

Mali

**Civil Society Participation and the Governance of
Educational Systems in the Context of Sector-Wide Approaches
to Basic Education**

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Acronym List

| | |
|-----------|--|
| ANCEFA | African Networking Campaign for Education for All |
| APE | <i>Association de parents d'élèves</i> (parents' association) |
| CCNGO/EFA | Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All |
| CEDs | <i>Centres d'éducation pour le développement</i> (development education centres) |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |
| CS | Civil society |
| CSO | Civil society organization |
| EFA | Education for All |
| ERNWACA | Education Research Network for West and Central Africa (ROCARE in French) |
| EU | European Union |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| FTI | Fast-Track Initiative |
| GCE | Global Campaign for Education |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Ratio |
| GTZ | German Development Agency |
| HIPC | Heavily Indebted Poor Country |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| IIEP | International Institute for Education Planning |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| INGO | International non-governmental organization |
| IPN | <i>Institut Pédagogique National</i> |
| NEF | <i>Nouvelle École Fondamentale</i> |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| NFE | Non-formal education |
| NGO | Non-governmental organization |
| NORAD | Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PISE | <i>Programme d'investissement sectoriel de l'éducation</i> (education sector investment program) |
| PRODEC | <i>Programme décennal pour le développement de l'éducation</i> (10-year education development program) |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| ROCARE | <i>Réseau Ouest et Centre Africain de Recherche en Éducation</i> (ERNWACA in English) |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Program |
| SCF/UK | Save the Children Federation UK |
| SCF/US | Save the Children Federation US |
| SMC | School management committee |

| | |
|--------|--|
| STI | Sexually-transmitted infection |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNAIDS | Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children’s Fund |
| UPE | Universal primary education |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WFP | World Food Program |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

Executive Summary

Mali is a new (1992) but relatively vibrant and open democracy, with high levels of rural poverty and a primary gross enrollment ratio of 58.4% (World Bank n.d.). There is “virtually no organized political opposition,” and the government rules based on consensus and collective decision-making – although this does raise questions about the quality of political debate (OECD 2004: 15). This said, the country has free broadcast and print media (BBC n.d.). A relatively diverse constituency of NGOs act as a well-established voice in politics (Miller-Grandvaux et al 2002a). Many local as well as international NGOs are involved directly in the delivery of rural health and education services to the poor. The literature suggests that Malian politics are still influenced by relationships of patrimonialism (Danté, Gautier et al. 2001), but offers little insight into the interface between these relationships and the growing NGO sector.

In 1999, Mali launched a 10-year sector-wide educational reform program, *Programme décennal pour le développement de l'éducation* (PRODEC). Amongst the main objectives of PRODEC is to increase Mali's gross primary enrollment ratio to 95% in 2010, from 42% in 2000 (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2001). At least 15 multilateral and bilateral donor organizations support this sector program through a sector investment framework (PISE, *Programme d'investissement sectoriel de l'éducation*), including the World Bank, Canada, Belgium, France, African Development Bank, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, USA, European Commission, Banque Islamique, and NORAD – with USAID as the lead donor (World Bank FTI n.d.). The EU, Netherlands, and Sweden fund PRODEC through budget support, while other donors are supporting sub-programs (World Bank Country Department for Mali 2003). Mali is one of CIDA's 25 priority countries, and Canada is considering provision of budgetary support for Mali's education sector program (CIDA n.d.).

Mali was one of the first West African countries to develop a widespread community schools movement. Between 1995 and 2002, the number of community schools rose from 176 to 2344, representing more than 1/4 of all primary schools in the country (CLIC n.d.; Tounkara 2001). External donors and their funding supported this rapid expansion of INGO and community-led schools. They also played a role in the decision by the Malian government to afford community schools legal recognition, funding, and pedagogical support (Boukary 1999; Miller-Grandvaux et al 2002a). In the design and launch of PRODEC, Mali's ten-year education sector plan, the Malian government recognized the important role that had been played by the NGO-led community schools movement; it called upon non-governmental actors to incorporate their educational innovations into the wider education system, and to participate in PRODEC design, implementation and monitoring committees (Tounkara 2001, Miller-Grandvaux et al 2002a, Capacci Carneal 2004, Tounkara 2005).

However, there have been tensions within the community schools movement from its inception – over the balance between local relevance vs. compatibility with the formal system, and over the development of a parallel system funded by the poorest communities and external organizations (Capacci Carneal 2004; Miller-Grandvaux et al. 2002a). Despite recognition by the government, the community schools movement has been opposed both by teachers' unions in Mali and at times by the national federation of parents' associations (*associations des parents d'élèves*) (Tounkara 2001).

The Malian government also committed itself to a process of decentralization in PRODEC. In certain other West African countries, decentralization emphasizes the administrative *deconcentration* of authority from government ministries to their own sectoral field staff. In Mali, however, decentralization also has a strong emphasis on the *devolution* of resources and decision-making power to local authorities elected by the people (Land and Hauck 2003). Although the shift of resources and power from the ministerial and central state levels in education is far from complete (USAID 2002), educational structures at the commune, *cercle* and regional levels now have responsibility for both non-formal and formal education, and new school management committees have been set up (Diarra 2003, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). We could locate little research on the changing character of relationships between NGOs and the newly-elected local educational authorities, but many INGOs appear to have played strong roles in building stronger community capacity to participate in school-level management in the 1990s. Decentralization has the potential to open up new avenues for local NGO participation. However, teachers' unions, who have voiced their priorities strongly to the Malian government in the past, have been opposed to NGO-provided schooling (Tounkara 2001, Miller-Grandvaux et al. 2002a) and particularly, to the hiring of contractual teachers.

In the mid-1990's the formation of a national consortium of NGOs involved in education, *Groupe Pivot Éducation*, marked the beginning of civil society coalition-building in the education sector. Since 1995, there has been active civil society involvement in the education policy arena, often supported by external donor organizations (INGOs and bilateral). Mali has a national EFA/GCE coalition and hosts a regional GCE network ASSAFE (*L'association du Sahel d'Aide à la Femme et à l'Enfance*) and OEB/CEDEAO, an Observatory on Basic Education for the Economic Community of West Africa States (CCNGO/EFA 2001). These types of new EFA and GCE coalitions appear to have aims somewhat dissimilar to those of *Groupe Pivot*, in that they call more directly for public participation in national public policy-making and give less emphasis to the expansion and recognition of community schools. In addition to NGO coalitions, Mali is host to ERNWACA/ROCARE, an educational research network that provides high-quality policy analysis. ERNWACA/ROCARE played a significant role in the development of PRODEC and has been involved in evaluating the quality of education in community schools (Tounkara 2000; Tounkara et al 2001). In addition, ERNWACA/ROCARE

operated a USAID-funded training and organizing program for national advocacy teams to make use of research results produced by national ERNWACA/ROCARE offices (Toukara 2005).

Overall, NGOs in Mali, as well as ERNWACA/ROCARE, appear to have a well-institutionalized place in education policy discussions (Miller-Grandvaux et al 2002a; Toukara 2005). This does not mean that their role is univocal or uncontested. In addition, we know relatively little about the role of other civil society organizations in education policy processes. Sector programming, aimed at extending Mali's mass public education system, appears to open the door to greater partnership between NGOs and government. But government-led expansion might also threaten the autonomy of the NGO-led community schools movement. The sectoral reform program raises the need for stronger cross-community linkages between civil society organizations and for greater civil society capacity within recently-established local educational authorities. The literature offers little indication of the way in which NGOs and other civil society organizations are managing these competing demands.

