

ENDA GRAF/USAID/SENEGAL

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

for

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

INTERIM FINDINGS ON IMPACTS

Nov. 1, 2000

Introduction

This report presents the preliminary data on the impacts of the Enda Graf/USAID one-year Technical Assistance Program for local governments. This program was justified by the fact that, nearly 4 years after the beginning of the implementation of "Regionalization" (the final phase of the Decentralization process), one still notes a lack of knowledge of the relevant texts, conflicts of competencies, and very limited popular participation.

The objectives set for this policy are therefore far from being achieved, namely effective local democracy in terms of good governance, active and effective exercise of citizens' rights and duties, and popular participation in the management of local affairs.

Therefore, the activities developed under this program concern Decentralization texts of laws and related laws (national domain, natural resource management, etc.), the management of local institutions (institution building, management skills, lobbying, leadership, gender and development, etc.).

Training in social literacy (exchanges, communication, basic management skills, reading, writing, etc.), planning (research and survey skills), project management (management and monitoring) is also included.

The activities developed in 10 local governments concerning 6 CDLs (local development committees) for phase one, have contributed to increasing the capacities of local actors in the local communities concerned, with clear and real impacts as outlined below.

Data collection was conducted on the basis of findings and interviews by the ENDA monitoring team and field staff (literacy supervisors and trainers, local monitoring groups).

The data contained in this report are interim ones and only highlights manifest elements not exclusively related to the program indicators and results monitoring plan.

This includes the impact of training activities in Decentralization and land laws, management of organizations, research and planning skills and social literacy.

A sociological and statistical study will start at the beginning of November in order to determine the specific proportions of results and indicators.

I/ Decentralization and Land Laws

The activities developed via seminars in the first 6 CDLs of the first year have allowed to make significant progress in the following areas:

1) Local democracy and good governance

Public hearing of mayors on their management activities

In most localities targeted in the initial phase of the program (6 CDLs and 10 local governments) there used to be no relations between the local leaders and communities.

The majority of the population knew nothing about the activities of their communes, the contents of their budgets, the management of lands and the operations of the communes, etc.

Of all these issues the communities only had a superficial and in fact negative vision having never felt concerned about the management of public affairs.

The seminars conducted on the Decentralization texts and land legislation provided communities forums to express their opinions on local government management in presence of mayors and councilors who also took these opportunities to explain their management activities and results.

The seminars actually offered the citizens who had never communicated with their mayors or rural community presidents an opportunity to express their opinions on the management of the communes and rural communities.

2) Improved knowledge and implementation of texts

The seminars contributed to the edification of local actors on such concepts as Decentralization, Regionalization, Local Governments, Municipal and Rural Councils, to sensitizing them on the importance of these concepts and clarifying the respective roles of the different actors involved.

OCB leaders are now attending council meetings

The issue of relations between citizens and municipal councilors was raised during the seminars because council meetings used to be held behind closed doors although the code clearly stipulates that such meetings should be public unless otherwise decided.

This gave OCB representatives and even some municipal councilors an opportunity to inform members and citizens that they could thenceforth attend such meetings. (Ref: **Increased popular participation in the management of local affaires**, for example in the localities of Diamaguène, Dioffior, Mont Rolland, Guédiawaye where CBO leaders now attend council meetings).

As people learnt during the seminars that they were allowed to attend municipal council meetings, one municipal councilor in Diamaguène Sicap Mbaou revealed that one observer even participated in the vote once, which aroused heated exchanges between local leaders and CBO members.

Then the relevant provisions of the Local Government Code were cited to calm down the participants. These provisions stipulate that municipal council meetings are open to the public except for some cases specified in the Code, and that attending members of the public are not entitled to either speak, vote or express any opinion or feeling about any expressed positions.

Actors are now sensitized against tax evasion

The raising of the issue of sources of revenue for the commune provided an opportunity to sensitize participants to the importance of timely payment of taxes.

In this context, the question of whether a municipal councilor owning a stall in the market should pay market taxes or not was also clarified. Indeed, like any citizen, he or she must pay any duties and taxes imposed on citizens.

Furthermore, the issue of the mechanisms of budget adoption and implementation was clearly explained to the population who strongly criticized the mayors' attitude in implementing budgets, most of them saying that mayors made often unnecessary expenditures without any control.

The truth is that a budget represents an assessment of receipts and expenditures and its adoption does not mean that money is readily available. Taxes must be recovered to allow the commune to obtain the means required to meet its obligations. Participants were therefore informed and sensitized on the importance of timely payment of taxes.

Local leaders are assimilating the texts better now

The seminars have allowed municipal councilors to have a new vision and better understanding of the procedures of adoption of decisions because it is the ordinary voting system (by hand raise and count) that was used in the past, instead of the public secret ballot, which makes more sense.

The seminars were also very instructive to municipal councilors who learnt that district (*commune d'arrondissement*) councilors could discuss and send issues in writing to the town mayor on issues of interest to the district council. They also learnt that they must be consulted on certain matters, for which the town is responsible, but are entirely or partly implemented within the district limits, as provided in the Local Government Code, in order that dissolution of the city municipal council results in that of the district.

