

THE MULTI-FUNCTIONAL PLATFORM

bringing energy, ushering in change
for the better to Burkina Faso's rural communities



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January 2009

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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



With the Multifunctional Platform, UNDP will reinforce its partnership with the private sector, with the electricity distribution and water sector and with microfinance sector

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Foreword

Poor access to modern energy services is a reality for too many African villages. While this limitation generally constrains development, it especially affects the situation of women in rural areas. A typical day for a wife and mother starts before dawn and finishes long after dark, by the time food has been prepared, children cared for, animals fed, crops tended and sufficient water brought from far away sources.

In Burkina Faso, with the introduction of the first Multi-Functional Platform in 2002, a giant step has been taken towards breaking the vicious cycle of gender-energy-poverty. This has been done by liberating time and energy for the most vulnerable groups in the community and in using the time gained for productive and income generating activities. Moreover, by bringing electricity right into the heart of the village, the Platform, literally, shines a light into the lives of all community members.

Time-use surveys suggest that the introduction of Multi-Functional Platforms reduces by between two to

six hours per day the time women devote to domestic chores, such as agro-processing and food preparation. In almost all the villages studied, the Platforms have helped to increase agricultural production, particularly of shea butter, rice and maize.

The mechanization of traditional chores, such as grinding and milling, has also helped farmers to augment their production of added-value products and to raise the quality of their products. As a result, women's income has increased and diversified. Also other benefits for women have been observed, such as women's empowerment, higher schooling rates and better health.

Thanks to the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in cooperation with the Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Luxembourg Agency for Development Cooperation, Aarhus Karlshamn Denmark, Shell and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation partnering with the Ministry of Economy and Finance in a national Programme, Multi-Functional Platforms have been installed in villages in 8 regions of Burkina Faso in recent years, with the vision of a national programme planned for 2009 to establish them in 8000 villages countrywide. In addition, a regional Programme "Energy for Poverty Reduction" is already demonstrating comparable successes for Multi-Functional Platforms in twelve West and Central African countries.

UNDP Burkina Faso warmly welcomes both the present transformative effect and the future potential of the Multi-Functional Platform programme, which is filling the country's energy gap and making dynamic changes to the lives of its rural people.

Babacar Cissé
UNDP Resident Representative
Burkina Faso



Babacar Cissé, UNDP Resident Representative in discussion with the President of the Women's Association in Boura village

Empowering women, ending gender-energy-poverty: these things are made possible by the Multi-Functional Platform

Background

Reliable and reasonably-priced energy stimulates rural development

The Multi-Functional Platform Programme, promising energetic services which are reliable and available at reasonable cost for rural people, is an important component of Burkina Faso's Poverty Reduction Strategy Framework (French acronym PN-PTF/LCP.)

The Programme's focus is to reduce poverty in the rural and peri-urban areas of Burkina Faso by promoting access, especially by women, to the modern energy services which are essential for economic growth and wellbeing.

The Programme's potential to stimulate rural development has been clearly demonstrated at national level, with the lives of 200,000 Burkinabe being impacted so far, due to the installation of 233 Multi-Functional Platforms.

A range of important impacts

Impacts include the gain of time by women as the burden of their domestic tasks is lifted; increased agricultural production; development of income-generating activities, mobilisation of local banking systems and introduction to micro-financing; and creation of employment opportunities.

Holistic rural development of this kind is being shown as not just reducing poverty, but as also capable of stimulating further economic growth in a dynamic manner through entrepreneurial enterprises and micro-projects at community level.

Platform ownership as spurring growth, steering development

There is a clear role for a strengthened cadre of local NGOs in first initiating dialogue and then taking communities forward towards ownership of the Platforms, the electricity and water distribution networks linked with them, and the income-generating projects that evolve from these.

Giving people power to steer their own development, in this way underpins the concept of decentralization and increased village-level autonomy that has been shaping policy in Burkina Faso since the early 1990s.