Section 1: Background

Economic situation

Mali is a landlocked country in West Africa, sharing borders with Mauritania, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Niger and Senegal. It is home to 11.6 million predominantly rural people (World Bank n.d.), although 65% of its land is desert or semi-desert (CIA n.d.). Historically, Mali's peoples have played an important role in the history of West Africa, building thriving societies, kingdoms and empires (CIDA 2000). Numerous cities, Timbuktu, Djenné, Gao and Ségou, "were major centres of technological development (weaving, metal work, architecture, etc.) and cultural development (universities, research centres, development of oral literature and Islamic studies, growth of the arts and culture" (CIDA 2000: 3). Mali's ethnic groups include Mande 50% (Bambara, Malinke, Soninke), Peul 17%, Voltaic 12%, Songhai 6%, Tuareg and Moor 10% (CIA n.d.). Animal breeders (Tuaregs, Arabs, Peuls) live in the edges of the desert or in the Northern, Sahel region, and farmers inhabit the central and southern parts of the country (CIDA 2000). The areas along the Niger and Senegal rivers and their tributaries are home to fishermen (CIDA 2000). 80% of the labor force is in agriculture and fishing, while industrial activity is focused on the processing of agricultural commodities (CIA n.d.).

Mali's "economic performance is fragile and vulnerable to climatic conditions, fluctuating terms of trade, dependence on ports in neighboring countries, concentration of its exports in three primary sector products (gold, cotton, livestock), and weak administrative capability" (World Bank n.d.). Instability in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire has also had a negative impact upon Mali's economy (OECD 2004). Mali is dependent upon foreign aid, having received an average of 9% of its GDP in official development assistance per year, between 2000 and 2004 (World Bank 2003). Called a "donor darling" (World Bank FTI n.d.), Mali has been granted US \$523 million debt relief over 30 years, under the HIPC initiative (CIDA 2000). Concerning Mali's donors, Aid Harmonization and Alignment reports the following:

The March 2004 roundtable meeting confirmed donors' commitment to Mali's PRSP with \$2.4 billion in aid pledged by the country's development partners for the coming three years. Multilateral donors supporting the government's poverty reduction strategy are: The European Union (Mali's largest donor in this area), the United Nations System (including the activities of the UNDP, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, FAO, WFP and UNAIDS), the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Islamic Development Bank, Africa Development Bank, and the West African Development Bank. Bilateral donors active in the country are: France, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Sweden (since 2000 and currently providing budget support with technical assistance). The United States through USAID does not give direct government support, but channels funds through American NGOs in four areas: health, democracy (large decentralization and civil society program including capacity building), education, economic growth, including trade promotion, financial sector development (notably micro finance), and agricultural promotion (highlighting the animal feed industry).¹

CIDA identifies Mali amongst its twenty-five priority countries, with a bilateral program averaging CDN \$16 million annually, and another \$16 million supporting programs of CIDA partners such as the UNDP and Canadian development NGOs (CIDA n.d). Donors to Malian education include the World Bank, Canada, Belgium, France, African Development Bank, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, USA, European Commission, Islamic Development Bank, and NORAD (World Bank FTI n.d.). Mali was expected to be in the Fast Track Initiative in early 2006 (World Bank FTI n.d.).

According to CIDA's 2000-2010 *Mali Policy Framework*, poverty reduction is the country's most important current challenge (CIDA 2000). The Malian PRSP states that "63.8% of the population live in poverty and 21% in extreme poverty. While poverty is mainly a rural phenomenon, it is increasing in the large towns as a result of the deteriorating labor market and migration" (Government of Mali 2002: 1). Mali's 2004 illiteracy rate was 71.3% (OECD 2004); infant mortality, 121/1000;² and life expectancy, 47 years.³ Women in particular suffer the effects of poverty: the median age at which

¹ Quoted from the Aid Harmonization website, consulted January 14, 2006, at: http://www.aidharmonization.org/ah-cla/ah-browser/index-abridged?area_list=H-TBD&master=master&advanced_view_p=f&page_no=3

² US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2828.htm> (September 2005)

³ US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2828.htm> (September 2005)

girls marry is 15.7 years; rural women have an average fertility rate of 7.3 children; hardly 5% of them use any form of contraception; and 1 in 10 women die in childbirth (CIDA 2000).

Political Situation

Malian political context

Previously called French Sudan, Mali gained its independence from France in 1960. Thereafter, the country experienced the rule of a one-party socialist state under Modibo Keita (1960-1968), followed by two decades of military dictatorship under Moussa Traoré (1968-1991). Traoré paid lip-service to improving democratic processes, but when civilians began increasingly to demand greater participation in national governance, his regime responded with violent repression (Capacci Carneal 2004). In March 1991, close to 100 students were killed by the army and riot police during pro-democracy movements, however, civilians ultimately prevailed, and the Traoré regime was deposed in a coup that same year (Boukary 1999).⁴ A committee comprised of civilian and military representatives was then established to oversee the country's political transition, and in 1992, Alpha Konaré became the first Malian president elected in a democratic environment with multiple parties (Boukary 1999).

Mali's current president, elected in 2002, is former army general, Amadou Toumani Touré, popularly known as "ATT."⁵ While he has no party, Touré is backed by "support groups and minor parties" (BBC n.d.). Today, Mali is called a "vibrant" (CIDA n.d.) multiparty democracy, and only prohibits parties from organizing on ethnic, religious, regional, or gender bases (CIA n.d.). Malian media enjoy a high degree of freedom (BBC n.d.). There is no organized political opposition and the government rules based on consensus and collective decision-making (OECD 2004) – although this does

⁴ In 1999, Traoré was sentenced to death on corruption charges, but his sentence was changed to life imprisonment by President Konaré. |

raise questions about the quality of political debate (Danté, Gautier, Marouani and Raffinot 2001). Nevertheless, the present government is commended as “committed to democracy, economic reform, free market policies, regional integration, and international cooperation on peacekeeping and counter-terrorism activities” (CIA n.d.). Danté, Gautier et al (2001:6) summarize the Malian political context as follows:

From an institutional point of view, Mali respects most of the rules of a modern democracy. It is characterized by a plural political system, freedom of the press, separation of powers, existence of all the institutions we find in a modern democracy, plural trade unions and the emergence of various NGOs and a civil society. Human rights are respected [...] However, this young democracy has yet to overcome the patrimonial structure that is its political heritage. The main questions relate to the weakness of the opposition and concerns about the neutrality of the administration.

Decentralization and governance structures

One feature of the Malian political context which receives attention in the literature is its reform of governance via decentralization. This reform is rooted in the democratic transition of the 1990's, and its "overwhelming consensus among Malians on decentralization of governance as a structural goal" (USAID 2002:7). Mali's current governance structure consists of four levels: national, regional, *cercle* and commune (Government of Mali 2002; Diarra 2003; MSI 2004). The decentralized structures, or *collectivités territoriales*, at those levels are: eight regional assemblies (*assemblées regionales*), fifty-two *cercle* councils (*conseils de cercle*), and seven-hundred and three urban and rural communal councils (*conseils communaux*) (Government of Mali 2002; Diarra 2003; Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004).⁶ Bamako, Mali's capital, is its own separate district (Diarra 2003).