The issue of the nomination of the Municipal Secretary raised by the population of Diamaguène and Guinaw Rail, which used to arouse heated discussions, was eventually resolved during the seminar when the related Decree was fully read and clearly explained, allowing each and every one to assimilate its provisions.

Many other issues were raised during the seminars including the concept of Commune which used to be wrongly defined with a lot of people alleging that it had been created by a bill or draft bill.

Fortunately, clarifications were provided that the Commune had been created by Decree, including a law establishing its operating and dissolution rules.

As for the operating mechanisms of the commune bodies, the councilors were not able to determine the exact number of ordinary meetings that the municipal council should hold annually although it is also supposed to convene an extraordinary sessions.

Clear explanations were provided concerning the mandatory three-clear-day timeframe before holding municipal council meetings, unless there is an emergency when it becomes 24 hours, and concerning the procedure to follow to oblige a mayor to convene a municipal council ordinary meeting.

The issue of the resignation of a municipal councilor and that of their dismissal by the mayor, as well as other related issues were also addressed.

It was clarified that although councilors can resign, they can also be dismissed. For example, if and when they miss three consecutive meetings with no legitimate reasons or refuse to accomplish a function provided by laws and regulations.

Concerning the quorum issue, the problem lies at the level of municipal councils, relative to the counting of letters of attorney.

As a matter of fact, only physical presence is counted to determine quorum, the letter of attorney being used only at the time of voting. Also, a municipal councilor may hold no more than one certified letter of attorney.

3) Purchase and sale of land

During discussions at the different seminars, a very original land purchase and sale practice within the territory of the communes was illustrated.

Less abuse on land purchases

In **Guinaw Rail**, the different parties used to merely sign contracts that were afterwards submitted to the commune police station for certification.

This illegal practice not only left out the municipal authority (the mayor) but also the government land and urban planning service which have competence to review and approve any land purchase and sale transactions.

According to the mayor of Guinaw Rail and some local actors, these practices tend to disappear after the training sessions.

In **Rufisque**, one notes numerous conflicts over land ownership mostly due to traditional succession modes.

Following the seminars, some twenty cases were recorded and addressed with the help of consultants. In fact, this has resulted in the planned forthcoming creation of a legal assistance office to help people in conflict situations related to land ownership.

In **Diamaguène**, the problems raised were mainly related to expropriation for reasons of public interest and to lack of understanding of the concepts of National Domain and State Domain.

In this commune, many conflicts have opposed the municipality with third parties (most of them traders) over land ownership.

Thanks to the light shed by the seminar, many citizens have now developed strategies to regularize their land ownership (acquisition of land title, occupation permit, etc.).

The seminar has also allowed to re-activate the process of restructuring and developing the Taif 1, 2, 3 and Léona neighborhoods.

In **Guédiawaye**, problems revolved around the lack of titles to lands occupied and previously acquired by means of sale acts. This issue aroused heated discussions with accusations between citizens and local leaders.

The clarifications provided during the seminar contributed to curbing the wave of suspicions and accusations with the announcement that the government intends to take appropriate social action under its poverty reduction effort. A firm selected to realize developments in some localities is working on this. The deputy mayor has given assurances that no landholder's interest would be harmed.

Popular participation in land management

In **Dioffior**, a verbal agreement used to suffice to execute land sales. After the community received training in land laws, this practice has changed to be in line with the law.

There is also a notable change in the allocation of land, which used to be done in anarchy and without the participation of the community. A land allocation committee is now in place, and comprises all segments of the community and representatives of the commune and government services at the local level. This committee is operating and has already allocated land plots. The names of recipients were posted for public knowledge.

Fewer conflicts between farmers and herders

In **Mont Rolland**, a major conflict between farmers and herders over land is about to be resolved.

Following the seminar, a crisis management committee chaired by the *Préfet* (leading representative of the central government) and including different government technical services (agriculture and livestock) was set up. Meetings were organized between the protagonists and no more conflicts have been recorded so far.

II/ Social literacy training

Social literacy training centers are above all forums for exchanges and increased access to good information for the direct beneficiaries who are currently 1,500 in number including over 98% women.

There was a shift from one-group classes to multi-group ones thus allowing the women to exchange experiences.

It was considered that the mere ability to read and write was not an end in itself and could not produce individual and/or societal change.

Therefore the social literacy training program that we initiated was first and foremost a framework for mutual learning in as many diverse areas as citizenship, local democracy, good governance, institutional management, in addition to funding to support income-generating activities.

Improved management skills for women

The acquisition of reading and writing skills has allowed beneficiaries in our 50 currently operating classes to better manage their activities, as they are now able to use calculators as well as management books.

These beneficiaries are now able to manage their own activities (keeping records of household expenditures, family ceremonies and other social gatherings, informal savings and credit unions (*tontines*), etc. In Rufisque, women traders have indicated that, thanks to the training they had received, they no longer lose their goods as before because they know how to identify them by writing their names on them and noting the license numbers of the vehicles they use.

