

**FRAMEWORKS STATE REVIEW IN BURKINA FASO
FOR A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the Rio de Janeiro conference held in 1992 the participants unanimously agreed that it was necessary for all countries to implement national strategies for sustainable development. In this regard, an action plan called Agenda 21 or World Action Plan for the 21st century was designed. The national strategy for sustainable development is not aimed at proposing a new plan designed for replacing previous planning frameworks. In fact, its objective is to enhance policies and programmes which are underway and enable a better synergy between the different actions carried out in the field.

2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF FRAMEWORKS

While achieving its independence in 1960, Burkina Faso decided to set up a national system for planning economic and social development. Three five year plans were designed without the participation of the civil society actors.

Since the advent of the revolution in 1983, the national policy has been based on participatory development. However, as of 1991, the implementation of the five year plans was hampered by the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) by the state and international financial institutions which considered it as a proper solution to a current crisis (persisting deterioration of public finances and balance of payments). As a result of economic reforms dictated by the SAP, the five year plan could no longer be a normative plan which had set assessed objectives and a precise temporal vista intended to be changed into a short and medium term framework for policies orientation.

The effects caused by the structural adjustment policies and the devaluation of the CFA Franc weakened the production system and resulted in a general impoverishment which seriously affected the most deprived communities. The nasty social effects caused by the SAP and the dramatic situation urged the Government to identify the fight against poverty as a priority objective of policies to be implemented during the 1995/2005 decade.

In its objective such as establishing a global consistency of sectoral policies and taking into account all development concerns, the Letter of Intent on a Policy for Sustainable Human Development (LIPDHD) elaborated in 1995, emphasizes the necessity to promote human security by enabling each Burkinabe to have access to remunerative employment, preventive and curative medical care and environmental, individual and political food security.

To pursue the LIPDH objective, the Burkinabe authorities elaborated a strategic framework for poverty control (PRSP) in 1999 with the support of external partners.

Operationally speaking, the LIPDHP and the strategic framework for poverty control constitute the support of the new strategy for Burkina Faso economic development. In the meantime, the country is involved in other sectoral or transversal planning processes which need to be improved along with the PRSP.

3. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF PLANNING FRAMEWORKS

While conducting a comparative analysis of the planning frameworks, whether sectorial or transversal, the following aspects are to be taken into account : context , actors , how to integrate institutions and initiatives, process, impacts.

3.1. Planning processes context

The initial idea of elaborating planning frameworks derived from various motivations. Regarding the ten year plan for basic education and the elaboration of the strategic plan for scientific research or decentralization policy, these planning processes were urged by national concerns, particularly a strong social demand and pressures exercised by certain actor groups. One should note that these processes occurred in a context characterized by great institutional changes (questioning the state's role as the greatest rural development actor, emergence of new actor groups seeking new negotiation opportunities, etc.).

The ratification of certain international conventions by Burkina Faso can be considered as one of the fundamental causes of these planning processes particularly in the case of the elaboration of the national programme for desertification control and the preparation of the action plan for biologic diversity.

The last case concerns planning processes resulting from certain donors' requirements in relation to the implementation of structural adjustment policies

3.2. Actors

The actors are involved in the planing processes in several ways. In fact, we could say that there are as many involvement formulas as the number of planning processes. However, these various involvement forms can be classified in three main categories.

The first category concerns involvement modes based on a technocratic and centralized approach. **The second category** is related to modalities of involvement in the planning processes aimed at including the civil society, but one should note that the quality of this involvement is not always satisfactory. **The third category** refers to all involvement strategies which have been successfully implemented while raising the concerned actors' awareness of their responsibility.

In general, the actors involvement strategy has been hindered by several constraints. The first constraint is related to ways in which the consulting and steering structures are established and function. In fact, mechanisms used to represent actors in these structures don't always take into account proxies' capacity of contributing significantly in the planning process. It has been noted that technical service representatives and those from the civil society organizations cannot always establish adequate relationships between their original institutions and the planning frameworks the represent.

This situation is partly due to the fact that the institutions which should be involved in the planning process are generally selected by the steering structure. Deadlines given are not enough to assess the different institutions capacities of being actually involved in the process and to carefully examine agents' profiles before designating proxies.

The lack of specifications for these representatives doesn't enable to precise their roles in the steering frameworks. When terms of reference are defined, the representatives' mission is not clearly determined and there is no procedure to evaluate the quality of their involvement in the process. As a matter of fact, the lack of specifications including sanction procedures (positive or negative depending on cases) shows the proxies unmotivation and their inadequate performance.

This situation has been worsened by the fact that institution representatives in the steering committees change their ways according to the meeting they have attended, which undermines the continuous follow up of the planning process.

Another constraint is the lack of mechanisms designed for a preliminary sufficient preparation of the different meetings (forms, steering committees, work meetings). Actors attending these meetings only receive the preparatory documents on the eve of the meeting or on the very day. In these conditions it is difficulties for them to bring their contribution efficiently while taking into account all the experience of the actor groups or the institutions for which they work.

In addition, regarding pedagogical aspects, French illiterate actors face serious difficulties in getting involved in the consultation processes due to the lack of devices which could enable their comprehension (translations of basic documents into local languages) and in defining a suitable work plan according to their needs. The civil society actors cannot always participate in debates largely. They need mediators who will help them better understand some terms used in the debates. This is indispensable and enables them to express their concerns and make proposals.

It has been noted that when actors are not enthusiastically involved in planning processes, this is due to the fact they are requested at a late stage after the processes have been designed and modalities defined. As for the civil society actors more specifically, they feel that their involvement in the process is simply a vindication and a source of legitimacy for state institutions since there is no certainty that their viewpoints will be actually taken into account. It has been also noted that the insufficient involvement of the civil society organizations in planning processes is due to the internal functioning of these organizations.