In contrast to other West African nations, Mali is recognized for its emphasis on devolution, and not simply deconcentration, within its decentralization reforms.

Deconcentration involves the transfer of authority from government ministries *to their*

⁵ Touré has been nicknamed the “soldier of democracy” for participating in the overthrow of Traoré in 1991 and then handing over power to an elected civilian government in 1992. Well-known for his work in UN peacekeeping missions in Africa, Touré surprised the public by later running for president (BBC n.d.).

⁶ The commune councils are elected by constituents of the commune; the *cercle* councils, by their commune councils; and the regional assemblies, by their *cercle* councils (Diarra 2003).

own sectoral field staff (Gershberg and Winkler 2003; Land and Hauck 2003; Ouedraogo 2003). Devolution, on the other hand, emphasizes the actual transfer of resources and decision-making power *to local authorities elected by the people*, and not just to lower echelons of ministry staff (Diarra 2003; Land and Hauck 2003). While Mali's decentralization reforms include both deconcentration and devolution, the latter is central to Mali's agenda for institutional reform, and is currently in a more advanced state of implementation than the former (Land and Hauck 2003). This said, the shift of resources away from the ministerial and central state levels is far from complete (USAID 2002, Raffinot, Muguet and Alhousseynou 2003).

Section 2: Current Education Policy Landscape

Overview of the Malian Education System

Basic education demographics⁷

-*Gross enrollment ratio*: Primary 58.4 (2003); Secondary 19.5 (2003); Tertiary 2.5 (2003)

-*Primary completion rate*: 40.4% (2003)

-*Total spending as % of GDP*: 3.0 (2000)

-*Ratio of teachers to pupils*: Primary 57.3 (2003)

-*Private sector enrollment share*: Primary level 21.9% (2000)

-*Gender Parity Index*: Gross enrollment ratio in primary and secondary 71.3 (2002)

-*Progression to secondary level*: 54.2% (2003)

Major issues in basic education

Concerning girls' education, only 40% of girls finish 6th grade (Ministère de l'Education Nationale du Mali 2004). Fewer girls than boys finish the 5th and 6th years of school, due to a lack of financial resources, to religious and cultural practices (e.g. early marriage) and to long traveling distances to schools (WID Tech 2002: 7). Although the

⁷ These figures are "the most recent data available within two years of the year indicated," World Bank *Summary Education Profile*, retrieved February 23, 2006, from: <http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/SummaryEducationProfiles/CountryData/GetShowData.asp?sCtry=MLI,Mali>.

rate of girls' education in Mali more than doubled from 19% in 1990 to 50% in 2000, some parts of the country still lag far behind the overall average (WID Tech 2002).

In addition to gender inequities, Mali faces other major challenges in basic education, such as achieving universal primary education; regional and urban/rural disparities; improving access to the *second* cycle of basic education (i.e. the last 3 years of the 9-year primary cycle); and recruitment and training of sufficient teachers. 65% of teachers in the first cycle of primary are contractual, and have only an initial 90-day training (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004).

Improving education quality, however, poses the biggest challenge of all. Measures needed to accomplish this include: on-going training of teachers; strengthening the means, frequency and quality of support to schools provided by decentralized education governance structures; integrating life skills into school programs; inclusion of preventive health education on STIs, HIV/AIDS, malaria and unwanted pregnancies; widespread adoption of the new curriculum; supplying adequate textbooks, teaching materials and programs in support of reading; careful monitoring of girls and children in difficulty; and continued reinforcement of the gender approach in the Ministry of National Education (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004).

PRODEC, Mali's education sector program

A milestone for Malian education reform is PRODEC (*Programme décennal de développement de l'éducation*), the 10-year education sector program, launched in 1999. PRODEC is being implemented through PISE (*Programme d'investissement sectoriel de l'éducation*), an education sector investment program with three phases, 2001-2004, 2005-2007 and 2008-2010.⁸ Referred to as a response to Education for All, PRODEC's objectives include:

-achieving a primary GER of 95% in 2010 and reduced disparities between regions and between urban and rural areas

⁸ This is drawn from the Government of Mali's Ministry of Education website, retrieved February 23, 2006, at http://www.education.gov.ml/cgi-bin/view_article.pl?id=43

- substantially increasing the gross enrollment ratio of girls and reducing gender disparities; raising the GER of girls to 93% in 2010
- improving the quality of basic education
- by 2010, allowing unschooled and out-of-school youth, from 9-18 years old, to have access to at least minimum learning opportunities
- increasing the adult literacy rate to 50% in 2010, and to at least 40% for women (Ministère de l'Education Nationale du Mali 2004).

The Malian PRSP explains PRODEC as follows:

The reforms targeted by [PRODEC] are centered around the link between school and community. [...] The basic objective comprises: a village, a school and/or a [Development Education Centre] or CED [*Centre d'Education pour le Développement*],⁹ and the decision to use maternal languages in the education system, to decentralize the management of the system, to develop a genuine system of school maintenance, and to move as swiftly as possible towards universal formal education (Government of Mali 2002: 55).

Both PRODEC and its sector investment program, PISE, seek to include components that are “most favorable to education and training of the poor and disadvantaged groups” (Government of Mali 2002: 55). PRODEC also seeks a high level of civil society participation in the design of education programs; INGO and NGO representatives participate in committees that monitor its progress (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a).

Structure of the education system¹⁰

Since 2000, Mali has had just one Minister of Education, but there are two ministries: one for basic education and one for secondary, higher education and scientific research (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). Amongst the principal categories of school in Mali are public, catholic, community, private secular schools and medersas¹¹ (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000).

⁹ In other words, each village should have at least a school or a CED.

¹⁰ Unless otherwise indicated, this information is drawn from a 2000 IIEP document by Cissé, Diarra et al..

¹¹ Medersas "teach religious and secular subjects in Arabic [whereas...] Koranic schools are designed to teach the Koran through memorization in Arabic" (Capacci Carneal 2004: 94).

The education system is sub-divided into formal and non formal education, as follows:

a) **Formal education** (under the *Direction Nationale de l'enseignement fondamental*, DNEF) includes:

- preschool and special education
- basic education, which consists of 6 years for the first cycle (access at 7-8 years of age), at the end of which is the CFEPCEF (*certificat de fin d'études du premier cycle de l'enseignement fondamental*), and a second cycle of 3 years which gives access to secondary education, via the DEF (*diplome d'études fondamentales*)
- secondary & higher education

b) **Non-formal education** is considered basic education. NFE is under the *Direction nationale de l'alphabétisation et de la linguistique appliquée* (DNAFLA) and includes:
-centres d'éducation au développement (development education centres) or CEDs. These centres provide a 4-year cycle without a diploma (access for 9-14 years of age)
-adult literacy and post-literacy centres (6-9 month cycles).

Mali's community schools are intended for pupils 6-12 years of age, and the Development Education Centres or CEDs (*Centres d'éducation pour le développement*), for pupils 9-15 years of age. CEDs are intended to provide education to people who had either left school prematurely or been educated outside the formal system, such as at Koranic schools (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). The Malian state has committed to ensuring the training, technical supervision and monitoring of community schools and CEDs (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000), through the *Direction nationale de l'éducation de base* (DNEB), their regional *directions* and their local *inspections*.

