



TRANSLATE THE MDGs INTO A POVERTY REDUCTION LAW

Summary of activities undertaken since one year (Oct. 2008 – Sep. 2009),
and strategic reorientation (2010-2012)



INTRODUCTION

Poverty is a severe human rights violation. Commitments to fight poverty made by the international community at the threshold of the 21st century taking the shape of the Millennium Development Goals are not yielding the expected results. Financial, fuel and food crises unceasingly increase poverty. It is high time to turn the fight against poverty into a binding legal imperative.

Since October 2008, in follow-up to the first two editions of the Grand Diplomatic North-South Conferences, ACECI has started mobilizing civil society organizations, governments and parliaments for a large scale campaign aiming to translate the MDGs into a poverty reduction law. ACECI and the consortium of North-South organisations engaged in the campaign, have adopted a human rights based approach and a participatory process leading to the formulation of a model bill on poverty reduction. At national level, this model bill is to be adapted to integrate country-specific goals and constraints in a nation-wide participatory process.

The launching of the campaign was planned to take place at the 3rd edition of the Grand Diplomatic North-South Conferences, scheduled for June 2009 in Niger. The dissolution of the Parliament in May has not allowed the conference to take place at the intended dates and place. So what is the situation today? The present summary gives an overview of successes reached and constraints met throughout the first year of efforts. It will be used as a basis for adjusting the campaign strategy from October 2009 onwards.

All steps presented in this overview have been documented, and the reports of the meetings are accessible at the following internet address:

http://aceci.org/calendrier_uk.asp

BRUSSELS MEETING

From 4 to 6 March 2009, the [first meeting](#) of the organising consortium of the 3rd edition of the Grand Diplomatic North-South Conferences (3GDNSC), launching platform of the campaign to translate the MDGs into a poverty reduction law, has taken place in a venue offered by the Flemish International Cooperation Agency (FICA) in Brussels, Belgium.

This meeting has allowed installing inside the consortium specialized commissions for communication, advocacy and funding, and a scientific committee for the formulation of the model bill. A working calendar as well as a budget were agreed upon.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE MEETING

With the support of UNFPA-Niger and the Niger National Assembly, the Scientific Committee held its first meeting from 30 March to 2 April in the 'Palais des Congrès' at Niamey, Niger. [The meeting](#) was the logical next step after the Brussels meeting. Niger's commitment to the campaign project was confirmed, in particular the implication of Niger's parliament as principal partner.

Among the participants, several members of the [Alpha team](#) created within ACECI, as well as the chair of the Commission on Cooperation and Development of the 'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie' Honorable Mahama Sawadogo, researchers from Niamey University, government staff and several representatives of Nigerien civil society.

The meeting has allowed deepening the rationale of a poverty reduction law. A process for the formulation of a model bill was agreed and a reflection on the conference agenda enriched its content. Progress made was [aired via the national media](#). The choice of Niger as host country for the 3GDNSC was confirmed.

AUDITION OF ACECI AT THE CCD - APF MEETING IN BENIN

In support of efforts made in Niger, consortium members have developed simultaneous initiatives at the international level. For instance, following an invitation sent by the chair of the AFP Commission on Development and Cooperation, Honorable Mahama Sawadogo, ACECI General Director Ms Ginette Karirekinyana, assisted by the chairperson of the 'Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture et du Développement' (GRAPAD) Mr Aurélien Atidégla, on 28 April in Cotonou, Benin has presented to the francophone MPs, members of the CCD, the outlines of the campaign and its consecutive phases: formulation of a model bill, launching of an advocacy campaign, auto-selection of the pilot countries, adaptation of the model bill to the realities of each pilot country, adoption of the bill, permanent monitoring and evaluation throughout the implementation, and consequent improvement and adjustment of the bill at regular intervals. The press has given the meeting [due attention](#).

RESULTS OF THE MOBILISATION PROCESS IN NIGER

From 22 February to 2 March, from 26 March to 7 April and from 1 to 22 May 2009, ACECI's General Director, Ms Ginette Karirekinyana, has undertaken three working missions in Niger. Goals: to sensitise and mobilise national actors as well as international

actors represented in Niger to adopt and support the MDG/PRL campaign and engage in a highly participatory and inclusive process for that purpose. These mobilisation efforts have been successful, judging the following results:

- Niger's Ambassador to Canada, HEM Aicha Foumakoye, as well as Niger's Ambassador to Brussels and the European Union, HEM Abdou Abarry, have supported the initiative.
- Niger's National Assembly's official acceptance to be the main partner for the 3GDNSC organisation in Niamey, Niger, from 29 June to 2 July 2009.
- Declaration of intent of UNFPA-Niger to provide technical and logistical support to the 3GDNSC. Funding of the scientific committee meeting in April 2009 was the first concretisation of UNFPA-Niger's commitment.
- Several working sessions with the Prime Minister's Cabinet Director
- Meeting with the Prime Minister to solicit the government's implication
- Information meeting with the secretary generals of technical ministries, on 6 April 2009 in Niamey, and designation of focal points to participate in the 3GDNSC organisation.
- Creation of a National Committee through decree n° 006PAN dated 7 May 2009. The National Committee's mission is as follows:
 - mobilise the MPs, public administrations, women and youth organisations, technical and financial partners as well as civil society organisations in view of their effective implication for the success of the 3GDNSC.
 - identify and mobilise all logistics, infrastructure and financial means needed for the preparation and organisation of the 3GDNSC.

