

OWNING THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN BURKINA FASO

UNDP supports decentralization and community-level decision-making



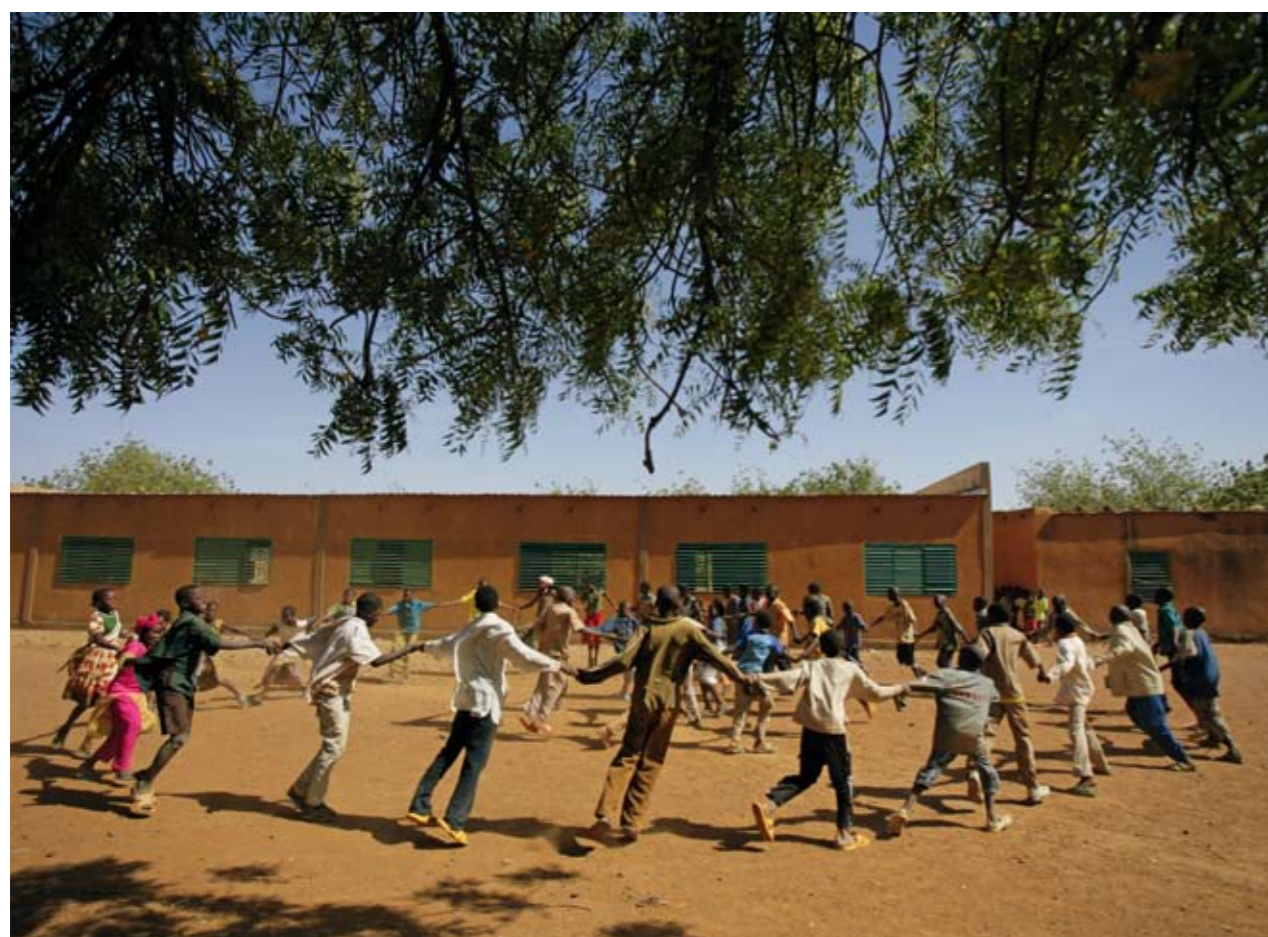
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VISION	MISSION	VALUES
A multilateral partnership to develop national capacities in order to achieve the MDGs	Deliver efficient development services in the areas of governance, energy & environment, HIV/AIDS with focus on a better and more fair Burkina Faso	Transparency Integrity Equity Tolerance Innovation



