptation requires much more cooperation among institutions in different fields and needs more attention. It is institutions at local, national, regional and international level that will mediate support for local adaptation.

Climate change impacts all sectors; so bridges between sector institutions are needed but are usually built as reactive measures in crises (as seen in the food and financial crises this year). The goal must be to proactively build links connecting local and community organizations to national governments and regional and international organizations. Representative and accountable governance is key.

Another goal is to assure that existing institutions function as well as possible. National institutions in developing countries often mirror the chaotic and uncoordinated international institutional architecture. There might be a need for an organizational

framework for adaptation to help international institutions exercise agreed roles and responsibilities.

The Commission Secretariat is establishing a schedule of future meetings among Commissioners, in larger and smaller groups, to assure a continuous flow of work.