As with Mali's overall governance reforms, the transfer of skills, material and human resources to communities is happening progressively within the education sector, under PRODEC (CLIC n.d.). Decentralized structures, all of whom must implement PRODEC/PISE, are as follows (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004):

- At the regional level, *Académies d'Enseignement* (AE)
- At the cercle level, *Centres d'Animation Pédagogique* (CAP)
- At the commune level, *Direction d'études* (DE)

In a process of deconcentration, these structures had responsibility transferred to them in 2002 for both formal and non formal education (Ministère de l'Éducation

Nationale du Mali 2004). They are starting to get financing for investing, recruiting, and paying a part of teachers' salaries, and "bottom-up" planning is taking place (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). New school management committees have also been created within this reform (Diarra 2003).

History of the Malian education system

The Malian education system was established in 1962 and immediately undertook a major reform, aiming to root basic education in Malian and African cultural values (Cissé, Diarra et al 2000). In the 1970's and 1980's, however, the system lacked vision for policy-making and strategy formation, and suffered under political, economic and social crises (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). The 1980's also saw the implementation of structural adjustment programs which obliged Mali to close its teacher training centres (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). By the 1990's, therefore, the system was in an operational crisis, due to "democracy under construction in the country," and due to the on-going economic challenges (CLIC n.d.). Interruptions to classes, strikes, and violence were some of the consequences.

Fortunately, the 1990's was also a turning point for education, bringing about reforms and innovations. Institutional reform created a separate Ministry of Basic Education in 1992, as well as *cellules* responsible for girls' schooling at national, regional and local levels. Massive recruitment of contractual teachers for basic education has taken place since 1992 (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2001). Since the 1994-1995 school year, there has been progressive mainstreaming of *pédagogie convergente*, which involves the use of Malian national languages in the early years of instruction, and then the gradual introduction of French (Capacci Carneal 2004).¹² Also

¹² *Pédagogie convergente*, which involves using both maternal languages and French in basic education, was under experimentation between 1987-1993 in Ségou region, then was evaluated and adopted by Malian education authorities for widespread use within the system (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000; Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). The idea behind *pédagogie convergente* is to allow a child to properly appropriate their maternal language, and then build on that learning to acquire new languages; students are intended to be functionally bilingual after 6 years (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali

in 1995, the legal framework was adopted for the flourishing of local alternative schools such as community schools, village schools and CEDs (*Centres d'Éducation pour le Développement*, or Development Education Centers). These alternative approaches to education were then adopted into PRODEC, the education sector plan.

The Malian community schools movement

History

Community schools started in the 1980's but had a huge surge of growth during the 1990's, when Mali became known as “the home of the community school” (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000; Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 4). These schools were initiated by Malians, assisted by NGOs and international donors. They were a response to problems that rural populations found with the public education system, such as very low access rates and public schools' lack of relevance to their needs and priorities (Boukary 1999).

The government of Mali has now recognized the legitimacy of community schools, granting them official recognition within PRODEC. This was not always the case; from “their inception [...] the role and place of community schools in the education sector has been contentious. Every aspect of [them] has been the subject of intense policy debate in Mali, from the curriculum to the qualification of teachers to the status of their pupils” (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 25).¹³ Nevertheless, community schools multiplied spectacularly, from 176 schools in 1995 to 2344 schools in 2002

2004). Some community schools use *pédagogie convergente*, while others use the more traditional *pédagogie classique*.

¹³ There were grave doubts expressed about the quality of learning that students could receive from contractual teachers who had less education than government-school teachers. The quality of the school infrastructures themselves, also, raised serious concerns. An anecdote concerning quality in community schools: “A Guinean official who visited the Save the Children community school program in Mali declared, ‘We will never allow such chicken coops to be established in our country’” (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 13). Meanwhile, a “Malian teacher, responding in a seminar where student achievement in public and community schools was compared, declared, ‘Are we going to accept that despite our training, our experience, and our membership to the professional teacher corps that these (community school teachers) are our equals?’ Any discussion of how these less trained teachers could

(CLIC n.d.). In 2000, community schools represented 31.7% of the schools in Mali (Toukara 2001). Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al (2002a) attribute this expansion to several factors: the publicity surrounding the schools; pressure on government to legalize them; large donor grants and the willingness of government to let them expand, since communities financed a substantial part of them.

External donors exerted considerable influence upon the Malian state to officially recognize community schools (Boukary 1999; Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al 2002a). Indeed, the World Bank and USAID played a major role in Malian education policy even prior to the community schools movement (Boukary 1999). Boukary (1999) argues that USAID used its influence as a donor to the Malian government to obtain a legal framework and legal recognition for community schools. This recognition was of great importance because without it, community school pupils were cut off from opportunities to cross over into the formal system. The Malian government began to alter this situation in 1994-1995 through the development of a legal framework recognizing both the existence and the independent management of community schools (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000, Ministère de l'Education Nationale du Mali 2001). Furthermore, with the issuance of a presidential decree, children enrolled in community schools were permitted to attend public schools and to take the primary school leavers' exam (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). Community schools also became eligible for supervision of instructional quality by public education authorities and for receiving public resources towards teacher training and supplies (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a).

Controversies

Ambiguity of mandate. As the community schools movement has evolved, both local and international NGOs have had to contend with difficult questions surrounding community schools' mandate. For example, the SCF/US schools have sought to be of benefit to pupils in two ways (Capacci Carneal 2004). Firstly, the schools were to

provide an equal level of service is dismissed with vehemence" (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 14).

provide a *passerelle interne*, a bridge to the "internal development of the community," for example, through including a life skills curriculum (Capacci Carneal 2004: 58-59).

Secondly, they were to offer a *passerelle externe*, a bridge to other educational opportunities, by promoting literacy and numeracy in French, for the pupils' eventual integration into the public school system (Capacci Carneal 2004).

Contradictions exist, however, between these two *passerelle* goals (Capacci Carneal 2004). For example, government is more likely to support community schools that complement the public school model; however, this might compromise those schools' ability to "address the concerns of the village, especially when its ideas for school improvement do not fall under the umbrella of the national education system" (Capacci Carneal 2004: 51). It remains unclear which of the two *passerelle* concepts will enjoy a greater impact in the longer-term (Capacci Carneal 2004). Thus, community schools are caught in a tug-of-war between "the pull of mass education and the pull of locally relevant and driven forms of [non-formal education]" (Capacci Carneal 2004: 145). A possible casualty of this situation is the potential for community ownership of the schools. Amongst Capacci Carneal's conclusions from researching the SCF/US schools in 1999-2000: one of "the key findings of this study is that the image of community schools as champions and embodiments of village needs and locally relevant instruction in the face of national and international agenda is not supported by evidence" (Capacci Carneal 2004: 151).