Increased access to good information

The women interviewed have stated that when they now walk past an announcement (posters, streamers, etc.) they try to understand the information and take advantage of it, something that they were not able to do before.

Also, thanks to the discussion sessions led by the literacy trainers, the number of malaria cases have considerably declined this year as the women fully understand malaria prevention and treatment methods.

Social literacy training sessions have also allowed for the management of many cases of sexually transmitted infections.

The training provided by the center of household maids in Rufisque has allowed a woman who had long and unknowingly been suffering from blocked Fallopian tubes resulting in her not bearing a child for about ten years, to find out and start having the appropriate treatment.

There are many examples of women who were able to present problems that they managed to resolve thanks to the information provided by peers or trainers.

Increased income-generating activities for women

Revolving credit funds in the amount of CFA 12, 500,000 were used to support the social training program. and allowed about one thousand women to develop income-generating activities.

In Diamaguène and Rufisque, about 50 parents have indicated that the funds had enabled them to develop activities which generated income that was used to enroll their children and buy them school supplies at the start of the 2000 school year.

In Rufisque for example, the profit generated by the funds has also allowed to set up a solidarity fund to aid members in need.

This fund has helped about fifteen members to meet school expenditures, medical care costs for sick family members, and to aid disaster victim families.

Access of women to official texts in local languages

Following the seminar on Decentralization, a guide on the texts of the law and on land laws, was developed. This guide is now available in Wolof, Pular and Sérère (3 local languages) and taught in literacy classes. It has helped categories of illiterate individuals to know the texts. These individuals can now express themselves in their respective local languages on such concepts as Decentralization, Regionalization, Local Governments, Communes, Rural Communities, Decree, Law, Order, etc.

The knowledge acquired in land laws through training in local languages has contributed to the women's awareness, notably to be able to resolve some specific individual problems.

III/ Organization management skills

Activities developed in this module and related to management, leadership, lobbying, gender and development. institution building for local community organizations, have allowed to achieve a lot.

Increased negotiation skills for local actors

The seminars on organization management skills have increased the negotiation skills of local actors who were able to achieve the following:

1. Public water-supply units and latrines in Diamaguène;
2. A host/counseling center for the association of household maids in Rufisque;
3. A community center for the women in Rufisque;
4. Classrooms built in Dioffior with the assistance of CDLs.

All these achievements were made possible through increased skills in organization management and mobilization (for example in Dioffior where the population built 4 additional classrooms to the existing 5). in negotiation (in Rufisque, household maids further analyzed their situation and identified a project to host girls in difficulty). Similarly, the building by the committee of public water-supply units and latrines built in Diamaguène was facilitated by the acquisition of greater management skills.

Institution building for OCBs (grassroots community organizations)

The implementation and monitoring of this module have increased the OCBs' organizational capacities. Now in almost all OCB member organizations, the minutes of meetings and activity reports are prepared and accessible in local languages.

The module also contributed to OCB networking, as well as to greater awareness among OCB members, resulting, for example, in increased proceeds from membership card sales (case of the association for the enhancement of the value of women's trades).

Training contributed to transparency in the management of public affairs. For example, in Dioffior, schoolmasters have acquired tools to manage the funds contributed by the parents' association thus reducing the large number of conflicts that used to arise in this area.

IV/ Computer training

The provision of computer equipment and training to CDLs has given the latter several advantages:

Increased access to good information

The computers that were provided to CDLs have become important data banks with the storage of the various data on the local governments concerned, for consultation by the general public.

The computers were also used to prepare general information papers at the level of the CDLs, including the "CDL INFO" in Guédiawaye and the "JOTTU: S'AFFRANCHIR" (to liberate oneself) in Diamaguène.

Bills, letters, posters, leaflets, notices and announcements are now prepared at the local level using the CDL computers.

Information has become more accessible at the local level with the printing of such various supports as meeting minutes, activity reports, action plans and general information to be posted at CDL and OCB premises.

Reduced unemployment among the young

The 12 computers provided to the CDLs are managed by a total of 24 young men and women (2 individuals per computer) who were previously jobless. Now they are employed by the CDLs to provide services for a small fee, including word processing. Proceeds are used to pay computer managers and to meet operating costs.

V/ Research and Survey techniques

Improved analytical and planning skills

The training of 80 local actors including local leaders and OCB leaders in research techniques (rapid rural appraisal and outreach) followed by field surveys has allowed them hands-on use of analytical and research tools for their respective localities.

Not only did they acquire analytical and planning skills but are also implementing them and contributing to the population's access to good information.

Increased access to good information

Today, in each of the 8 local governments covered by the first research studies, there is a data bank accessible to the community.

These data banks contain information on the resources, wealth, constraints and priorities of each locality. It is also important to note that this computerized data serves as reference for any future internal or external interventions.

In this prospect, all solutions considered to resolve problems raised are to be translated into action plans (projects) after the training of actors in project management scheduled for early 2001.