



Reporting back seminar in Bamako, Mali, 27 Nov, 2009

On 27 Nov, Commission Member Youba Sokona and Head of Secretariat Johan Schaar presented the Commission's report *Closing the Gaps* at a reporting back seminar in Bamako, Mali. This was the second such seminar, the first was held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia in mid-October. A third is planned in Bolivia in early 2010.

The three country visits undertaken by the Commission had strong influence on its thinking as reflected in its report. The dialogue with villagers, local and central government, civil society and international partners helped commissioners put climate change in context and see the physical, social, economic and political determinants of adaptation at local, national and international levels.

It is good practice and a measure of accountability that informants to a project gain knowledge of how their contributions were used and what conclusions they led to. Just as the Commission had the impression that discussions were triggered among those that met the Commission, reporting back its results may again contribute to useful national dialogue in the three countries.

The Bamako seminar opened with a presentation by the head of the Mali delegation preparing for COP 15 in Copenhagen, outlining African positions and his analysis of the present state of negotiations, expressing concern that the EU position to join the Convention and Kyoto Protocol negotiating towards a single legal instrument risks jeopardizing the achievements gained through Kyoto. A new step is the African Union's decision that Africa will speak with one voice in Copenhagen, articulating positions with regard to emission reductions of developed countries and the need for mobilization of financial resources.

In Dr Sokona's presentation of *Closing the Gaps*, he emphasized the importance of making risk management a central feature of development as the climate is changing, recalling the Commission's call for scaling up, urgency, a change of focus towards vulnerable communities and integration between environment, development and climate change action. While climate change presents significant threats to African development, it also offers a new opportunity for strong action against obstacles that hold back progress.

Commentators expressed appreciation for the Commission's return visit and confirmed that many of the gaps identified in *Closing the Gaps* were felt locally. Its

proposals would inform debate at the national level and help harmonize and coordinate action among international partners.

The Commission's effort at 'turning the climate issue upside down' in order to focus on risks faced and perspectives held by local communities was felt to be important, as well as its engagement in dialogue with civil society. Its ability to bring issues to the highest international level and to inform the EU policy process were noted as particularly valuable.

The view was expressed that it is important to collect indigenous and local knowledge and to confirm its validity and utility through rigorous research. This is necessary not only as far as water management and agricultural systems are concerned, but also regarding the constituent elements of community resilience, particularly as to how livelihood security can be achieved through diversification leading to spreading of risks, e.g. in the way most households simultaneously take part in rural and urban economies.

A representative of the Ministry of Finance explained how deforestation is countered through subsidies of butane gas for cooking while investments are increasingly made into social protection programs, along with devolution of financial resources to regional and local government levels.

In closing the seminar, the moderator concluded that climate change adaptation should be seen as an integral part of development and that efforts at closing gaps at the national level could lead to improvements in the way development obstacles were managed.