Poor access to modern energy services is constraining rural development. The importance of increasing access to energy, as "the engine of development" is vital in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to which Burkina Faso is committed. Helping achieve the MDGs, is one of three key areas on which UNDP is working with the government (see box "The UNDP Burkina Faso programme").

Platforms expand employment opportunities, increase income-generation

The Multi-Functional Platform Programme comes under the strategic area of reducing poverty and protecting the environment. It is designed to respond to the needs for expanded opportunities for employment and income-generating activities, especially for young people and women, and for improved income and food security for vulnerable groups. Other programmes in this strategic area aim at supporting development of a national strategy for microfinance and assisting with the sustainable management of natural resources.

The Multi-Functional Platform Programme is operational in 8 areas in Burkina Faso: the North, the East, Centre East, Centre Nord, the Loop, Mouhoun, the Centre West, and Hauts Bassins/Cascades.

Keeping the home and family clean and healthy is easier with plentiful water pumped by power from the Multi-Functional Platform

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



The diesel motor (second from right) powers the red and blue grinders to the left, and the big grey grain mill for sorghum, right

FEATURE STORY

Gone forever are the days of drudgery for the women of Soualigou as the Multi-Functional Platform eases their burdens and lights the life of their community

“There’s the Platform,” says Lamoussa Tendano, pointing as she opens the blue slatted doors of the shed in the centre of Soualigou village. Lamoussa chairs the management committee (Comité Féminin de Gestion: CFG from its French acronym) whose nine members were selected from the village women’s group. In all the 172 rural communities of eastern Burkina Faso where a Multi-Functional Platform has been installed so far, it is a group of volunteer women which has been tasked to take charge of operating it.

A shaft of bright midday light falls on a row of machines on a metal dais slightly raised above the dirt floor. Seeing the squat dark green diesel motor and the vividly-coloured machines and hearing what they can do: the red and blue grinders for rice and millet, the big grey grain mill for sorghum, a smaller one for de-shelling peanuts, suddenly it becomes clear how this so-much-talked about Platform project can make such dramatic changes in the lives of villagers like Lamoussa and her group.

Laali Lankoandé, another CFG member, remembers what hard labour it was patting by hand the final layers of clay on to the shed’s exterior as they completed the building six years ago when the Platform arrived. Could she have possibly dreamed then of the way the machines would revolutionize her daily experience?

Certainly, she wouldn’t have predicted that most of the unremitting manual work for bringing water for the household, for the animals and for mixing the materials for such building work would one day soon be behind her. Like 90 percent of Burkina Faso, Soualigou, before the Platform, had no electricity. “When dark fell, we slept,” says Lamoussa. “Now on market days we get the motor started up at 4 am so we can continue preparations.”

The electricity generated by the Platform at Soualigou

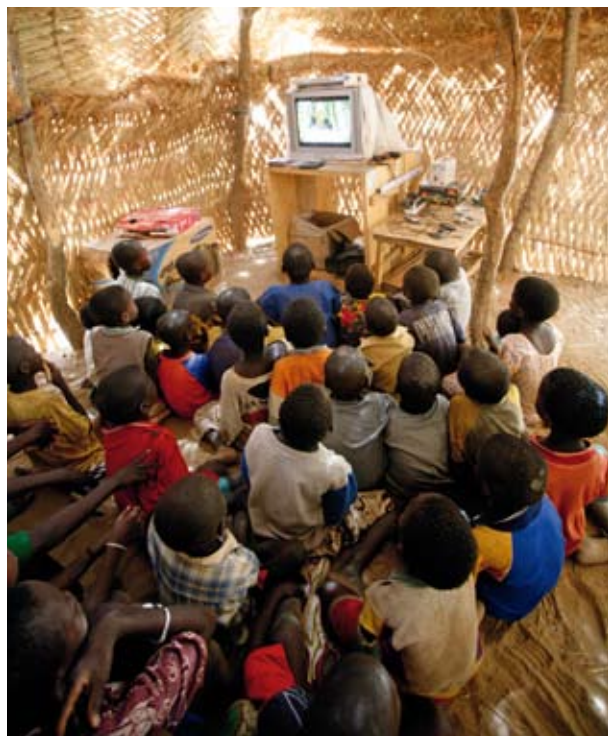
lit up the night while it lifted the community to an unprecedented level of prosperity. As well as illuminating up to 10 houses and shops and permitting the day-long grinding of cereals and nuts, it allowed for the development of enterprises such as battery charging, welding and vehicle washing (see box “*Sparks fly for entrepreneurs as Burkina Faso’s village-level energy deficit is filled*”).

