



THE PARLIAMENTARY NETWORK

On The World Bank & International Monetary Fund

MALI FIELD VISIT REPORT 20-23 June 2010



Executive Summary

The secretariat of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB) participated in a field visit to Bamako, Mali from 20-23 June 2010, which was organised by the World Bank in cooperation with the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF). The visit included PNoWB members from Burkina Faso, France, Italy, Nigeria, Portugal and Senegal, as well as a representative of the Polish Foreign Ministry. During the visit, the delegates met with Mali's Prime Minister, Members of Mali's National Assembly, and representatives from the local World Bank country office, the private sector, civil society, and donors. In view of the ongoing negotiations for the 16th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA 16), the delegation also undertook a field visit to an IDA-sponsored energy project in Konobougou, about 15km outside of Bamako.

Among the poorest in the world, Mali is a country facing many development challenges. It is entirely landlocked, with limited natural resources. As part of the Sahel belt, about 60% of Mali's 1.2mn square kilometres are desert and the country is prone to droughts. Limited efficiency in agricultural production and under-developed transport networks reduce Mali's capacity to trade with its neighbours or at an international level. Ongoing security issues are also an obstruction to the country's expansion of its tourism industry.

In 2009, Mali was ranked 178 out of 182 on the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A lack of access to basic social services lowers Mali's prospects for achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Agriculture, Education, Energy, Gender and Health are some of the key areas that present challenges to Mali's development. Throughout the three days, the visiting delegation discussed Mali's



development challenges with the government and other civil society representatives, and issued recommendations to the World Bank and the local authorities.

In regard to agriculture, the delegation agreed that Mali's comparative advantages must be exploited. This would involve putting in place strategies to strengthen exportation of products currently produced for local use, such as cereals and mangos. This should, however, not replace continued diversification of Mali's economy.

The delegation recognised that education in the country is a critical issue. Not only is it vital to increase enrolment and completion rates, especially for women, but it also necessary to increase the quality of education.

Delegates during a visit to an IDA-funded energy project expressed their approval of efforts to increase energy access in rural areas to further the country's development. However, they also expressed concern that energy from the plant cost twice as much as in the capital Bamako, while local incomes are much lower. Delegates urged the World Bank to cooperate with the local government in order to reduce costs.

In order to achieve greater gender equality in Mali, the delegation considered that it is absolutely crucial to focus on women's education. Attaining higher rates of female education will be a key means to reduce child marriage and help lower the currently high birth rate of seven children born per woman. This high birth rate is directly connected to another persistent problem in Mali: high rates of maternal and child mortality.

Overall, the parliamentary delegates considered the visit an important and valuable experience to see the situation on the ground. Often, it is this setting that personally motivates individuals to act.



A. ORIENTATION

The secretariat of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank (PNoWB) from 20-23 June 2010 participated in a field visit to Bamako, Mali, organised by the World Bank in cooperation with the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF). The visit included PNoWB members from Burkina Faso, France, Italy, Nigeria, Portugal and Senegal, as well as a representative from the Polish Foreign Ministry. During the visit, delegates, met with Mali's Prime Minister, Members of Mali's National Assembly, representatives of the local World Bank country office, the private sector, civil society and donors. In view of the ongoing negotiations for the 16th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA 16), the delegation also undertook a field visit to an IDA-sponsored energy project in Konobougou, about 15km from Bamako.



i. **Overview of Mali**

Located in Western Africa, Mali is entirely landlocked with limited natural resources. As part of the Sahel belt, about 60% of Mali's 1.2mn square kilometres are desert, and the country is prone to droughts. Its population of 13.5mn grows at about 3% per year and is highly dispersed. Almost 90% of its population is Muslim.

The majority of the population depends on agricultural activities such as herding, farming or fishing in the Niger River for their livelihood. Economic activity is mostly concentrated in areas irrigated by the Niger. Farming and fishing occupy around 80% of the labour force and most of the industrial activity is concentrated on processing farm commodities. Mali's main exports are gold and cotton. Additionally, Mali has invested in tourism and is building a road network that will connect it to all adjacent countries, in addition to its railway line to Senegal. Transport in Mali, however, continues to be a major challenge in the country's economic development as its poor quality hinders access to regional and international markets.

