

A study of political, social and economic
structures and power relationships

Burkina Faso



The goal of Sweden's development cooperation is to contribute to an environment supportive of poor people's own efforts to improve their quality of life. Sustained poverty reduction requires equitable growth – but it also requires that poor men and women have access to political power and resources.

To better understand the persistent and multi-dimensional aspects of poverty – inter alia powerlessness – as well as the potential for and obstacles to poverty reduction and development, Sida decided to commission, on a pilot basis, a power analysis of Burkina Faso during the preparation of the Swedish West Africa Strategy for 2004-2006 in 2003.

The purpose of the study is to provide Sida and other development cooperation actors with a deeper understanding of the formal and informal political, economic, and social power structures and power relations in Burkinabé society as well as their implications for poverty reduction and development in Burkina Faso. The study may also help Sida to identify different processes and initiatives in the society of Burkina Faso, which could contribute to poverty reduction, democratisation, socio-economic development, and increased fulfillment of human rights.

Sida's experience of conducting power analyses has been rather limited. The first pilot round of analyses include Ethiopia¹, Burkina Faso, Kenya² and Mali³. All these analyses were carried out as an integral part of each country strategy process. Each report expresses the views and findings of its writers. At present, Sida's Division for Democratic Governance (DESA) is assessing the approaches used in these four analyses further to develop methods for these types of studies.



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Stockholm, March, 2004

¹ Sida Studies no 10, 2004, The Culture of Power in Contemporary Ethiopian Political Life, by Sarah Vaughan and Kjetil Tronvoll

² not published yet

³ not completed yet

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Content

Introduction	3
1 General	7
2 Institutions and political processes	12
2.1 Power relationships and theoretical mandates between the various institutions	14
2.2 The role of the army and law enforcement services.....	14
2.3 Approaches to decentralization and relationships between local, regional and national administrations.....	16
2.4 Respect for political institutions, and the rule of law	23
2.5 An independent electoral authority	23
2.6 Relationships between current structures and between formal and real powers	25
2.7 The political party system	27
3 Human Rights	31
3.1 Human rights violations	31
3.2 Relationship between the Constitution, laws and traditional legal structures	32
3.3 Introducing a peace culture into the programme and education	33
3.4 Contemporaneous relations with NGOs and Burkinian community-based organizations	33
3.5 The implications of HIV/AIDS for the power situation	34
3.6 Implications of the presidential decree of 6 December 2000 .	34
4 The rule of law	35
5 At village and community level	36
5.1 The exercise of power at village and community level	36
5.2 Role and status of State bodies	36
5.3 Role of the private sector, religious institutions, traditional healers, harmful practices and community-based organizations	37
5.4. Possibilities for poor women and men to promote their interests by influencing the decision-making and resource-allocation process	38
5.5 Rural populations as subjects rather than citizens	39

6 The political culture	41
6.1 Public and political forums for the human rights debate	41
6.2 Assessment of pluralism, tolerance and dialogue between the State and others involved in politics	41
6.3 People as citizens or subjects: the role and status of women, young people, children and the disabled	43
7 Corruption	45
7.1 Lack of a national strategy	45
7.2 Role of corruption in consolidating or challenging power relationships	46
8 The private sector	47
8.1 Analysis of trends in asset ownership	47
8.2 Mechanisms used to exert control over the business sector	48
9. The role and structure of civil society organizations	49
9.1 Key players in civil society at national, regional and local level	49
9.2 Civil society organizations as agents for change in reducing poverty and promoting human rights and gender equality	51
9.3 A largely urban civil society	54
9.4 How laws and regulations on freedom of association affect organized interest groups	54
9.5 The potential role of local radio stations in the democratization process	55
10. Participation by the poor	56
10.1 Power relationships at all levels of society that have an effect on opportunities for participation by the poor	56
10.2 Groups consistently favoured or discriminated against	56
10.3 Is there a serious risk that discrimination or favouritism towards certain groups may lead to armed conflict or increased violence between the different ethnic groups in Burkina Faso?	57
11 The role of sponsors	58
11.1 The role of sponsors and the international system	58
11.2 Sponsors' influence over the distribution of power	58
12 Peace and security	60
13 Prospects: the changing role of players and power relationships	61
Recommendations	64
Bibliography	67

Introduction

1. Context and justification for the study

Sweden's policies relating to democratic development and poverty reduction

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) considers that reducing poverty means not only economic growth, but also empowering the poor. To achieve this in a manner consonant with human development aims, there is a need to construct solid forms of democratic governance at all levels of society, i.e. forms resting on cardinal principles and values whose fundamental purpose is to promote the power and influence of poor communities in society, through a democratic political process. Such a process must be characterized by participation, equality of dignity and rights for all, transparency and accountability. From this point of view, it is crucial that the State should be willing and able to fulfil its responsibilities by doing its best to guarantee human rights and freedoms for all men, women, girls and boys.