Development partners are usually well motivated to support almost all planning processes. However, they face several problems in their intervention. In order to respect their deadlines donors have imposed a progression pace to the planning processes which could often affect the quality of work (collection of preliminary data, assessment of ongoing actions, consultation between actors, etc.).

3.3. Integrating institutions and initiatives

The problem of integrating institutions and initiatives should be addressed in relation to the steering of processes on the one hand and to consultation between the different planning frameworks on the other hand.

Generally, the weakness of the steering committees (irregularity, quality of participation) didn't permit to develop a sufficient capacity for an efficient follow up of decisions and enable coordination and consistency of processes. This situation raises the question of the coordination framework and political authority capable of taking over or supervising the effective implementation of orientations. In order to work efficiently, these frameworks should be made up of the main representatives of the different social groups (public institutions and non governmental

actors) and exercise sufficient authority (in terms of taking over) to supervise planning activities and create favorable conditions for a common implementation of policies and plans.

Donors in general have tried to develop sectarian attitudes. Each of them prefers to encourage actions which respond to their concerns without considering ongoing dynamics in the field, or attempting to coordinate planning frameworks and policies. The priority that each donor gives to his own options in relation to objectives, evaluation criteria and financing procedures, tends to keep planning processes in an isolated functioning logic.

Two important issues should be taken into account in assessing cooperation systems: the lack or difficulty of consultation among donors themselves (In some sectors remarkable exceptions need to be highlighted) , national leadership in managing frameworks and coordinating .

3.4. Processes

In almost most cases, planning processes have largely depended on external financing. The Government's support consists of only providing agents and premises. In some rare cases of financial support, amounts provided were purely symbolic and couldn't meet financial needs identified.

Donors support occurs in different forms according to cases. In the case of the decentralization process they showed a good example by acting in consultation in the context of fungible funds. This unique procedure facilitated the execution of a real programme unaffected by accounting and administrative heaviness. However, in preparing the PAN/LCD, financing modalities were mainly undermined by the lack of flexibility of financial partners in elaborating budgets and by the option of these partners which consisted of financing actions gradually.

One should note that donors have always disagreed to support a national expertise even partially for a determined duration. Besides, they are not very willing to provide resources intended for mobilizing appropriate expertise at national level.

The operationalization of the different planning frameworks remains an important challenge. There are still no reliable indicators which will enable to assess the quality of the process and the impacts deriving from it. In general, actors responsible for monitoring/evaluation activities are not fully autonomous to appreciate the process impacts objectively. This situation resulted in divergences noted between government officials' appreciation and those of donors and beneficiaries. The SAP experience is an obvious example.

Donors are not always willing to allow true autonomous evaluations which could enable to question their programs and plans. Civil society (particularly trade unions, Human rights movements) estimate that donors have a high responsibility in not checking if the conditionalities principles are effectively observed by national authorities.

3.5. Impacts

It is difficult to determine the planning process impacts for at least three reasons : the operational implementation of most processes is still in a starting phase ; certain oldest processes lack institutional structures to support their implementation ; others have not yet been thoroughly evaluated so as to determine impacts. Therefore, processes related to the SAP have produced effects

which have been differently appreciated by actors and authorities (economic reforms, etc.). As indicated previously, there is a difference between the donors and the beneficiaries viewpoints obtained through data on the evolution of poverty indicators.

4. ONGOING INNOVATIONS

The PAN/LCD represents a global strategy for desertification control ; it has been elaborated as a participatory approach despite its limited scope. However, other frameworks have expressed their willingness to integrate environmental issues in their actions.

The LPDR/D is a policy letter elaborated by the government to ensure the coherence of actions in the rural sector and set up coordination mechanisms both at national and local levels. All the strategic orientation frameworks haven't been taken into account by the LPDR/D which hasn't been adopted yet.

The CSLP which is a central reference framework in Burkina has been elaborated in order to meet the requirements of the PPTE initiative ; it doesn't sufficiently focus on other strategic frameworks such as the PAN/LCD. The managers in charge of implementing the CSLP have pointed out the fact that this exercise was executed repeatedly and have expressed their willingness to read just it over a year in the monitoring context.

5. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The national strategy for sustainable development will not be a document which defines new policy orientations, but the confirmation of an existing reference framework (the CSLP), which will precise the modalities of its improvement, while defining management codes, intervention principles and institutional reforms with the approval of all social actors. The objective is to ensure a sustained and coherent economic, social, political and environmental growth of the development process.

Recommendations have been specifically made to the State, development partners, the civil society and the private sector in order to address the inadequacies underlined during the exercise : consistency of actions, transparency, capacity building, operationalization of policy orientations, monitoring, evaluation.

6. CONTINUATION OF THE PROCESS

The Government should examine the workshop conclusions as well as the final report and validate the results. Then, the following tasks will have to be carried out urgently :

- readjusting the CSLP and formulating proposals to harmonize the strategic orientation frameworks and the coordination mechanisms based on the NSSD lessons ;
- formulating an assessment monitoring system (indicators and institutional modalities) for all concerned actors.

It has been suggested that the present Steering Committee should keep on playing its current role before the establishment of another mechanism. In any case, the idea will not be to replace existing monitoring and coordinating frameworks but to provide them with advice and information (the

actual significance of the NSSD : orientation codes, implementation modalities and actions). In addition, an assessment monitoring needs to be ensured. The steering committee's responsibility will be centered on supervision whereas implementation activities will be carried out by independent actors.