For the youth in the village this leap into modernity totally transformed their daily reality, removing the need to keep girls at home for chores (so school attendance has soared), and giving both boys and girls light in the evenings so they can study with ease. Additionally, the youth club now runs the village’s video parlour, where they can watch the free films and television programmes which are opening a wider world of future possibilities to them. When the adults come to watch football games the 50 FCFA (US 10 cents) they pay finances the club.

In 2006, through UNDP assistance working with local NGO Tin Tua, another leap forward was brought about by the installation of a water tower and piped system. For the 1300 villagers this means there’s a daily 20 litres each of potable water available to them. Gone forever are the hours of carrying laden jerry cans (see box “*Water flows thanks to the tank on the tower*”).

With the price set at 10 FCFA (US \$ 2 cents) for the 20 litres by the management committee, it’s radically reduced the women’s daily workload, releasing too the girls from the long trudge to the source. With an adequate water supply to hand, “We can wash clothes - and ourselves! - every day now,” says Lamoussa.

Recalling the first days of the Platform, Laali says, “I didn’t realize then I’d no longer need my hand tools, my mortar for crushing for example, or my traditional hand mill”. “Nor did we foresee how much we could



produce,” chimes in Lamoussa. “In those days we measured ground peanuts by the plateful, now we get ten times the quantity and it doesn’t take as long.”

Twenty three women belong to the Soualigou women’s group. As the CFG members have been trained over the years through the National Multi-Platform Functional Programme, in management, marketing and how to start up new money-making enterprises, the benefits have been passed on to these women at their monthly meetings. At these, an animator is in attendance to guide and check progress.

The increased output the women rejoice in is carefully monitored, the national Multi-Functional Platform Programme having set in place ways of tracking progress to analyse the socio-economic benefits, measuring practical matters such as skills gained and cost implications. After two years there’s a review to assess how proficiently the CFG members handle both the hands-on maintenance of the Platform and the people management aspect. At Soualigou the 2006 review gave the example of how before, a woman could typically have expected to own one sheep to raise; since the Platform’s arrival she could look to rearing three. Setting a monetary ceiling to categorise community members as well-off, average, poor and very poor, the review demonstrated a 5 percent decrease in poor and very poor households over the four years the village has hosted a Platform.

But talk to anyone in Soualigou village and it’s clear the machines in the blue-doored shed are not just about productivity and profit margins; there is the recognition that the Platform has brought them more than that, in representing a larger vision of a developed society.

Very conscious, of course, of its practical day to day benefits, Lamoussa can rapidly reel off that, “Our girls are freed up to go to school; we women have an income now; we can get credit for new ventures; we don’t have such a back-breaking workload; we are less exhausted and have the time to attend literacy classes; some of us are learning French.” It is almost as though these things are taken for granted now, no longer marvelled at but accepted, along with absorbing the new pace with which change is affecting the village.

A deeper discussion soon ensues though. This tends to centre around abstract issues such as the degree of autonomy achieved by the community which can be attributed to the Platform, and what it means in terms of social organisation and plans for the future, with the village chief and elders showing they are fully cognisant of how the advantages are affecting every community member.