Sustainability. Poverty presents one of the most serious challenges for community ownership of these schools (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000, Capacci Carneal 2004). Supporting a school presents more challenges than a community can properly contend with on its own, and communities express feelings of inadequacy about their ability to take over schools after their construction (Sangaré and Oumar Fomba 2001, Capacci Carneal 2004). At present, it is unclear how community schools will survive when NGOs withdraw (Toukara 2001). Much greater consideration is needed of the state's role in this regard. Donors often frame questions of sustainability and exit "in terms of how *communities* might take over the programs rather than government" (Miller-Grandvaux,

Welmond et al. 2002a: 42), despite clear requests by communities for support from the state or from an external partner (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). By 2000, the Malian MoE had agreed to cover teachers' salaries, thereby abating a major source of conflict at the community level. However, there are other school-related costs that place strain on poor families.

Equity and justice considerations. Capacci Carneal (2004: 145) points out that equity issues are amongst the "topics missing from the international, national, and local discourse about community schools," in other words, that there is inadequate recognition that Mali's poorest communities are mobilizing more resources for the development of schools than are communities with greater means. Community schools might thus be accused of creating a dual system which comprises formal, state-supported schooling in urban areas with easy access, and NGO- and community-supported schooling in more marginal communities (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). As a related problem, Cissé, Diarra et al (2000) point out that community schools seek to achieve the same pedagogical objectives as public and private schools, but with far fewer resources at their disposal.

Divisions within state and civil society. The early controversies surrounding community schools should not be understood simply as situations where the Malian state opposed the innovations of communities, NGOs and donors. Rather, alternative approaches to education have created divisions between state actors themselves, and between civil society groups. In 1995, the Malian government itself proposed a reform within basic education, the *Nouvelle Ecole Fondamentale* (NEF), which called for the use of national languages and curricula more adapted to rural priorities (Boukary 1999). The NEF would have bridged public and village schools, as well as giving decision-making power to communities in financial and administrative matters (Boukary 1999). Although backed by the donor community in Mali, the NEF was voted down in parliament. Even the party in power at the time, ADEMA, was divided over the NEF policy. Within civil society, teachers' unions, students, labour unions and opposition parties were key players in defeating the NEF (Boukary 1999).

3. Civil Society in Mali -- Background

Overview of Malian civil society and its collaboration with the state

There is some diversity of opinion about the vitality of Malian civil society, although these opinions do not seem to be neatly associated with particular categories of actors. CIDA, for example, calls Mali a “lively democracy with a strong civil society” (CIDA n.d.). Conversely, a 2002 USAID report comments that Malian civil society is “nascent in many respects;” although guarding against “anti-democratic and abusive tendencies of the state, [Malian civil society] is far too dispersed, diverse and lacking in resources to balance the power of the central state” (USAID 2002: 9). Similarly, the Malian PRSP offers some criticism of its own political context for civil society:

[...] the Malian democratic process is still fragile because of the absence of a democratic culture and citizenship, the absence of civic spirit and the pursuit of special favors. The fragmentation of civil society and its weak ability to mount a credible challenge to the established authority are also a manifestation of the democratic malaise (Government of Mali 2002: 23)

Other researchers, by contrast, have made more sanguine remarks. Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. (2002a: 4) comment that “Mali has a vibrant civil society with promising experiments in democratization. NGOs are numerous, dynamic, well organized, and represent a well-established voice in politics and society.” Capacci Carneal (2004: 89) calls Malian civil society “diverse and dense.”

Whatever the diversity of opinions about Malian civil society, there seems to be a stronger consensus around the idea that Mali itself is a favourable context for NGO¹⁴ activity. Particularly since 1991 and the democratic revolution of that period, NGOs have flourished. Since then, 1412 NGOs have formed and the government has provided a legislative and regulatory framework for their activity (Toukara 2001). Compared to other West African countries such as Niger and Senegal, Malian NGOs have a much easier official process to follow for registration (Toukara 2001); the government must

¹⁴ The use of the term *NGO*, and not *civil society*, is deliberate here and is not intended to conflate the two. Since NGOs are the main subject of much of the literature on Malian civil society, it is difficult to

complete an NGO's registration within three months of application or it becomes automatic (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a).

It is difficult to say, however, whether a context that is favourable to NGO activity translates into sustained state and civil society collaboration across the social sectors. The Malian PRSP, for example, comments that:

Civil society organizations are actively involved in the definition and implementation of development policy at various levels and in various ways according to their respective capabilities and their level of participation [...] However, this involvement is often limited due to a number of constraints, such as: a lack of the means and funds of the majority of civil society organizations, and the low level of involvement in the design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation of **government** projects and programs (Government of Mali 2002: 23 emphasis mine)

The PRSP seems to suggest that civil society actors and government officials generally operate within their own spheres of activity, with limited collaboration. On this point, again, we find a divergence of opinions, one salient example being the different perspectives on the level and quality of civil society participation in the PRSP design process. Some comments are adulatory: for example, USAID states that the Malian "government's participatory development of its PRSP has been exemplary" (USAID 2002: 4). Similarly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) called the Malian PRSP process "an example to be emulated in the West African subregion, in terms of content, stress on employment and the degree of participation and political pluralism involved in its preparation" (ILO 2002: 6).

Danté, Gautier et al (2001:viii) offer a different perspective: civil society was "involved in the PRSP process, but its participation in shaping the document [was] not effective." Dissatisfied with the speed of the PRSP formulation process, Malian NGOs opted to set up their own parallel consultative process, supported by USAID (Danté, Gautier et al. 2001). When they did participate in government-organized PRSP working groups, their presence did not equate with *influence*, and they took second place to government and donor representatives (Danté, Gautier et al. 2001):

generalize about the nature of the Malian context for *all* civil society actors. Further research is needed into whether NGOs enjoy greater freedoms than other civil society actors.

There is a consensus among stakeholders (even donors who strongly support them) that NGO technical capacities are an obstacle [to a deeper involvement in PRSP processes...] Indeed, the small committees within each [working] group are always composed by the persons supposed to be the most competent of the group, and these are most of the time Government or donor representatives. These people have a kind of technical legitimacy that gives them more influence on the process (Dante, Gautier et al. 2001: 17-18).

These contrasting opinions may be attributable to the fact that different civil society actors enjoyed varying degrees of influence and participation. The PRSP itself offers very little ‘thick’ description of civil society, however, to explain which actors enjoyed what kinds of participation or degree of influence.

At any rate, the practice of government and civil society operating separately has some historical precedent in Mali. In previous decades, foreign donors tended to work through NGOs as an alternative to the state. This mode of operation was visible in the handling of foreign assistance provided to Mali for drought relief in the early 1970's. Due to a crisis of confidence because of state corruption and incapacity, donors chose to work through NGOs for both emergency relief and development programming (Toukara 2001). The same was true under state shrinkage in the structural adjustment of the 1980's (Toukara 2001).

In the education sector, the government’s somewhat *laissez-faire* approach initially allowed for NGOs to take the state's place in increasing access to education in rural areas, through community schools (Toukara 2001). With the expansion of the movement, however, the government’s response changed from permissive to wary. Tensions in the relationship began to ease as community schools gained credibility for providing quality education (Toukara 2001). Decentralization reforms have also been favourable to the development of NGO roles within key social sectors such as education (Toukara 2001).¹⁵ Today, therefore, the government-NGO relationship in education is

¹⁵ NGOs have played an important role in building community capacity for decentralization (e.g. problem identification, solution strategizing, resource mobilization, etc) (Toukara 2001). However, the Malian state is increasing the resources of its own decentralized monitoring and training structures, so NGOs will need to support these government entities, rather than competing with them (Toukara 2001).

described as one of coordination -- although details are rather scant as to how this works out in practice (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a).