Mali has undergone considerable political transformations since the 1990s and has now established a strong democratic process. To date, Mali has completed four presidential elections. In 2007, Amadou Toumani Touré came to power for his second and final five-year term. The President is both Head of State and Head of Government. He appoints the Prime Minister, whose post has been held by Ousmane Issoufi Maiga since 2004. The Prime Minister is the most senior minister of cabinet in the



executive branch of government. The last parliamentary elections in 2007 were won largely by the Alliance for Development and Progress (ADP), which supports the president.

The ongoing security issues in the northern part of the country are a key priority of the government. The ceasefire signed in 1992 between the Malian government and representatives of the Tuareg movement was not entirely successful and sporadic attacks have continued, most recently in 2006. In collaboration with Algeria, the government has stepped up its military activities against the Tuareg rebels and is also fighting against activities related to Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb.

ii. Development Challenges in the Country

Mali is among the largest states of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) and was ranked 156 out of 183 countries in the 2010 Doing Business Report, an improvement of six points from the previous year (The Doing Business report is published by the World Bank Group and provides measures of business regulations and their enforcement across 183 economies and selected cities at the sub-national and regional level). The difficult international financial environment did not seriously affect Mali's macroeconomic stability, partly because the country is not integrated in international financial networks.

Mali, remains among the poorest countries in the world. High energy costs, a small financial sector, limited and costly access to credit and low labour productivity resulting from low education and skill levels have added to Mali's development constraints. There has been progress in establishing democratic governance, but Mali's government has yet to establish an effective delivery of basic social services, strengthen the business environment and put controls on corruption.

In 2009, Mali was ranked 178 out of 182 on the Human Development Index of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). An improved performance in terms of economic growth has not translated into improved human development outcomes. Almost half of the population still lives in poverty (on less than \$1.25 per day). Lack of access to basic social services lowers Mali's prospects for achieving all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The country could attain the goals of access to drinkable water and reduction of HIV/AIDS levels if it continues ongoing efforts. It could also potentially achieve the goals of reducing extreme poverty, access to primary education and gender equality in primary education, but this will require increased partner country efforts and coordination.

Mali continues to face considerable challenges in terms of health. In 2008, the infant mortality rate was 103 per 1000 births and the maternal mortality rate from 2003 to 2008 was 460 per 100000 per live births (UNICEF).

Mali is highly dependent on foreign aid. In 2008, it received US\$76 per capita of Overseas Development Aid (ODA), which makes donor coordination an important issue. The government of Mali has even established a secretariat for donor coordination in order to help align donors behind the country's poverty reduction strategy. Multilateral and bilateral donors in Mali have also put in place a technical partnership group, which helps to harmonise their interventions and prepare consultations with government officials.

iii. The World Bank in Mali

Mali became a member of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Association (IDA) in 1963. The Bank's Mali Country Office was established in 1976. Together with the International Financial Cooperation (IFC), IDA has put in place a Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) covering the period 2008-2011. The current CAS has two



strategic objectives: promoting rapid and broad-based growth, and strengthening public sector performance for service delivery. IDA's current portfolio for Mali consists of nine operations totalling US\$526.05 million in net commitments, of which US\$316 million remains undisbursed. IDA has allocated 36% of its portfolio to the energy sector, 20% to the rural development sector, and 17% to the transport sector. Financing for the nine projects is divided as follows:

- Energy Support Project – US\$120mn net commitment
- Second Transport Sector Project - US\$90mn net commitment
- Household Energy and Universal Access Project - US\$70.65mn net commitment
- Rural Community Development Project - US\$60mn net commitment
- Growth Support Project – US\$55mn net commitment
- Education Sector Investment Program II - US\$50mn net commitment
- Agricultural Competitiveness and Diversification Project – US\$46.4mn net commitment
- Multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS Project - US\$31.5mn net commitment
- Development Learning Centre project - US\$2.5mn net commitment

During the Parliamentary visit to the World Bank's Mali Country Office, Ousmane Diagana, the Country Manager, explained that these investment projects are crucial for innovation in Mali. He pointed out that there is more work to be done in terms of institutional strengthening and more efforts to raise funding following the international economic crisis. He further explained that Mali has been a source of experimentation for the Paris Declaration in terms of country ownership. This, however, has sometimes caused delays in the completion of World Bank projects in the country. He further informed participants that the World Bank collaborates closely with other technical and in-country financial partners in support Mali's development.



