

**Partner news from Niger: LASDEL training workshop for Niger's newly elected mayors  
15-16 September 2011**



[APPP partner](#), Laboratoire d'études et de recherches sur les dynamiques sociales et le développement local (LASDEL) inaugurated its new training centre in Niamey with a two-day training workshop held for Niger's newly elected mayors of Niger on 15 and 16 September 2011. This training brought together the mayors of 15 *communes* (districts): Azagor, Balleyara, Bana, Birnin Iallé, Dakoro, Dessa, Filingué, Gouré, Gueladio, Guidan roumji, Korahan, namaro, Roubou, Say, Tamou and Tchintabaraden.

The districts all have a long-term relationship with LASDEL, which has been conducting social research studies on decentralization in these locations for the past decade. The training marks this relationship and shares the results of the research studies undertaken in these locations.

**Day 1:**

Dr Amadou Oumarou , scientific director of LASDEL, made the inauguration speech. Professor Mahaman Tidjani Alou then introduced the workshop, highlighting the main challenges of decentralization in Niger and the current problems faced by the local districts.

Presentations from the LASDEL panel of senior researchers included:

**'District, chiefdom and local committees: complementarities and conflicts of local development', Dr Mohamadou Abdoulaye:** Dr Abdoulaye explained that local development is one of the main challenges of decentralization. The promoters of decentralization suggest that authorities that are elected locally manage their local economic resources better and are more inclined to be accountable to the population. Dr Abdoulaye's socio-anthropological studies the resource management of several villages in Niger portray many different situations with considerable contrasts. A fragmented vision of local development, conflicts of competencies of the different actors of local power, the absence of a real community project, etc are factors that have handicapped the emergence of a viable alternative local developmental alternatives.

**'Technical partners and financial support to the *communes*', Dr Abdou Elhadj Dagobi.** Dr Dagobi investigates the cautious behaviour of financial and technical partners (PTF), that show a certain reluctance to engage with State structures in Africa. They intervene more directly in the 'communities' by entrusting NGOs to implement development projects. After the decentralization process, it seems that districts should be the most appropriate partners as they are the interface between the State and the communities. According to Dr Dagobi, if this partnership constitutes a means to increase access to public services for the population, one can question the fairness of the 'arrangements in place as well as the social dynamics that it generates.

Day 2:

**'Types of public services delivered at district level in Niger' Dr Amadou Oumarou, LASDEL scientific director.** Dr Oumarou explained that, in Niger, the delivery of public services does not just refer to a few municipal services. Districts human and financial resources are too scarce to manage all the services that are imposed upon them by regulations. Other actors intervene in local public services delivery such as the government decentralised services, the NGOs, local associations and committees as well as the direct users of these services. According to the mode of delivery and modalities of access, public services delivered in the districts can be classified in several groups. Dr Oumarou presented a typology of services delivered in the districts to launch a debate around the services that are 'really' delivered by the districts and those that are delivered by other actors in Niger.

**'Local co-production of public services delivery', Prof Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan** According to Professor Olivier de Sardan, more often than not, neither decentralised state services and nor the districts are in a position to deliver local public services such as health, security, education, sanitation etc completely on their own. Collaboration with other actors is necessary, either to finance the service or to manage certain steps in the delivery. As a result, users are heavily involved (they are expected to contribute in various ways), as well as other local institutions such as chiefdom, local businesses, associations, corporations, etc. Financial and technical partners are desperately sought to finance infrastructure and support technical capacity. But all these forms of cooperation are unstable, fragile, and dependant on human resources. They penalise certain

categories of the population. To find out more on Niger local governance, download the following papers:

[APPP et LASDEL Background Paper Etude et Travaux 90, le service public du marche a SAY, Guidan Roundji et Balleyara par Amadou Oumarou- French only](#)

[APPP LASDEL Background Paper Etude et Travaux 93, Le service public de l'eau et de l'assainissement a SAY, Guidan Roundji et Balleyara par Younoussi Issa- French only](#)

[APPP Working Paper 10 Local governance in Niger by JP Olivier de Sardan](#)

**'Lessons learned from the operation of the first *district* councils'** Dr Mahaman Moha. Dr Moha compared the official operation of the districts and the reality of everyday practices. He gave the example of the communal project in Dakoro. He highlighted a number of negative indicators: a large illiteracy rate amongst elected mayors, absenteeism level of many mayors, factional conflicts and local reversal of local alliances, the inexistence and/or non functionality of specialised commissions, the lack of local management tools, the difficulty in developing and executing local budgets, and the lack of investment capital.

The questions and answers sessions at the end of each presentation generated a lively and frank debate amongst the LASDEL researchers and the mayors. These debates have offered a greater understanding of the local realities of the life of the new Nigerien districts.

**Author : Djibo Amadou**

**APPP Communications Officer, LASDEL-Niger**



[\*\*www.institutions-africa.org\*\*](http://www.institutions-africa.org)