Sida sees poverty reduction as an integral part of the development process, understood as a viable and sustainable process of deep-rooted freedoms, wellbeing and dignity for everyone living in a just and equitable society. Development implies that poor men and women should participate fully and completely in processes of political, social, cultural and economic change and receive the full benefit of their efforts. At the same time, it must be explicitly recognized that social, ethnic, age and gender injustices and inequalities cause vast differences in access to power, opportunities and security.

Broadly speaking, poverty constitutes a violation of almost all human rights, and a lack of democracy prevents poor communities from expressing their demands. Human rights provide a normative framework for combating poverty, while democracy tends to be the best way to organize political life in order to achieve this, particularly through people's active participation and respect for their universal rights. Such respect undeniably depends on the existence of firm political will. Promoting human rights and democracy is therefore one of the cardinal objectives of Swedish co-operation in development. Consequently, such co-operation is designed to promote:

- active and equal participation by men and women in political life; democratic culture based on tolerance, respect, participation and transparency;

- a dynamic civil society resting on broad-based democratic organization;
- free and independent news media;
- effective procedures and institutions such as elections and parliaments;
- a State where the rule of law prevails;
- public administration serving democracy;
- well-developed local democracy.

The following elements are considered crucial:

- parliaments and judicial systems;
- electoral institutions and the holding of elections;
- public administration, decentralization and local democracy;
- enforcing and monitoring human rights conventions;
- women's participation in democratic life;
- the existence of democratic schools;
- the existence of free and independent news media;
- civil society organizations and political parties.
- Sweden's policies in West Africa

Apart from supporting democracy and human rights, Sweden's development co-operation seeks to focus on the environment, health, education and, to some extent, research. All these efforts have the ultimate purpose of improving living conditions for the poor. In West Africa, Sweden's co-operation has identified two countries as priorities for long-term co-operation: Burkina Faso and Mali. A regional strategy including a focus on these two countries and, to some extent, Guinea Bissau will be submitted to the Swedish government for approval in early 2004.

This is the background against which Sida decided to undertake studies on strategic topics with a view to facilitating its understanding both of poverty as a multi-dimensional, persistent phenomenon and of the potential for and obstacles to poverty reduction and development in Burkina Faso. West Africa represents a genuinely new programme area for Swedish development co-operation in the field of democratic governance. Consequently, there is a great need to understand the political processes under way in Burkina Faso. This study will provide an input into the country analysis of Burkina Faso to be prepared by Sida in spring 2003. This analysis will subsequently form the basis for the future country strategy for Burkina Faso.

2. Aims of the study

This study will describe and analyse formal and actual political, social and economic structures and power relationships, perceptions of these and mechanisms by which power is exercised in Burkinan society. The study attempts to identify and understand the dynamics of the current situation by analysing the role and agenda of strategic players – both those favouring change and those opposed to change – and the structures, initiatives and processes at work in Burkinan society. It includes recommendations concerning the implications for donors such as the Sida.

The following questions constitute the framework of the analysis.

- Are there initiatives or processes promoting key political processes such as accountability, participation, transparency, equality of dignity and rights, gender equality and economic development?
- Are there stakeholders, processes and initiatives tending to boost the participation and influence of the poor (women, men, girls and boys) in decision-making processes as well as access to basic social services and productive resources? Which are the key areas of progress?
- What are the possible scenarios for the next three to five years as regards key players and developments in power relationships within society in Burkina Faso?