Newly completed with PAPNA support, the re-built classrooms at Yalgo school demonstrate the community's emphasis on investment in education

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Foreword

As part of the strategy for poverty reduction in Burkina Faso, the process of decentralization entails the devolution of power to the country's Provinces. Decentralization reforms are introducing a radical new agenda, involving civil society and the private sector in areas formerly controlled by State authorities. This agenda offers unparalleled opportunities for local people to participate in the decision-making processes which have a direct impact on their daily lives and livelihoods.

Encouraging the voice of the people to be heard through increased local autonomy and self-government has been at the core of governance in Burkina Faso since the early 1990s. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in partnership with the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization and in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and of Water and Fish Resources and the Fonds Belge de Survie have contributed to the process of decentralization in Burkina Faso since 2006.

This assistance is channelled through a specifically designed Government programme of support to decentralization, citizens' participation and development known as DEPACIDEL from its French acronym, standing for *Programme d'Appui à la Décentralisation, à la Participation Citoyenne et au Développement Local*.

The outcomes of this programme are very encouraging. From interventions in different regions across Burkina Faso it could be concluded that, as understanding of democratic processes is enhanced, opportunities for economic advancement are taken up. Furthermore, being able to observe how vigorously communities evolve and how actively they take ownership of participatory processes when they are enabled to plan and manage their own affairs, a preoccupation that lies at the heart of the governance agenda, has been very satisfactory.

At the same time, DEPACIDEL clearly shows the linkages between enabling people to articulate their needs and live up to their rights and the achievement of a culture of peace, where social harmony is celebrated and enjoyed. With a strong political will, demonstrated by the government through the establishment of a permanent fund for investments by local governments (FPDCT), the future is bright for Burkina Faso as decentralization rolls forward across the country.

UNDP Burkina Faso is confident that supporting DEPACIDEL is the right approach to lifting people out of poverty, one which will continue to pay invaluable dividends and benefit every citizen in the future.

Babacar Cissé
UNDP Resident Representative
Burkina Faso



During a visit to Dédougo, Babacar Cissé, UNDP Resident Representative receives the Local Development Plan

Background



It's heavy work in the heat but the spirit of enterprise enthuses the Yalgo women's group



Poverty reduction through local government strengthening

Initiating decentralization in Burkina Faso is a process entailing a concerted long term effort for poverty reduction, implemented through strengthening local government. In 2004 a decentralization law established more than 300 local government bodies known as rural communes.

Since 2005, local governments in 13 regions, comprising urban and rural municipalities, have been tasked with planning for economic development, health, the environment, education, employment, literacy, culture and sports, civil protection, water and electricity, cemeteries, markets and abattoirs.

Enhancing communes' capacity to plan

In the rural areas, where 80 percent of the population lives, the grouping of the country's 8000 rural villages into self-governing communes was designed with the aim of enhancing their capacity to plan, manage and mobilise resources for their development, while encouraging the creation of commissions making cooperation at inter-village level easier. Communes formulate their own development plans and establish new local institutions.

No longer beneficiaries, now autonomous actors

The aim is to transform those who were formerly merely beneficiaries of local development initiatives

into responsible, autonomous actors taking charge of community-driven investment in physical and social infrastructure. Of the rural population, 51 percent is estimated to be living below the poverty line.

Hearing citizens' voices on issues of rights

The first elections were held in rural municipalities in 2006. A crucial aspect of decentralization involves raising citizens' awareness around their social, economic and cultural rights - and ensuring their voices are heard.