B. THEMATIC AREAS

i. Agriculture

a. IDA approach to agriculture

IDA's overall allocation to agriculture increased from \$305mn in 2000 to \$2.16bn in 2009 worldwide. Around 60% of IDA's funding goes toward irrigation, drainage, and general agriculture. In 2008, following the food crisis, the World Bank renewed its focus on agriculture in its *World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*. Four key working areas for agriculture in developing countries emerged from the report and have become the main priorities for IDA, namely: reducing poverty, ensuring food supply for the world's growing population, mitigating effects of climate change, and supporting economic transformation through the agricultural sector.

To address these challenges, the World Bank has prepared an Agriculture Action Plan for the fiscal years 2010-2012 that outlines five critical actions:

- Raise agricultural productivity;
- Link farmers to markets and help them earn more;
- Reduce risk and vulnerability;
- Facilitate rural non-farm income; and
- Enhance environmental services and sustainability

b. Situation in Mali

Cotton is one of the main crops in Mali, as well as one of its largest exports. In order to enhance competitiveness and performance, the government undertook reforms in 2001 and tried to privatise the sector in 2003. Both proved unsuccessful and in 2005 the government devised a new plan to restructure the cotton sector by 2008. However, stagnant cotton prices, unfavourable exchange rates and competition from Brazil, China, India, the EU and US continue to slow the reform process.

Commercial irrigated farming is one of the major potential growth sectors in Mali. Partly due to lacking mechanisation of agriculture, subsistence farming still represents 80% of the country's agriculture. The country is still not well connected to international markets, which hinders its exports of goods such as mangoes or rice, currently produced only for local consumption.

c. Delegation observations and recommendations

The delegation agreed that Mali's comparative advantage in agriculture has to be exploited. This would involve the country putting in place strategies to strengthen its export of products currently produced for local use, such as cereals and mangos. Access to surrounding ports in the region is very important to strengthen trade capacity and integrate the country with its neighbours. Strengthening the agricultural sector should not come at the cost of economic diversification, nor should it be done without regard to the environment. During a discussion at the World Bank office in Bamako, the delegation had discussed international funds, such as the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which provide grants to developing countries and countries with economies in transition for projects related to issues such as climate change, international waters, and land degradation. Often government officials in developing countries are unaware of funds available to them or there are burdensome application procedures. The delegation encouraged the World Bank to collaborate with the government of Mali on which international funds could be available to the country to put in place policies to protect the environment. Such funds could also be allocated to subsidies to cotton



plantations to encourage environmentally friendly cotton farming, which would otherwise be impossible for farmers in Mali, who are faced with declining relative cotton prices driven by new technologies employed by new competitors such as Brazil, China and India, but also by China, EU and US subsidies to their own production.

ii. Education

a. IDA approach to education

Since 2000, IDA has allocated over US\$10.2bn for education in low-income countries, half of which supports primary education. Since 1995, total IDA funding for education has averaged US\$922mn per year. Some of the main goals of IDA's funding for education are to integrate education into national economic strategies and work with countries to develop balanced education systems with a focus on learning outcomes. IDA's priorities for education include:

- Quality learning for all
- Skills and knowledge that contribute to economic growth and competitiveness
- Education systems that attain measurable results

In addition to the 50% of IDA education funding that supports the primary education sector, another 24% goes towards educational sector reforms and funding for post-basic education is increasing. Since 1995, about 40% of lending for educational programs has been to Africa and South Asia, for a total of about US\$5.5bn each.

In 2002, with IDA's guidance, Canada, France, the Netherlands and Norway, created the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (FTI). The secretariat of the FTI is managed by the World Bank, as well as the initiative's US\$1.54bn FTI Catalytic Fund and US\$115mn Education Program Development Fund. This initiative is focused on obtaining results in primary education in developing countries.

b. Situation in Mali

There have been some recent improvements in primary education in Mali, with an increase in enrolment rates from 61% in 2003 to 75% in 2006. Nevertheless, the country still ranks below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 92% for primary enrolment rate. The enrolment rate for girls at slightly above 50% also ranks below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of about 70%. In addition, the quality of education remains a concern and literacy in the country is one of the lowest in the world at 24%.

Challenges to improving primary education in Mali include inadequate recruitment and training of qualified teachers and the demand for new classrooms and textbooks outstripping the supply. Tools to monitor performance and appropriate resource allocation are also lacking.