3. Methods for analysing the power situation

3.1 Fundamental concepts for analysing structures and power relationships

The *interactive interpretation* adopted by contemporary political science considers power to be a matter of human relationships, the cause of certain behaviour, a restriction on other people's freedom and an unequal relationship. Structural analysis is concerned with frameworks that vary in the extent to which they are complex and hierarchical, that describe the status and respective roles of members of a society, prescribe how they interact and distribute scarce resources between them. Therefore, to understand a political system, it is necessary to understand its social structures and its unequal and hierarchical social relationships, which have the potential to – and may actually – lead to conflict. Social structures vary from one society to another, but derive from the same social constructs:

- classification on biological grounds (sex, age, kinship, etc.) which has more significance in traditional societies and is highlighted by anthropology
- classification based on socio-economic differences (qualifications, occupation, income, etc.) in modern societies, highlighted by sociology.

Rather than approaching the concept of power through the holder of that power, more attention needs to be paid to what type of power is exercised, how it is exercised and how it is understood and felt and by whom. From this point of view, the State is neither the source of power, nor a simple reflection of the power of a given party (e.g. the governing group).

Rather than thinking of the State, political parties and all other organizations with influence over society as bodies holding or exercising power, it is more useful to see them as sources of power that passes from one to another or where they act as co-ordinators. Within this notion of bureaucratic State power, the State as such is not a body that takes power, but a characteristic mode of power, which is organized through State institutions but transcends them. On this basis, the State and power remain the property of the people, who influence and exercise power. To see this clearly, we should focus the analysis on the relationships and

operational aspects of power and the collective knowledge systems that underpin it.

In the context of Burkina Faso, it can be seen that a country does not depend – whether or not it has the benefit of democracy, justice and an egalitarian approach to social change – solely on the activities and aspirations of its leaders, but also on the nature of political and social relationships and the expectations and viewpoints of each of its citizens. For example, in some cases, failure to democratize relationships that have been marked for centuries by hierarchy and authoritarianism cannot be exclusively or even principally attributed to government policy.

One of the strategic issues identified was the reality of power within Burkinan society. There is a need to analyse comprehensively the political, economic and social structures and power relationships within formal and informal decision-making processes at all levels of society, as well as their implications for poverty reduction and development in Burkina Faso. The study also seeks to identify the various processes and initiatives within Burkinan society that could facilitate poverty reduction, democratization and economic and social development.

How and where does power really lie? More to the point, what is likely to happen in future? However and wherever power lies, can anyone gain access to the process or is it reserved exclusively for certain segments of society? If power lies in certain areas, should the disparities, discrimination and inequalities that arise – as often happens – as part of the emerging structures be considered as a side-effect or as inherent in the process, an integral part of the interests and objectives of those who control changes in the structures and power relationships within Burkinan society?

3.2 Hypotheses

Analysis of power relationships and structures in Burkina Faso shows that, as a post-colonial State, they are shifting, but that traditional relationships and structures still have an influence, with consequences for the democratization process and efforts to combat poverty.

3.3 Research paradigm and techniques: desk studies, interviews and field surveys

The research was conducted mainly by means of desk studies, combined with interviews and visits in the field.

1 General

Since the advent of the democratization process in Burkina Faso in 1991, marked in particular by adoption of a constitution and the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections, State power has been assigned and exercised through what is theoretically a democratic process, major policy decisions concerning the management of public affairs being taken by the constitutional institutions, especially the executive and the National Assembly. What actually happens is that major decisions are taken within restricted political circles, particularly by the President of Burkina Faso and his party, the *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (Congress for Democracy and Progress, or CDP), which control the other centres of power. This state of affairs is a result of the nature of the political and party systems in Burkina Faso, the latter being characterized by the dominance of the President's party.

In principle, power should be transferred through democratic processes such as free and transparent elections in accordance with the Constitution. Unfortunately, we have not so far seen any changeover in power between parties in Burkina Faso. However, the results of the latest parliamentary elections look encouraging.

In their vast majority, civil society's organizations represent the interests of particular groups of voters, such as women, young people, children or the poor as a whole. However, organizations able to influence policy are usually located in urban areas. The interests of rural civil society are not always taken into account. The position with regard to political parties is rather more confused, insofar as a goodly number of them claim that they represent all levels of society (intellectuals, women, young people, the marginalized, etc.) and that they defend and promote the interests of the population as a whole. It would therefore be difficult to come up with any list of political parties representing particular interest groups. Nevertheless, one cannot fail to notice that political parties in government or capable of joining the government are led by élites who usually come from relatively well-off groups in society (particularly civil servants). From this point of view, one may say that the interests of these sectors are to a large extent ensured.