Outline of Malian civil society actors

The literature on Malian civil society seems to focus mostly on national and international NGOs' roles in education (via the community schools) or else on civil society and peace-building, particularly in the *flâme de la paix* peace-process in Northern Mali (Poulton and Ag Youssouf 1998; Poulton, Ag Youssouf et al. 2000; Igué 2005). An overall picture of Malian civil society must therefore be assembled in a rather piecemeal fashion. Some of the actors that feature in the literature include:

Umbrella organizations: Due to the proliferation of NGOs in the 1990's, it became clear that there was need of a structure for organizing them, beyond the government-appointed one. As a result, there are two umbrella structures providing coordination and institutional support to NGOs: firstly, CCA-ONG for both INGOs and NGOs; and secondly, SECO-ONG for national NGOs (Tounkara 2001). CCA-ONG has 110 members and 124 affiliates,¹⁶ and its current activities include involvement in the Structural Adjustment participatory review, and organizing civil society consultations about NEPAD.¹⁷

Economic policy networks: The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN) has a chapter in Mali. Its Malian partners are conducting grassroots research on the impact of SAPs, as well as building CSO economic literacy and strengthening CSO networks so as "to actively engage with and lobby the [World] Bank and government in the area of economic policy."¹⁸

¹⁶ This information is drawn from the Africa Action website, retrieved March 3, 2006 from: <http://www.africaaction.org/docs97/sap9708.htm>

¹⁷ This information is drawn from the CIDA website, retrieved March 3, 2006 from: http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cida_ind.nsf/0/69B61A21A564195A85256E160062F526?OpenDocument

¹⁸ Quoted from SAPRIN's website, consulted February 23, 2006 at: <http://www.saprin.org/mali/mali.htm>.

Business or economic associations: Peasants' organisations are increasingly structuring (Dante, Gautier et al. 2001), and have some influence upon government. For example, 1991 saw groups including farmers, herders, fishermen, and woodcutters demand decentralization (Boukary 1999). They successfully pressured the government to give a genuine delegation of authority to rural communities and to create a new relationship between the government and the rural sector, to deal with issues of land tenure and natural resource management (Boukary 1999).

Unions. Trade unions, particularly the more autonomous ones, are “well-organized and powerful” (Dante, Gautier et al. 2001: 17). As a reflection of this, the ILO has commended the Malian government's “demonstrated political will to involve employers' and workers' organizations effectively as the leaders of civil society” (ILO 2002: 7). Malian teachers' unions have been vocal opponents of the state, at strategic moments. For example, they were among the key players who defeated the government's proposed *Nouvelle Ecole Fondamentale* (NEF) in the 1990's (Boukary 1999).

Media. Media actors carry out a watchdog role in monitoring public service provision to the poorer levels of the population and in pressuring public authorities; they are rapid in denouncing abuses or problems (Raffinot, Muguet et al. 2003). There is also a local branch of Transparency International, which, although “modest, has made itself heard since 1995 by means of seminars and press releases. It is backed by a network of Malian anti-corruption journalists” (Raffinot, Muguet et al. 2003: 26).

Community-based organizations. Since 1989, civil society actors have set up “a series of dynamic organisations based on village communities, centred around maternity clinics and community health centres for the health sector,” around elementary and community schools in education, and around “producers' cooperatives and trade unions in the economic sector, with the professional organisations” (Raffinot, Muguet et al. 2003: 18). The community health centres are a success, and are being increasingly used by local people, since their costs are fairly low (Raffinot, Muguet et al. 2003).

Traditional organizations. A Management Systems International (MSI) 2004 report on decentralization in Mali states that in the communes, “true power relations are

based more on historical and traditional social status than on modern legal and elected structures," which means that newly-elected mayors have to dialogue with the "traditionally legitimate authorities" (MSI 2004: 2). Similarly, Danté, Gautier et al (2001) confirm that traditional and customary chiefs, as well as representatives from different religious confessions, have a significant influence over state officials.

Section 4. Civil Society and Education in Mali

Policy, legislative frameworks and structures for civil society in education

As already discussed, the GoM has officially recognized community schools within PRODEC (the 10-year education sector plan). This means that civil society actors working with community schools may now receive technical supervision from public education authorities and public resources towards teacher training and supplies (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). The state has also established a unit for monitoring community schools and developing a partnership between the Ministry of Basic Education and NGOs active in education (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). The *Centre National de l'Education*¹⁹ (CNE) is responsible for teacher training including for public schools, community schools, medersas and CEDs (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). Thus, the foundation seems to have been laid both legally and structurally, for civil society actors in education to collaborate with the Malian state.

Does this conducive context for civil society mean that ordinary citizens have a strong degree of influence on the educational opportunities available to them and to their children? This question is easier to answer for community schools than for public

¹⁹ The CNE was formerly known as the *Institut Pédagogique National* (IPN) (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000; Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). IPN staff were noted to be specialists in *pédagogie*

schools, since much of the research on Malian civil society and education relates to the former. Some studies of participation suggest that local people's roles in community schools involve considerably more than only providing "hardware" e.g. construction materials, labour for building and maintenance, or financial contributions towards teachers' salaries, school supplies and textbooks (Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder 2002b). Communities have also been involved in selecting management committees; monitoring of quality by instituting teachers' contracts contingent upon student results; monitoring of gender parity and retention of girls; curriculum development; monitoring teachers' and students' attendance; determining school schedules; managing school start-up funds; identifying school sites; getting legal documents for school opening; operating income-generating activities for schools and networking with Ministry officials (Tounkara, Oumar Fomba, et al. 2001, Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder 2002b).

As encouraging as these reports are, it is important to remember that phrases such as "community participation" do not necessarily explain the frequency or consistency of that participation, *who exactly* is meant by "community," or the degree to which community participation is representative of all school stakeholders. Reports of community participation in school management do not indicate, either, whether local people are merely consulted in decision-making processes lead by community authorities and NGOs, or whether they have real power to determine the outcome of those processes (Pateman 1970).

Outline of civil society actors in the education sector

While it is certainly not an exhaustive list, the following is a summary of some key civil society players in education who appear in the literature:

Networks linking NGOs. Perhaps the best example of an umbrella structure for Malian education NGOs is *Groupe Pivot Education de Base*. This consortium was established by local NGO actors (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). Dating

convergente and in maternal languages (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000), and assisted SCF/US in designing curricula for their community schools (Capacci Carneal 2004).

from 1993, the group brought together 70 NGOs, both local and international (Boukary 1999). At first, the group focused on dialogue between NGOs and INGOs on education-related themes, but then it received financing from SCF and USAID to take on advocacy for community schools (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). Once these efforts succeeded, however, the group declined in effectiveness (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). The *Groupe*'s leadership changed and made a fatal mistake: "upon donor urging, it began to act as a clearinghouse for donors who wanted to contract NGOs for their programs" (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 34). Unprepared for handling these types of contracts, the group faced accusations of "mishandling funds," lost credibility, and "continues to exist but with very little importance for the education NGO landscape" (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 34).

Concerning other networks linking civil society actors in education at the present time, both ANCEFA and the GCE have local chapters in Mali.