Central to their engagement with the democratic process is the raising of literacy levels. This is of vital importance in a country where only 28.3 percent of adults are able to read and write: a literacy rate amongst the world's lowest.

UNDP supports decentralization through the Government's programme of decentralization, citizens' participation and development (known as DEPACIDEL from its French acronym for "Support to Decentralization and Citizens' Participation"), partnering the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization.

Under a sub-programme, ADEPAC, (from its French acronym) there is a focus on citizens' participation, building civil society capacity for planning by communities, including women and young people's contributions to decision-making.

Strengthening efficiency and transparency in local governance

UNDP's programme comes under the strategic area of promoting good governance. The objectives of this are to enhance the efficiency and transparency of public sector management, to strengthen civil society, to encourage respect for human rights, to help the decentralization process through involving citizens in local governance, and to build up a culture of tolerance and peace.

Focusing on encouraging individual and community participation and local involvement, decentralization is one of 4 programmes. The others are designed to build the capacity of institutions and civil society, to strengthen economic and administrative institutions, and to promote human rights and the culture of peace.

PAPNA's technical assistance in water management, food security

At the local level UNDP supports a range of associations working to reduce poverty through building local resources. One of these is PAPNA (from its French acronym for "Development of Agro-Pastoral Resources in Namentenga") a development project for the agro-pastoralists of the Namentenga province region of Burkina Faso.

PAPNA's focus is on support to local economic improvement initiatives such as water management projects and investment in programmes ensuring food security. Through these, access to clean drinking water has been increased, literacy training has reached more than 1000 people, and health facilities and cooperative grinding mills set in place.



Every day 23 men and women attend literacy training sessions in the Ouagamcé school room

THE UNDP BURKINA FASO PROGRAMME

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been partnering with the Government of Burkina Faso since 1966.

UNDP is the UN's global development network, advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. As they develop national capacity, they draw on the people of UNDP and its wide range of partners.

In an overall context of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, programmes are designed around the key concepts of Governance, Poverty Reduction, Disaster Prevention and Emergency Relief, Energy and Environment, HIV and AIDS.

In its 2006-2010 programme the focus is on 3 strategic areas:

- Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), reducing poverty and protecting the environment
- Promoting good governance
- Combating HIV and AIDS

FEATURE STORY

"You must lift yourselves up don't sit waiting for help to come": village-level animators mobilise women for dynamic local development

There must be a thousand or more head of zebu cattle, emerging slowly, mirage-like, from over the horizon and proceeding in stately fashion across the shimmering sand towards the dam. Their hides are a combination of myriad shades of tan, cream, beige and pinky-brown, streaked and spotted with colour. Their handsome humps sway gently as they move, almost soundlessly, down to the water's edge. They fan out to drink their fill, some standing contemplatively knee-deep in the shallows, reflected against a pale sky in the still water.

By contrast, the scene at the nearby market garden overlooking the dam is one of vigorous activity, noise, laughter, clamour and colour. It is five o'clock in the afternoon, with the fierce heat of the day easing as the sun dips near the horizon.

Women in bright T-shirts and headscarves stride back and forth down the paths between the green rows of cabbages and onions, hefting the bucket or can of water they carry on to their hips to slosh it liberally over the plants. The repetitive trips from the plot up and down the track to the dam make for heavy, sweaty work, the effort eased a little by the banter ringing back and forth between the workers and with their children.

A red motorcycle sputters to a stop by the fence and Mariam Zongo jumps off. Mariam, 35, is an animator for PAPNA (from the French acronym for "Development of Agro-Pastoral Resources in Namentenga"), a UNDP-assisted project working on developing the region's rural resources.

Mariam is greeted by Somsoré Sawadogo, President of the market garden cooperative. They settle into discussion, joined by Fatimata and Michelle Sawadogo and Eveline Konsilga, cooperative

committee members. All four women are residents of Ouagamcé village, one of several which Mariam visits at least twice a week in her work.