National Multi-Functional Platform Programme Coordinator, Adama Rouamba, describes this autonomy-building as a process taking an average of 2 years, as a community absorbs know-how in management and learns how to plan for development



Even at night car batteries can be powered, thanks to entrepreneur Yarga and the Multi-Functional Platform

as an ongoing series of improvements self-selected by the community. Once considered autonomous, the animator no longer oversees the CFG and it alone steers the process, with the assistance of the local Tin Tua NGO when seeking credit to set up new projects.

The word is spreading in Burkina Faso. So far, it’s a small proportion of the country’s 8663 villages that have benefitted. But to date more than 700 requests for a Multi-Functional Platform have come in from communities all across the country, (to be set against the original Programme’s scope of 400 within five

years, in five of the country’s 13 provinces, 165 with water or electricity distribution networks.)

“Undeniably,” as Mr Rouamba confirms, “the Multi-Functional Platform is delivering real results and generating qualitative change; it’s the best mechanism we have today as a solid basis for economic and social development in our villages”. He concludes, “Before, it took women three and a half hours to grind their millet – now it takes only 30 minutes. It’s the same thing with their task of fetching water. Every day they are saving several hours.”

Sparks fly for entrepreneurs as Burkina Faso’s village-level energy deficit is filled

“This place is dynamic; we’re located on a busy crossroads and always busy with people – but without electricity to develop we’d have a problem. We could wait for 20 years for the national grid to reach us!” says Yarga Timbendi as he surveys his small but bustling repair shop on one of Piela’s street corners.

On one side seven car batteries are lined up, plugged in for re-charging. “We have space for 10,” he says, “and the Multi-Functional Platform means we can power them, even at night.” On the other side of the area a metal structure is being welded and soldered, sparks flying as the mechanic bends over the rods with a power tool which glows red hot in the evening light.

Yarga is an entrepreneur who has recognised early the benefits of hooking up to the Multi-Functional Platform. Formerly, he was a grain merchant with a warehouse but found his business expansion blocked because, like 90 percent of Burkina Faso’s rural areas, his community had no access to electrical power. To achieve anything, the only resource available was physical strength, meaning most opportunities for managing a modern business were denied.

This energy-poverty trap in which Yarga found himself is recognised by UNDP as the major constraint holding back Burkina Faso’s rural people. Daily tasks, particularly for women, are so draining of their energy that they barely have a moment to think of how things might be different if they had cash income. The Multi-Functional Platform’s potential to release ambitious men as well as women from this cycle of frustration is clearly demonstrated by Yarga’s success.

Before his shop was set up battery charging or welding entailed travelling 150 kms to a big town. Now, charging 500 FCFA (US \$1.1) per battery and 500-700 FCFA for small welding jobs, Yarga’s making a living, employing an assistant and able to put his 8 year old son, Etienne, through school. Increasingly, he’s re-charging mobile phones too.

“We’re doing well,” he admits, “but not so well yet that I can afford to pay for electricity in my house – that’s what my wife would like. For myself, I dream of constructing a big workshop where I can have a big workforce and take on large scale jobs.”

“We’re discovering how many entrepreneurs there are,” says Etienne Mouni Kabore, UNDP Communication Officer for the Multi-Functional Platform, “Once the power is there, the committees are coming up with different ideas: for soap-making, for example, and a bakery for bread, even a restaurant and a guest house!”

In response to the increasing demand for Platforms he acknowledges the need now for the Programme to expand rapidly to national level, accelerating procurement and delivery of the engines and machines.

Water flows thanks to the tank on the tower

There are four empty trolleys and more than 30 jerry cans lined up at the pump near Soualigou village in Piela district. They are proof of the villagers' confidence in a continuing supply of water, enough for all their needs. This is something new here. "It used to be that the well often ran dry," says Koka Lankoandé as, soap suds flying, she wrings out the clothes she's washing.