The National Committee is composed of representatives of the National Assembly, its commissions and networks, political and technical ministries, SCOs (DNGOs, women's and youth organisations, the peasants' platform, trade unions), Niamey University and strategic partners.

- on 14 May 2009, the National 3GDNSC organising committee starts working. A draft budget is worked out, a precise calendar for the conference preparation has been fixed and 8 commissions are being installed inside the National Organizing Committee.

- Two meetings between Niger's national organising committee and technical development partners have taken place in May. Certain partners have welcomed the initiative and have announced their intention to contribute to the event's success.
- on 21 May 2009, the Speaker of Niger's National Assembly has approved an official invitation letter to the 3GDNSC.

However, following the dissolution of Niger's National Assembly on 26 May 2009, it has become impossible to organise the 3rd edition of the Grand Diplomatic North-South Conferences at the planned dates and place.

Lessons learned from the Nigerien experience

ACECI's diligent mobilisation efforts have generated clear and dynamic commitments from the side of national and international actors. Without hesitating, this mobilisation can be called successful: it has led to genuine national institutional appropriation and ownership by major pillars of Nigerien society: parliament, government, civil society, trade unions, private sector (chamber of commerce) and their international partners. All conditions for an effective organization of the 3GDNSC were fulfilled. If the internal political crisis in Niger had not led to this unexpected institutional stalling, the launching of the campaign could have been done according to plan.

The results of the mobilisation in Niger are not lost. On the contrary, as soon as the stabilisation of the political situation in Niger will allow for it, the relaunch of activities in Niger will be envisaged, either to start all over the 3GDNSC preparation or to launch the national appropriation campaign of the model bill, the adoption of a national poverty reduction bill and its implementation. In the mean time, it matters to keep the campaign goals present on the Nigerien scene, through the organization, whenever possible, of symbolic actions.

Mobilisation and sensitisation efforts for the PRL campaign continue unabated. Beninese members of the consortium have been very active, and several activities have been deployed in Benin.

BENIN - ALTERNATIVE HOST COUNTRY

From 28 to 30 April, and from 12 to 22 June 2009, ACECI's General Director, Ms Ginette Karirekinyana, has undertaken two mobilisation and sensitization missions to Benin.

The most important conclusions of these missions are as follows:

- The President of the Republic, His Excellency Thomas Yayi Boni, has accepted on 18 June 2009 to sponsor the African campaign to translate the MDGs into a poverty reduction law.
- The national CSOs have confirmed their interest and commitment to participate in the campaign in Benin. Social Watch, GRAPAD and RIFONGA-Benin have positioned themselves as leaders.
- The parliamentary commission « Populations et développement » (regrouping half of the National Assembly members) has agreed to participate in the campaign.
- The Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians (NAWMP), Benin section, has committed support to the campaign.
- Certain international partners are ready to support the 3GDNHC if it takes place in Benin: Denmark, Switzerland, UNFPA-Benin, UNDP-Benin.

After these two missions, the parliament and government of Benin have been invited by national CSOs to concretise their contribution to the campaign preparation. It is important for each country to follow its own pace.

Looking at the results achieved so far, the strategy needs to be adjusted and a new impetus has to be given.

ADJUSTING THE CAMPAIGN STRATEGY

For the period 2010-2012, the strategy needs to be adjusted, taking into account the experiences of the first pre-campaign year. These are the major adjustment elements:

1. Elaboration of a new campaign document (terms of reference). While waiting for the right conditions for the 3GDNHC organisation and the launching of a field campaign to be fulfilled, a virtual campaign will be launched, aiming above all at the mobilisation of new allies (CIVICUS, Social Watch, WILDAF, the network Genre-en-action) and broadening the consortium into an international campaign MDG/PRL Collective.
2. Sensitisation and mobilisation of multilateral regional (ECOWAS, AU, PAP, EU,...) and global (APF, IPU, UN agencies,...) organisations.

3. Launching of an inclusive process ensuring the participation of the populations of the South in the campaign preparation and activities.
4. Launching of the [virtual campaign](#), marking the following symbolic days :
 - 15 October : World Rural Women's Day
 - 16 October : World Food Day
 - 17 October : International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

The [support message](#) from the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Mr. Olivier De Schutter, and the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, Ms Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, will be put to value at these occasions.

The ACECI direction and the Consortium Coordination team thank you very much.