Animators like Mariam are trained as "polyvalent" community workers, meaning they have knowledge of a range of social issues including preventive health measures. "Yesterday I gave a talk on meningitis", says Mariam, "but today my focus is on how these women are able to improve the meals they feed their families, and get some cash income, thanks to this project."



Mariam Zongo visits several villages every week to help women's groups build capacity to generate income

PAPNA's contribution to the project followed from the discussion at the local management committee which oversees micro-projects. It is in direct support of the government's decentralization process, through which the country's 8000 rural villages are grouped into self-governing communes with the aim of building their capacity to plan, manage and mobilise resources for their own development. The communes formulate their own development plans and establishment of new local institutions as necessary.

At Ougamcé, the market garden is the latest idea broached by the 80 members of the village's dynamic women's group. Since 2002 this group has been managing a PAPNA-donated mill for grinding cereals as a successful income-generating activity. "We gave the group the name *"Namaneg b zanga"* which means "Everything will work out well" in our language," says Segbo Pategba, women's group president.

With PAPNA help to buy the initial batch of seeds, the market garden committee's optimism is already beginning to pay off. "I encourage them by saying 'You must lift yourselves up – don't sit waiting for help to come,'" Mariam explains, "The crops produced here are important firstly for improving families' nutrition and now it's doing well, selling the surplus is bringing the women cash." The village is located in the heart of Burkina Faso's poorest and most cut-off region, an area where most people subsist on less than US \$1 per day.

PAPNA support also paid for the plot's perimeter fence and the net which protects the vegetables from birds, and for improving the surface of the track down to the dam. Ensuring food supply in this way is important in a region which is proving increasingly vulnerable to recent changes in weather patterns which are producing drought as well as floods.



Crops like these improve family nutrition as well as bringing in cash when the surplus is sold

Rising temperatures and shifting rains, both outcomes possibly attributed to global warming, while putting the main economic activity of livestock herding at risk, also threaten to reduce crop productivity, and could possibly decimate the region's entire food supply.

"We at PAPNA push a little and provide technical advice," says Mariam, "but only after the community's decided their priority needs and chosen the tasks." She adds, smiling, "Everything comes from them – especially the energy!"

Somsoré Sawadogo lists the benefits the women are appreciating, "Everyone is better fed, the children are healthier (but we can put aside some of the money in case anyone gets sick) and most importantly, we now have a bank account and we have the possibility of getting credit for extending our activities."

In Mariam's experience this is a typical progression from accepting initial support to crafting plans for expansion; she notes that generally, as villagers gain confidence they are defining more ambitious projects, with women requesting support with a wider variety of income-generating activities. With the management aspect of these becoming increasingly important, the groups' lack of literacy and numeracy emerges as a glaring need.

To counter this, in village after village PAPNA is channelling UNDP assistance for running literacy classes (see Box *"Now I read every day – it shows others it can be done!" – acquiring literacy leads the way for democracy and self-determination*). At Ougamcé 23 men and women are currently attending daily sessions, using a room in the school, packed closely on the children's benches.

"We'd like to build a proper centre where we adults can learn," says Eveline, the committee's Treasurer. She describes how, at the market garden, they share a vision for technological improvements such as installing a foot-operated pump for extracting water from the dam and for buying trolleys for carrying it up to irrigate the crops. "If we could do that we could easily start growing rice here" she says, adding, "and if that happened, then we'd be able to open up the place and invite all the other women who keep asking us to let them join in the work here." "



In a poor and cut off region assistance from PAPNA encourages self-sufficiency

“Now I read every day – it shows others it can be done!” – acquiring literacy leads the way for democracy and self-determination

Guinguiri Fourkanga, 39, is a tall man with a shy smile. Glasses on the end of his nose, he has the studious air of a professor as he stops by to drop in some papers to the Head Teacher’s office at the village school. But he says softly, “It’s only four years since I learned to read. I was the oldest in the class; there were 60 students, many of them were women.”