In general, enrolment rates (65% for girls and 85% for boys in 2006 compared to 45.6% and 68.9% respectively in 2000) and completion rates at the primary education level (43% for girls and 53% for boys in 2006 compared to 23.7% and 39.4% respectively in 2000) have improved, but the issue remains, particularly at higher levels of education. Technical and vocational training are also not sufficiently developed. University enrolment remains very costly per graduate and there is an increasing mismatch between the growth in some disciplines and labour market needs. Low labour productivity resulting from low education and skill levels is also a major constraint to Mali's development.



c. Delegation observations and recommendations

The delegation recognised education as a critical issue for Mali. Not only is it crucial to increase enrolment and completion rates, especially for women, but it is also necessary to increase education quality. Some delegates considered that while a focus on primary education is certainly important, secondary and tertiary education should not be ignored. Meanwhile, it is important to consider the country's economic needs in the education system. This will prevent disparities between the qualifications of the labour force and the needs of the economy can be avoided. This will also help to remedy Mali's high youth unemployment.



iii. **Energy**

a. IDA approach to energy

IDA globally invested on average US\$777mn annually between 2003 and 2006. Funding increased to US\$1.72bn in 2007-2009. IDA investment in energy has been highest in Sub-Saharan African countries, where fewer than five percent of rural households receive electricity services and it is estimated that more than 50% of households region-wide would still lack access in 2050.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), more than three billion people - mostly in IDA countries - use wood, dung, coal and other traditional fuels inside their homes for cooking and heating. This results in indoor pollution, which is responsible for the deaths of 1.5mn people each year, mostly children and women.

IDA has been focusing on addressing policy and institutional failures that contribute to the lack of investment in the energy sector and is often largest financier of energy infrastructure, such as rural electrification through extension of electricity distribution grids. In addition, in countries such as Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Mali, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, IDA is supporting the use of solar home systems to meet lighting needs of poor households.

b. Situation in Mali

The energy sector in Mali continues to operate below its full potential. Only 12% of the population has access to electricity. In urban areas, access to electricity is about 30%, while in rural areas it is only 2%. Insufficient investment in the energy sector is the cause of continuing shortages and interruptions of electricity service, which in turn leads to low productivity in industries. Mali's main sources of energy at the moment are hydro (60%) and diesel (40%).



Despite some progress in energy-service delivery, short- and medium-term electricity supply requirements remain a problem to be addressed by Mali's authorities, as well as options to reduce the cost of energy.

The Field Visit

The field visit in Mali consisted of a trip to Konobougou - about 150km outside of Bamako - to observe an IDA-funded energy plant still under construction. The plant consisted of two diesel-operated generators (135kw/h and 100kw/h respectively) and connection lines. The project – which will help to increase access to electricity in the surrounding rural areas-- began in 2008 with funding of 246mn CFA and is managed by the *Agence Malienne pour le Développement de l'Energie Domestique et de l'Electification Rurale* (AMADER). Currently the plant is only partly operational, but already it has helped in reducing the use of petroleum lamps from 3000 in the area to 500. Currently using diesel, the plant will eventually switch to biofuels due to environmental concerns. The plant will serve about 75 households in the area, the equivalent of 750 people. The project is audited every six months by World Bank officials and is set to be completed by 22 September 2010.

In addition to the energy plant, participants were also able to witness first-hand how the energy is used during visits to local shops, a radio station and a pharmacy. Delegates also visited a family who was able to buy a refrigerator to store mango juice, which the family sells for its livelihood. In addition, the radio station was able to operate longer hours through the combined use of energy from the newly-operational plant and solar power.



Currently, the plant is operational for 12 hours per day and energy in Konobougou remains more expensive than in Bamako.

c. Delegation observations and recommendations

While delegates fully recognised the importance of expanding access to energy in rural areas to further Mali's development, they were concerned by the fact that energy from the plant cost twice as much as in the capital, while peoples' incomes are lower. The fact that the plant operates only 12 hours per day at the moment is also unsatisfactory. The delegation urged the government to explore ways to avoid such phases in development of other electricity projects around the country and to find a way to lower the cost of electricity for rural clients.