International NGOs. INGOs played a critically important role in the development of community schools. By 1999, INGOs supporting community schools included Save the Children Federation (SCF)/US, SCF/UK, World Education, World Vision, Plan International, Africare, and CARE (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000; Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder 2002b). From within Mali, *Groupe Pivot Education de Base* also supported community schools (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000).²⁰ INGOs tend to work with groups or collectives of local NGOs, while major donors such as USAID have relatively few links with local NGOs (Toukara 2001).

Teachers' unions. Teachers' unions in Mali have been at odds with NGOs over the community schools movement and particularly, the hiring of contractual teachers (Toukara 2001, Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). A teachers' union representative was quoted as calling NGOs the "antenna of donors who want to control our country" (Toukara 2001:8). Teachers' unions in Mali rarely engage with education

²⁰ Government donors have also been major supporters of community schools; bilateral aid has come from organizations such as USAID, the Cooperation Française, GTZ, and French municipalities (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000).

NGOs, and are not informed of their policy endeavours (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). “Lack of relations has certainly made these unions an enemy,” although this has not yet been a constraint for the NGOs in policy endeavours (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 32). This said, NGOs will need to reconcile with teachers' unions and parents' associations (*APEs*), if they wish to play a serious role in education quality – e.g. in recruiting teaching staff and training them (Tounkara 2001).

Women's organizations. An organization that appears in the literature on Malian education is SAGE (Strategies in Advancing Girls' Education). In Mali, SAGE has worked with education authorities, community school grantees, Malian NGOs, and donors to introduce girl-friendly practices, life skills, and interactive teaching methods in the classroom, and also to train parents' associations (Capacci Carneal 2004).

Research Networks. ERNWACA (Education Research Network for West and Central Africa, or ROCARE in French) is active in Mali. Created in 1989 by researchers, in collaboration with IDRC, ERNWACA's mission is the promotion of African expertise in positively influencing education practice and policy. Its membership includes several hundred researchers in 12 member countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroun, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambie, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Its regional headquarters are in Bamako, Mali's capital.²¹ Information on their involvement in Malian education is discussed in a subsequent section.

Community-based organizations. Some of the main school-based structures for partnership in education include SMCs (school management committees) and APEs – *Associations des parents d'élèves* (parents' associations).²²

Parents' associations (APEs) have played a major role in education since the start of the Malian education system in 1962 (CLIC n.d.). In 1970 a law was passed whereby the MoE assumed responsibility for orienting and coordinating activities of APEs, and

²¹ This is drawn from ERNWACA/ROCARE's website, consulted January 14, 2006, at: <http://www.rocare.org/historique.htm>

²² It is important to note that sometimes the term APE is used interchangeably with SMCs, while elsewhere in the literature SMC seems to refer to a structure that was established or re-structured to replace the existing APE.

organizing them at the village, commune, regional and national levels (CLIC n.d.). APE's resources come from local and regional development taxes, annual contributions, subsidies and donations (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). They operate under community or village authority, and their members tend to be drawn from among the more educated people in the community (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000).

APEs are given substantial responsibilities in school management, but they are fraught with problems, including: serious deficiencies in their organizational capacities and in their planning of resources and expenditures; a huge need for training; a low representation of women; unfamiliarity with the laws, roles and responsibilities of their members and non-respect of the rules meant to govern them (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). In addition, the IIEP found that certain APEs are not democratically elected and that there is a lack of communication between APEs, schools and other partners (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000).

As a result of these problems, NGOs in education have conducted community sensitization, training and reorganizing of APEs (especially World Education). These efforts have had an impact in giving APEs a new dynamism, and many APEs have since shown themselves able to mobilize resources for their schools (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000). This said, there remains some tension at the community level around APEs. The National Federation of APEs opposed the wide-scale implication of NGOs within education, because of the latter promoting SMCs to the detriment of the existing APEs (Toukara 2001).

Service-providing CSOs in education. Local NGOs may be regarded as service providers; they have had a major role in implementing and monitoring community school programs (Cappaci Carneal 2004). While foreign donors work mainly through INGOs as intermediaries, in some cases, major local NGOs have been supported directly by donors in building schools and mobilizing communities (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). This experience has helped local NGOs “come into their own” (Toukara 2001, Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 56).

Major areas of CSO activity

Policy negotiations and reform

Within the education sector in the 1990's, there were certain strategic personalities amongst government officials who favoured civil society involvement in the design of PRODEC (Toukara 2001). The Minister of Basic Education at that time was a former researcher, very open to innovation and considered to be an innovator himself (Toukara 2005). This was conducive to NGO involvement; for example, in 1995, the Minister invited *Groupe Pivot Education de Base* to participate in PRODEC design. In addition, the regional coordinator of ERNWACA was asked to lead PRODEC's design team (Toukara 2005). This meant her involvement, and the greater involvement of ERNWACA, in all national and regional meetings on pedagogical innovations introduced by ten-year education sector programs in other African countries (Toukara 2005).

The role of NGOs in advocating for the inclusion of community schools within PRODEC may be considered an example of their involvement in policy reform.²³ Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. (2002a: 29) state that "NGO involvement in policy discussions has been institutionalized through the PRODEC process," and that PRODEC has INGO and NGO representatives on the committees that monitor its progress.

Also according to Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. (2002a), Malian NGOs engage state officials on a regular basis about a wide scope of policy issues; they have regular meetings, where NGOs offer informed arguments. In their 2002 study, the Malian government, of the four governments studied (Mali, Guinea, Malawi and Ethiopia), was found to be the most receptive to the idea that NGOs "can and should play a role in policy" (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 29). This said, detailed information on the *current* influence of NGOs in education policy is rather scarce.

²³ This said, Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. (2002a: 23) add the qualifying statement that while "national NGOs have played an important role in the Groupe Pivot," it was Save the Children and World Education who were "the driving force of the campaign in that country to change policies regarding community schools."

Education research and promotion of a research culture

ERNWACA also enjoyed extensive participation in policy processes leading up to, and resulting in, the design of PRODEC. In 1995, a regional education conference, *Perspectives de Ségou*, was held by the Malian Minister of Basic Education.

ERNWACA was asked by the Malian government to conduct the preparatory research and to prepare the content for this conference. Subsequently, ERNWACA carried out analyses of the educational challenges of its eleven regional network member countries. Their research was presented at the conference and allowed for drafting a regional program for the renewal of education systems in West Africa (Toukara 2005). In addition to these achievements, ERNWACA was involved in studies leading up to PRODEC design, and in a study relating to participatory processes and partnership for implementing PRODEC (Toukara 2005).

ERNWACA has also sought to bridge the gap between researchers and decision-makers/practitioners (Toukara 2005). At the CIES (Comparative International Education Society) meeting in Cape Town in 1998, ERNWACA organized a dialogue forum between continent-wide education researchers and decision-makers. They also established a training and organizing program for national advocacy teams to make use of research results produced by national ERNWACA offices (Toukara 2005).²⁴

Finally, ERNWACA has been involved in research on community schools, evaluating their effectiveness as compared to that of public schools (e.g. Toukara, Oumar Fomba, et al. 2000, Toukara, Oumar Fomba, et al. 2001).