In the various social spheres, relationships between people are built on a social order that enshrines the domination of some over others. Relationships between men and women, older and younger people, and

owners and non-owners of property reflect this phenomenon of dominators and dominated. The degree of the power relationship is determined by the position of each individual and social group in relation to (economic, cultural and political) capital. Some village chiefs who have a weak economic base are likely to find their position challenged by the general population. Conversely, villagers who are not from the chief's lineage may, on the basis of their considerable economic strength, seek to join the ranks of chiefs, often with support from the rest of their society. As a rule, this leads to disruption of the social order. Some political leaders have transformed their villages of origin into electoral fiefdoms where they behave like genuine traditional chiefs.

This attraction of "chieftaincy" would be incomprehensible if these positions of traditional power did not to some extent control access to elected positions and resources within the modern State. In fact, the traditional authorities play an ambivalent role in relation to the ongoing democratic process. As privileged channels for social and political change, especially amongst the Mossi (or *Moaaga*) people who form almost half the population, they sometimes appear to be obstacles to democratization, insofar as they perpetuate the traditional structures, relationships and social reflections of power enshrined in the culture of subjects' submission to their chief. Some political parties, especially the ruling party, that make use of chiefs, resort to political patronage and perpetuate traditional manifestations of power, doing nothing to promote the emergence of a democratic culture, and this is especially true in rural areas. Paradoxically, this makes them seem a brake on the democratic process. Furthermore, in Burkina Faso there are some parties that are against the system, adopt Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and oppose liberal democracy. One of them even called on people not to vote in the parliamentary election on 5 May 2002, saying it was a charade. Conversely, some of the organizations in Burkinan civil society look likely to play a positive role in democratization, in that they contribute to civic education, voting, democracy and human rights, thereby fostering the emergence of civic awareness and a democratic culture in the country.

Overall, the democratization process begun in Burkina Faso with the adoption of the 1991 Constitution has achieved remarkable success, but much still needs to be done to consolidate the democratic process, which has encountered several major stumbling blocks, including:

- **interpenetration of the majority party and State power.** The majority party is coming to dominate all the institutions of State power (executive, legislature and judiciary) and administration. This all-pervasive presence means that the relationships between the majority party and State institutions pose a threat to the separation of powers.
- **limited impact made by the opposition, characterized by the weakness of both its activists and leaders, and by a lack of financial resources.** Many opposition political parties have been set up by a political figure rather than around a vision of the future and a programme for government. Moreover, some of them have distinguished themselves by their lack of realism, lucidity and consistency.

- **influence of the army.** Theoretically, the army no longer plays a part in political debate. In reality, it retains a strong presence in the corridors of power. Attitudes and reactions more suited to a state of emergency than the rule of law have occasionally been seen.
- **social constraints.** Traditional societies constructed a social order based on submission to the authority of the chief. Social norms and values were laid down to consolidate this social order, and dissident opinions were not allowed. In such societies, social cohesion is seen as an affirmation of the chief's authority, and the chief's decisions were supposed to commit the whole community.
- **illiteracy.** Ignorance is a factor in social backwardness; it hinders the development of democratic culture and consolidates outdated concepts and behaviour.
- There are other factors that may be mentioned, such as widespread corruption within the power structure and excessive reliance on traditional chieftaincies.

Democratic change can only occur if a certain number of factors come together:

- Development associations;
- Development projects and programmes;
- News media;
- Educating the public and making people aware that elections cannot produce the desired results unless certain conditions are met, i.e. explaining the importance and meaning of voting; making it clear that choices must be made more between political programmes than between personalities (involving wealth, kinship, ethnicity, current holding of power, etc.);
- Genuine awareness on the part of the political opposition that it has a major role to play in the process of change and must, therefore, agree to smooth over its often minor differences and unite in order to gain strength and – especially – get on equal terms with the majority party;
- Depoliticizing the administrative function, which also is fundamental, as only institutions and a civil service that are impartial can have credibility and gain public confidence;
- Increasing the power of the judiciary relative to the executive and making people aware that this requires an ability to act effectively.