In his village in Yalگو commune, Namentenga Province, eastern Burkina Faso, no adult could read before Guinguiri volunteered as the first to take literacy classes. In a country where the current literacy rate is 28.3 per cent, one of the world’s lowest, the campaign for raising the level is an urgent Government priority. It’s intimately linked with the rolling-out of decentralization in the country, since it’s acknowledged there can be no true self-determination when people do not have the ways and means to make their voices heard.

UNDP Burkina Faso, with support to decentralization as one of its key pillars of assistance to the Government, is assisting a range of NGOs running classes like the one Guinguiri attended. On getting through at a good standard he decided to take a test to become a trainer so he could share his skill with others.

“Only 7 of those tested passed the exam,” he recalls. He has gone on to run an 8-week course in his home village, teaching from 8 am till 2 pm six days a week. Formerly, he made his living from tending some fields; his salary now is three times what he earned then.

Nowadays, the number in the village able to read is “at least 60”, Guinguiri asserts, adding, “I read every day – it shows others it can be done!” He constantly refreshes himself by scanning his manual for teaching literacy but also reads newspapers and keeps up to date with information about HIV and AIDS, health and hygiene which he shares with the community.

“I think of myself as an agent of change now; I go to a lot of meetings,” he says, remarking on the status conferred on him by his skills in reading and writing in the local language, and in numeracy. He writes letters for people, often becoming, by default, a mediator in family crises.

He has become highly involved with the committee for the Local Development Plan which articulates priorities for community action. There is a lot of discussion about this and the community’s annual investment plans as they are formulated, important in a context where participatory democracy is still a fledgling and most people have little awareness of the policy and legislative framework of local government or how to access resources.

“There should be more trainers like me because with the knowledge and understanding gained we become better able to talk through things together and determine the right decisions for ourselves,” is Guinguiri’s concluding remark.

He notes how a wide range of community concerns comes before the committee, topics which they need to prioritize for action such as the quality of the water supply, general cleanliness of the domestic environments and public spaces, outline plans for expanding the market, and for repairing the school (see Box *“The future of our children requires investment now” – Yalگو school’s re-built classrooms reflect community concern to equip the younger generation.*)



Literacy teacher Guinguiri Fourkanga says, “Everyone needs to read and write these days – with knowledge and understanding we can discuss as a community and make the right decisions for ourselves”

Protecting the lifeblood of Namentenga – PAPNA helps communities plan for prioritising animal health

It's a twice-yearly job to vaccinate cattle, once before the winter comes and again in the months of May or June. It's early on a sun-hazed morning as the first pastoralist slowly herds his 15 cows up to the newly-completed facility near Yalgo in the province of Namentenga, eastern Burkina Faso, where the injection can easily be administered.

The facility, referred to by the pastoralists as the "vaccination park", is located on the crest of a wind-swept ridge of the Moosi plateau, with far-reaching views of an undulating landscape dropping away on all sides, wave upon wave of yellowing grasses, sparsely tree-scattered. As many as three hundred cows may plod their way up here before the sun sets today, with the same number expected every day for the next few weeks.

The cattle are herded into a holding area with a system of gated metal barriers set in concrete bases. These serve to funnel them, one behind another, into a position where they are contained, unable to struggle or back away, while the syringe is plunged into their hide. As soon as the needle is out, the restraining front gate is opened and the cow walks away, its place being taken by the one behind.

The park is a recent construction, partly financed by the commune of Yalgo. Lower down the hill the old-style model lies deserted, its cumbersome wooden structure toppled over in the dust. These days the turn-around is rapid, a smooth process, today being observed by three individuals closely implicated in its completion.



A smooth rapid turn-around for farmers vaccinating their cattle thanks to newly-constructed park near Yalgo





Livelihoods here are totally dependent on successful livestock rearing

First to speak is Seydou Rouamba, of the local management committee which oversees micro-projects planned by the 11 villages in this sector of the commune. He explains, "It was agreed as a priority in our development plan that we must have a functioning facility."