Koka has come with her three children to take advantage of the increased flow to the pump that is assured due to the installation of a water tower and tank for the neighbourhood. They splash in the puddles that dot the surrounding area while she changes to a fresh basin of water for rinsing.

As a mother Koka knows that now, as well as being able to remove the grime they accumulate every day and to wash their clothes more frequently, the children's health is also protected. "There's much less diarrhoea these days," she says, "since we bring fresh drinking water daily to the house, and I use more to clean all around the place."

Across the pasture where a few humped "zebu" cattle wander the tower soars into the sky, taller by far than any of the local thatched-roofed houses. The water that's stored in the big 30 cubic metres tank atop it has been pumped up by electricity supplied by a Multi-Functional Platform.

Typically, such a Platform can power a village's grinding machines, provide electric light for selected homes, shops and businesses as well as pump a community's water supply through a network of pipes into and out of the tank to locations where taps are positioned – as has been happening for the last year in nearby Soualigou.

As well as household drinking, cooking and washing water the ready supply now means animal watering is much less of a worry, since there's a stock against drought periods. The promise of adequate water all through the growing season for the vegetable gardens is another plus.

Each trolley can carry six 50-litre jerry cans although it's heavy to push and two or three of the children have to combine their strengths to move it along the rutted track across the pasture towards home. Woba Abimael, 12, gives a shove to help a trolley on its way and then carries on tying on the third jerry can behind the seat of his bicycle. If he can wobble safely home with this ungainly load he won't be sent back again this evening for more by his mother. "I like to help her," he grins, "but tonight I want to play football with my friends."



The tank on the water tower ensures a plentiful supply pumped to taps conveniently placed close to the households



Future directions

Assessments to date show that the Multifunctional Platforms set up in 235 village communities in Burkina Faso have had a real impact in the fight against poverty in these communities.

Access to energy services for rural populations, thanks to the “motor power” which the presence of a Multifunctional Platform represents, has proven to be a powerful way to promote local economic and social development. This, in turn, has helped the creation of income-generating activities and brought improved access to basic social services in communities across the country.

As a result, the Government has decided to intensify - and perhaps even extend nationally - the installation of Multifunctional Platforms.

In this context, by 2015, the Government aims to set up approximately 3,031 Multifunctional Platforms in the country's villages, including 2,031 with a power system or water supply. UNDP has supported the Government from the very beginning of the process, and will continue to provide assistance, along with other development partners. By supporting the widespread installation of Multifunctional Platforms, UNDP will be significantly assisting the Government's efforts, particularly with regards to one of its primary objectives: i.e. the attainment of Millennium Development Goal 1 (elimination of extreme poverty and hunger.)

To meet these objectives, UNDP will reinforce its partnerships with the private sector, with the



electricity distribution and water sectors and with the microfinance sector, within the context of the country's decentralization process and the related process to empower communities.

Partnership protocols will be established to reinforce project and programme synergy for community-level development activities. These partnerships will be institutionalized through:

- the introduction of Multifunctional Platforms into community development plans;
- the development of microfinance to accelerate the provision of small credit for income-generating activities in the villages;
- private sector involvement and private sector partnership development to establish rural businesses and develop communication through mobile telephony and the internet.

These various activities will truly make it possible to improve local services, and consequently enhance the wellbeing of village communities.

Finally, the project will improve experimentation with Jatropha as a bio fuel source, an initiative with the potential to reduce Multifunctional Platform operation costs, as well as having a positive impact on the environment.



Before the Multi-Functional Platform soldering could only be done many miles away; now local young people are being trained in the skill



“Our workload is no longer so back-breaking these days and our girls are going to school,” says Lamoussa Tendano, chair of the Management Committee for the Multi-Functional Platform in Soualigou village

ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CFG	Comité Féminin de Gestion (Women’s Management Committee)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PN-PTF/LCP	National Programme-Multifunctional Platform (Lutte Contre la Pauvreté)
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