iv. Gender

a. IDA approach to gender

Following a request from IDA donors in 2001, the World Bank adopted a strategy to be more inclusive of gender issues in its operations. In 2006, 51% of all World Bank assistance for IDA countries included aspects of gender issues. In socially oriented projects, such as health and education, gender coverage was higher 69%, compared to economic operations 33%. In 2007, the World Bank launched its Gender Action Plan to help increase the consideration of gender issues in Bank operations in the economic sectors, with a focus on five key markets and sectors: land, labour, agriculture, private sector development and finance, and infrastructure. The majority of initiatives under the plan are carried out in IDA countries. Out of 149 Gender Action Plan initiatives, 89 are in IDA countries.

b. Situation in Mali

Mali suffers from significant gender disparities. Women represent over half of Mali's population (51%), yet the majority has never attended school, or has only achieved a primary school education level. Very few women in Mali reach university or postgraduate studies and leadership positions in the country are rarely occupied by women.

As women are more constrained in Malian society—for example through limited access to legal services-- they are often vulnerable when it comes to civil rights, in cases of divorce, child custody, and inheritance rights. In rural areas, women are the primary food producer, which implies they live in difficult conditions, and are almost entirely responsible for child care. Some progress has been made in increasing women's participation in community meetings and on village management committees.

The school enrolment rate for girls in primary education is lower than that of boys, girls also have a lower completion rate (see section on education). In addition, traditions continue to push girls and young women into childhood marriage. Much remains to be done to achieve gender equality in Mali.

c. Delegation observations and recommendations

Delegates considered that prevailing poverty in the country as the source of many challenges concerning gender inequality. Poverty in Mali perpetuates the childhood marriage of girls and young women. The high birth rate in the country means that young girls will stay at home to help their mothers in the provision of food for the household. This keeps them away from education and pushes them into early marriage. This process is repetitive from one generation to the next. The delegation recommended that the National Assembly should reconsider the Family Bill – a legal document seeking to give greater freedom to women such as equal inheritance rights and the ability to work without seeking their husband's permission - which was rejected in 2009.

v. Health

a. IDA approach to health

Despite reduced child mortality in IDA countries between 1995 and 2007 from 134 deaths per 1,000 children under the age of five to 105 deaths in 2007, 85% of IDA countries will not reach their reduced child mortality targets by 2015. Between 2004 and 2006, IDA projects have focused on training health professionals, de-worming children and helping to produce 10mn insecticide-treated bed-nets to protect against malaria and other mosquito-borne illnesses. IDA financing for health has



averaged US\$780mn over the last ten years. Development assistance for health rose from US\$5.6bn per year in 1990 to US\$21.8bn in 2007. Most of the increase stems from the emergence of large global health partnerships, most notably the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund) and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI). More recent years have seen a growing emphasis on collective action for strengthening health systems as a means of meeting disease-specific targets as well as achieving the MDGs



b. Situation in Mali

The country's high fertility rate contributes to its high maternal- and child-mortality rates. Most health care in the country is provided by the public medical services. The number of private doctors and well-equipped medical institutions is small. Local health services were decentralized at the district level. There were some attempts to establish community health risk-sharing mechanisms, such as health mutuals, but these cover only about 1.5% of the population. Furthermore, the emergence of numerous private health providers generally occurs in rural areas, which are not well serviced. Therefore, they are used by the poorest segments of the population) has made it difficult for the Ministry of Health to gather a comprehensive overview of the entire health system. In addition, the MOH continues to exclude the private sector in its plans and activities.

Mali needs to adopt extensive measures to expand access to potable water. The MDG of providing 82% of the population with safe drinking water by 2015 poses a major challenge for the country. It seems that rural water supply sector investments in Mali have declined steadily over the past years. Only 68% of the rural population has access to potable water. Currently, about 1800 villages have no potable water point and approximately 31% of the 25,000 water points are broken as a result of insufficient cost-recovery, poor operation and maintenance, and an overall lack of good management practices.

c. Delegation observations and recommendations.

Delegates unanimously agreed that the government should boost its actions to reduce maternal and child mortality rates. Women's education has to become a priority in order to reduce the high birth rate, which is one of the main causes for such high mortality rates. The government should also make



better use of the private sector in expanding health services, especially in rural areas. It should also ensure access to anti-retroviral treatment for HIV-positive people. Mali's government must make access to drinkable water a priority. To encourage this, the Bank could make IDA grants available to Mali for its potable water infrastructure, as opposed to loans.