Cattle are the lifeblood of this area, of huge economic importance in one of the country's poorest and most cut-off regions. The agro-pastoralists, for whom the mobility of pastoralism is the only viable land use system, struggle here to maintain their traditional semi-nomadic way of life and are deeply concerned with their animals' health.

They have to contend with very difficult conditions. The region has degraded soil vulnerable to erosion, in a fragile environment made more precarious by over-grazing and de-forestation - in a climate where erratic rainfall is producing recurrent drought. In recent years, there have been disruptions to the annual pattern of rainfall. Rain normally falls in the months between May and October, the growing season for the important dryland crops of millet and sorghum.

Now, perhaps due to global warming, it is becoming increasingly less predictable. Seedlings just planted dry up and die when the rains fail, and controlling an adequate supply of water for animals becomes very problematic. And then, on occasions – such as the 8 precipitations of over 150 mms in 2007 – rain has fallen in such a torrential manner in some areas that

it's created floods washing away entire villages.

Separated by only a few hundred kilometres from the arid Sahel, the prospect of deteriorating into desertification is the threat that hangs always over Namentenga Province. Helping pastoral people to better understand the dynamics of their own livelihood system and make the right decisions about how to deploy resources to strengthen it, according to their values and priorities, has become even more crucial in these environmentally adverse circumstances.

Amadou Bari, a local veterinary technician, refers to the vaccination park as "an essential investment" for this community where livelihoods depend entirely on successful livestock rearing. He leans over the barrier to stroke one cow's black and white spotted muzzle as he emphasises the importance of preventive interventions for protecting the animals from diseases such as contagious bovine peri-pneumonia, which they're at risk of contracting in the approaching winter season.

Boukary Bamago, an officer of PAPNA (from the French acronym for "Development of Agro-Pastoral Resources in Namentenga"), a UNDP-assisted project dedicated to developing Namentenga's agro-pastoral resources, is fully in agreement. He notes, "The vaccination park was on the list identified by the communities as their priorities for the five year Local Development Plan, along with education, pumps for water, and increasing food production for better household security."

He describes the process whereby these choices were initially agreed at a General Assembly in 2004 organised by Yalgo's communal commission and says, "These are typical of the community-driven activities to which PAPNA directs funding. We respond to requests from communities which are planning, managing and mobilising resources for their own development, and encourage cooperation at inter-village level."

Seydou Rouamba adds his voice, "This year in Yalgo we included the vaccination park in our annual investment plan because we were able to raise the 5 percent of the cash costs required by PAPNA, and also find ways to contribute materials such as sand and gravel for the construction."

As the cattle proceed in stately fashion down the slope towards their pasture, their hooves scuffing the dust up behind them, there's a general sense of satisfaction from the three men watching as they shake hands and prepare to drive away. It's evidence that the system at Yalgo set up for collaborative planning and expenditure is producing visible results and proving worthwhile for all the actors involved – and, in looking at the bigger picture, that this represents a valuable local example of progress in devolving responsibility to commune level and moving towards self-determination and autonomy.

"The future of our children requires investment now" – Yalgo school's re-built classrooms reflect community concern to equip the younger generation

Burkina Faso, despite being one of the world's poorest countries, is a determinedly modernising society, where the words "democracy and decentralization" are constantly on people's lips. Yet in this country there are still villages where no single adult is able to read or write. Education for the younger generation, particularly for those communities in formerly under-served rural areas, is understandably taking on a significance and value today that it would be difficult to under-estimate.

The Government has a ten year plan for the Development of Basic Education (known as PDDEB from its French acronym). Initiated in 1999, this was designed to expand basic education and increase enrolment rates at primary schools across the country. Incremental improvements in performance by a properly-equipped cadre of students graduating annually for the next few years will provide the firm basis on which decentralization can roll out to become a meaningful process.