Collaboration with education officials

The INGO SCF/USA collaborated with the Malian government's IPN (now called CNE)²⁵ to develop their community schools' curriculum; SCF surveyed pilot villages

²⁴ USAID provided funding for this work through SARA, a program supporting research (Toukara 2005).

²⁵ The CNE was formerly known as the *Institut Pédagogique National* (IPN) (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000; Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004). IPN staff were noted to be specialists in *pédagogie*

and the IPN designed the curriculum using survey results (Capacci Carneal 2004). In addition, a key event in building government-NGO relations was the IPN's evaluation of SCF community schools in 1993, which found that pupils in community schools were performing as well as pupils in public schools (Tounkara 2001). While these results met with resistance in some government circles, they built NGO and community schools' relations with the IPN, one of the state's most important technical institutions (Tounkara 2001).

Collaboration with civil society actors at the community level

Some of the INGOs active in Mali -- for example, SCF and World Education -- work at the community level to build "viable" CSOs (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 53). They and other NGOs active in education have been recognized as capacity-builders for good governance and participation in school management (Tounkara 2001). For example, World Education has a particular focus on parents' associations, helping them become well-organized and representative, and encouraging them to demand accountability both at local and national levels (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. (2002a: 54) believe that this is changing the definition of education quality, and will lead to a "spiraling up" of expectations in education. In other words, this will mean that parents' demands on schools will eventually become demands on the state (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a).

A potential impediment to this process, however, is that the work of NGOs in education has yet to make major strides in linking education actors together *beyond* the school and community levels (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). The literature yielded little information on efforts at coalition-building, advocacy, or even sharing of innovations. While we might reasonably assume that there were synergies and

convergente and in maternal languages (Cissé, Diarra et al. 2000), and assisted SCF/US in designing

innovation-sharing between the various INGOs and NGOs within the community schools movement, they are not clearly documented.

Part 5: Summary

Governance structures and civil society participation

Decentralization is often argued to bring governance closer to citizens, which would in turn seem advantageous for civil society participation. In Mali, however, there appear to be many stages still to reach before decentralization can promote sustained and effective collaboration between local government and civil society. While resources and political authority are gradually being transferred to decentralized governance structures (CLIC n.d.), the process is far from complete (MSI 2004). In addition, from some evidence in the education sector, it seems that these transfers are a case of *deconcentration* and not *devolution* of authority (Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale du Mali 2004) – despite Mali's official policy emphasis on devolution (Land and Hauck 2003). Even where devolution is occurring, the question remains as to the capacity of local government structures to collaborate with their non-state constituents, and vice versa. MSI (2004:2) has noted that “open and informed communication [...] is insufficient at all levels” of Malian decentralization processes, including at the commune level between mayors, communal councils, and civil society actors. In addition, CSOs at that level are not consistent or effective in playing a “‘watchdog’ role vis-à-vis local government” (MSI 2004: 2).

Numerous unknowns apply to the governance of the education sector. While NGO participation in the 1990's design of PRODEC has been documented, little research exists about their policy influence at either national or local levels of educational governance, at the present time. Information is also lacking about the policy influence of other civil society actors, either in the past or the present, except for ERNWACA's work.

There seems to be some good work occurring in promoting civil society within the governance of education at the local level. For example, the INGO World Education

curricula for their community schools (Capacci Carneal 2004).

and its local NGO counterparts are seeking to build the organizational and representative capacity of parents' associations, so that these associations can seek increased accountability both from schools and from officials at higher levels of the system (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al 2002a). Still, further research is needed. To what degree is the influence of local education CSOs -- such as parents' associations and SMCs -- "spiraling upwards" (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 54)? And *towards whom* should this influence be spiraling upwards, in this newly-decentralizing governance environment? How is decentralization changing the way that effective advocacy must be carried out?

"Invited" or "created" spaces for participation

Government shrinkage and illegitimacy in the 1970s and 1980s opened up the space for NGO involvement in relief and development programs, and later in education (Toukara 2001). In this sense, NGOs have been able to create space for themselves to participate in educational governance, especially via the community schools movement – but not without strong backing from foreign donors like USAID and partner INGOs (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a). These power relationships also have disadvantages for local NGOs, in that they can be viewed with suspicion by the Malian state or by other civil society actors such as teachers' unions (Toukara 2001).

This said, an overall impression gained from the literature is that Malian civil society actors have, over time, strongly and effectively voiced their priorities to different Malian governments. Student unions played a role in the downfall of the Traoré regime (although at the cost of many lives) and were invited onto the committee that oversaw the country's transition to democracy (Boukary 1999). Civil society actors successfully demanded decentralization from their government in the 1990's (Boukary 1999). Similarly, in the education sector, civil society actors have progressively gained greater voice and credibility in engaging with the Malian state. In the mid-1990's, Boukary (1999) found that the relationship between SCF/US and the Malian state was hardly a picture of congenial collaboration. While certain state agencies, such as the IPN,

collaborated with SCF, other government divisions were unwilling to do so (Boukary 1999). Subsequently, however, government and NGO relationships improved, especially when evaluations showed that community schools provided a comparable level of quality to that of public schools (Toukara 2001).

Government and civil society actors still have some points of tension. For example, donors have been perceived by the Malian government as making state-NGO partnership a conditionality for foreign aid (Toukara 2001; Danté, Gautier et al. 2001). In addition, “local officials regularly complain that their preferences are overruled by the actions of NGOs” in placement or recruitment of teachers (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 30). The Malian state has also tended to disagree with NGO involvement in the technical supervision of education programming (Toukara 2001). While the Malian government “talks of its partnerships with NGOs, engages in joint educational planning with NGOs, and seldom exercises any limiting power over NGO programs,” it still wants to define the terms of the partnership (Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond et al. 2002a: 7). What will be the longer-term impact of the community schools movement upon state and civil society partnerships? Will it result in greater influence for civil society upon the wider education system? Will it lead to a greater influence of the wider education system upon the community schools and the civil society actors who own them (Cappaci Carneal 2004)?

Structures and supports to aid civil society participation in education

In her 1999-2000 study, Cappaci Carneal (2004: 145) found that the concerns of stakeholders in community schools at local, national and international levels were not communicated to each other, that these actors were not “bridging each level’s aspirations in order to create a greater dynamic impact.” ERNWACA has also asserted the need for more strategic alliances in education between research networks, NGOs, donors, and associations seeking to verify their own work through using research results (Toukara 2005).

As a positive development towards this goal, the Malian PRSP includes a plan for civil society reinforcement and capacity-building. This plan proposes to strengthen the managerial and technical capacities of civil society actors, their level of organization and representation and their ability to share information, so that they can more effectively play their role within a state and civil society partnership (GoM 2002: 56). It is also encouraging that all “major donors in Mali include some form of decentralization support in their assistance portfolio” (MSI 2004: 5). A major need in this regard is the alignment of programs that build capacity in civil society actors with those that build capacity in government structures undergoing decentralization (Land and Hauck 2003). This same need applies to the education sector. Malian civil society actors must play a strong role in shaping education governance structures *at the present time*, while those structures are undergoing change, rather than seeking to alter them once they have become more rigidly-defined. The community schools movement offers some experience about educational governance, from which civil society actors may draw. Can these actors overcome their divisions and build a common platform? There would seem to be little alternative, if fruitful state-civil society collaboration is to be sustained within education and governance reform, over the long run.

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