C. EMERGING RECOMMENDATIONS and POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Overall, the visiting Parliamentarians expressed satisfaction with their time in Mali. They believed it important to see the situation on the ground in a developing country as this is one of the few ways to personally motivate people to act. The local Parliamentarians also believed that the visit was important to exchange their concerns and expectations for future World Bank activities in Mali.

One concern expressed on the part of the visiting delegation was that the field visit should have been to an agricultural project as agriculture is Mali's most important national industry with a capacity for further expansion. They considered that it would have been more helpful to see an operating agricultural project rather than an unfinished energy plant. Nevertheless, they recognised the importance of expanding energy access to rural areas and encouraged the World Bank to follow up on the project and report on its operability. The World Bank has also to make sure that projects in general are flexible enough to adapt to changing local realities. The delegation also encouraged the Bank to find ways to lower the cost of the plant's electricity to its clients.

The delegation highlighted the importance of World Bank cooperation with donor country Parliamentarians, so that the latter can better communicate and justify national funds going to World Bank-funded development projects to their constituents, especially in challenging economic times.

In regard to education, the delegation stressed the importance of increasing enrolment rates, especially for women. This, however, should be accompanied by policies improving the actual quality of education and encouraging completion. Additional efforts have to be made to establish an enabling socio-cultural, legal, economic, and institutional environment that would promote gender equity, and mainstream gender issues in national policies and sectoral development programs and projects. One comment which was raised concerning the expansion of superior education was that it should focus on the economic needs of the country to avoid high rates of youth unemployment - currently a reality in Mali.

Mali needs more vocational training in the area of agriculture as well as more research and development. The delegation recognised the imminent need to exploit the country's entire potential in this sector to accelerate economic growth. Mali has to adapt policies to improve its capacity to trade. One of the first steps should be to gain better access to regional and international markets. The production of goods currently produced for local consumption, such as cereal, mangoes, and rice, needs mechanisation to sustainably export these goods. This involves ensuring quality information on improved technology, agricultural production systems, and an improved regulatory environment. Better water control measures to ensure sustained irrigation are necessary so that agricultural holdings will be less affected by variations in the weather. Stronger land tenure and property rights and better access to credit are also important. Horticulture and livestock are promising sectors for the development of commercial agriculture. Delegates encouraged the government to prioritize agricultural development, especially the better mechanisation of agriculture, in combination with a professional education.

At the same time, the delegation considered that the expansion of the agricultural sector should not come at the cost of diversifying the economy. Mali has recently found sources of iron and bauxite and the government should develop an environmentally and socially responsible strategy to exploit these resources.



During a session at Mali’s National Assembly (below), local Parliamentarians expressed approval that the World Bank is taking an interest in Parliamentarians and involving them in their programs and planning. They encouraged the Bank to be involved in parliamentary capacity building in order to help in the creation of a state without corruption, with good governance and well-used resources – training seminars and monitoring of engaged actions are important. Local Parliamentarians expressed the wish to be consulted prior to the establishment of World Bank projects in Mali.



The local Parliamentarians expressed some criticism regarding previous World Bank projects involving the privatisation of local airline companies in the 1980s and 90s, which were perceived as imposed. These privatisations meant important downsizing, and according to the local Parliamentarians, were not accompanied with social security measures for the people affected. While Parliamentarians recognised that there has been much improvement in the cooperation between the local government and the World Bank Group, they remained concerned about ongoing privatisation of the water and energy sectors.

From discussions with Members of Mali’s National Assembly, it emerged that donors often work only with the executive branches of government and Parliamentarians are rarely, if ever, consulted. Local Parliamentarians would like to be more implicated in the work of the international donor community in Mali. During the visit, aid-effectiveness emerged as an important challenge affecting all areas of Mali’s development. The country’s budget remains limited while development objectives continue to increase. Development strategies should be results-focused and adapt to local realities. Country ownership is also a challenge and needs to be accompanied by local capacity building. Donors must



be willing to work with the local government's strategy. Having subscribed to the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, the World Bank has to stick to its commitment to involve Parliamentarians and Civil Society Organisations in its work. In

Furthermore, in order to lessen the country's dependence on overseas development assistance, the government should also consider how to optimise the use of its resources. It has to find ways to increase the tax base and mechanisms to ensure compliance with tax payments - at the same time, the population has to be reassured that the money will be well-spent.

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