One primary school at Yalgo, a town in the province of Namentenga, eastern Burkina Faso, is typical in the way its state reflects the growing concern of the community that investment in their children's education cannot wait. "We studied the maps and adapted them to make a new one more responsive to our community priorities," explains Seydou Rouamba, who sits on the local management committee which agreed the Yalgo commune's 5 year Local Development Plan.

In 2006 the annual investment plan was drawn up to include the re-building of a block of three classrooms at this school, the one in the commune which was suffering worst from disrepair and overcrowding, trying to squeeze over 600 pupils into inadequate, delapidated buildings.

The new section of the low-built classrooms, a white-painted concrete block with green window frames, stands out in stark contrast to the shabby paintwork and sagging doors of the two older buildings grouped in a semi-circle round the playground. In partnership with NGO PLAN International the school has been helped by the provision of training for the teachers, and with furniture for the classrooms, which each have sets of clean new benches.

UNDP Burkina Faso, in its commitment to the Government's push for decentralization, citizens' participation and development, through the programme known as DEPACIDEL from its French acronym, is partnering the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization in projects such as this school construction at Yalgo. In this particular case, UNDP contributed funds for the re-building while the community came in with the bricks, sand and cement needed.

Future directions

Given that the national territory of Burkina Faso has been re-organised into communes, ways of increasing the delivery of basic public services and improving people's living conditions are being actively sought.

UNDP intends to continue its technical and financial support to the Government in this decentralization process, in close coordination with other development partners, in order to address the country's development challenges.

Key concerns are:

- The weak technical capacity and poor support mechanisms for decentralized services and territorial communities;
- The need for improved literacy skills among key stakeholders at community level, and for wider distribution of informative texts that guide the decentralization process;
- The need to mobilize resources to finance the decentralization process.

Future UNDP and UNCDF involvement will be twofold.

The first strategic direction will be to continue to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders at communal and regional levels. Past support has shown that the Local Development Fund (LDF) financial mechanism has been an effective tool to progressively develop local participatory programming. This has created real opportunities for promoting local work skills and enhancing citizens' participation in all development areas. These programming and management tools for local development help build strong local and regional institutions, as they promote local economies and contribute towards the achievement of the MDGs.

UNDP and UNCDF subscribe to this vision and will extend their support within the framework of the Permanent Fund for Territorial Cooperative Development (PFTD). This support will be channelled through the regional office of the Boucle du Mouhoun Region, which will be created by the Support for Rural Towns and Community Initiatives project (ACRIC). An advocacy campaign will be launched in order to get the support of the various United Nations agencies and other technical and financial partners and create a

synergy of actions in the Boucle du Mouhoun Region, with the aim of promoting sustainable socioeconomic development in this region.

It is not only a matter of developing the technical capacity of decentralized institutions, but also of introducing the necessary economic and financial management tools, in order for decentralization to become effective as a local governance method based on a participatory and concerted approach that ultimately leads to enhanced access to basic services.

The second direction is based on national level support for implementing the Government's strategy to operationalise the Permanent Fund for Local Cooperative Development. This support will also touch upon steering mechanisms, capitalizing on local development management tools and monitoring and evaluation of the decentralization process through the Strategic Framework for Implementing Decentralization (SFID).



This mill for grinding cereals is an example of a successful UNDP-assisted income-generating activity for women

ACRONYMS

ADEPAC from the French acronym for support to citizens' participation and civil society capacity-building for planning by communities

AIDS Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

HIV Human Immunodeficiency

DEPACIDEL French acronym for Government of Burkina Faso programme of support to decentralization, citizens' participation and development

MDG Millennium Development Goal

NGO Non Governmental Organisation

PAPNA French acronym for Development of Agro-Pastoral Resources in Namentenga

PDDEB Government of Burkina Faso Development of Basic Education Plan

UNCDF United Nations Capital Development Fund

UNDP United Nations Development Programme