However it may be defined, democracy has certain features making clear that it is a collective activity. It is “government by the people for the people”, which in theory assumes identification of the governors with the governed. More specifically, it is a system in which all citizens have a share in power through their right to participate (the vote) and right to challenge (freedom to oppose). Democracy should also allow the governed to hold their leaders to account and, if necessary, get rid of them legally (e.g. through elections) when they see fit. Democracy is a process open to everyone and not reserved for any particular category of citizens. Unfortunately, in Burkina Faso, certain grassroots groups (women, young

people and the poor) do not feel at all involved, as they are excluded by the political élites. Their participation in political life is limited to election time when they are approached by political leaders. One might conclude from this that such democracy is driven and regulated from above, whereas those at the bottom can only look on and put up with it.

Some players are aware of what is happening, whereas others are purely and simply manipulated. Looking at the low rates of electoral participation (from 25% to 64%) in Burkina Faso since the advent of the democratic process, the nature of political discussion in public forums in the capital such as parliament and the media, the topics tackled and the absence of political debate in the rest of the country's town and regions, one gains the impression that politics primarily involves the élites in the capital. Many people who see these élites as manipulators force them to satisfy certain demands before undertaking to vote for a particular programme. The élites are then the victims of their own game. For example, because they see people only as potential clients, certain political parties now find themselves faced with excessive demands from the people, and they obviously cannot satisfy them. This results in disaffection and undermines the credibility of democratic institutions.

One cannot really say that all poor people have an identical opinion of democracy, but they do agree that their living standards need to be improved, through access to healthcare, education, an adequate and balanced diet, and decent housing. In this regard, it cannot be denied that many of them try to maximize their chances of social benefits by voting for the "richest" parties or those able to bring about redistribution in favour of their clients. Some people consider members of parliament and elections as expensive, and that the price to be paid to set up and develop democracy is too high in relation to the State's resources. They advocate quite simply abandoning the process and using the funds released for productive investments likely to help improve their living standards. For others, the benefits to come from democracy make the cost worthwhile, however, because it guarantees freedom for all citizens, who may then live as they see fit: a changeover of political power can be achieved through elections without resorting to force. Citizens who feel safe are better able to release their creative energies; also, taking part in elections is seen as a contribution to the management of public affairs and gives a degree of power to citizens, who feel useful and responsible despite their poor conditions.

Overall, public opinion judges élites harshly. They are in fact seen as people who exist for themselves first of all, who work for their own account to the detriment of the country and citizens as a whole. The behaviour of élites is cited to justify this feeling: they are usually absent when major social events take place in their constituencies, and very often time their visits to coincide with approaching elections. Considering their living standards, élites cannot be said to experience the real situation of their territorial base; their morality is often undermined by partiality, and the annoyance often expressed by ordinary people clearly shows that they are not very satisfied with the behaviour of the élites. Some well-integrated and respected political élites do exist, however. They are close to the grassroots communities and their concerns, launching various initiatives to support the people in their struggle for a better

standard of living. There remains an urgent need in Burkina Faso to reconcile the governing élites with the ordinary people and promote trust between the two sides. Even within the various elements of the élite, as well as between the majority party and the opposition, there is a lack of democratic dialogue, which the Council of Elders deplored in its report to the Head of State when investigating ways and means to overcome the socio-political crisis triggered by the murder of the journalist Norbert Zongo in 1998. This absence of dialogue is partly due to the lack of trust that results from a succession of such crimes that remain unpunished, the weak democratic ethos within the political class and the fact that power involves paternalism and clientelism, leading all and sundry to change position whenever it suits their own interests.

2 Institutions and political processes

In principle, a framework of good governance should enable the poor and other vulnerable groups to be fully informed about policy choices, to organize themselves, and to take part in all aspects of national life, notably the dialogue on public policy. They should have access to the courts where necessary to give expression to their rights and be able to hold the public authorities to account. This should ensure that the civil and political, social, economic and cultural rights of the poor guaranteed under the Burkinan Constitution are effective. In reality, the entitlement of the poor to accountability, participation, transparency and the rule of law comes up against many obstacles. First of all, transparency depends on the free availability of information. In this regard, it is actually difficult for people to judge public policy because they do not have access to information and government documents. This is the result not only of the illiteracy that affects 70% of the population¹, but also of the culture of secrecy that surrounds public administration in Burkina Faso. The consequences of illiteracy are undoubtedly mitigated by the vital role played by the private and public media, but the poor do not always have access to these sources of information. Furthermore, media output in national languages suffers from various deficiencies, especially a lack of professionalism. Consequently, only scraps of information are imparted and people are not always made aware of the real political issues. Without real access to strategic information on policy options, the poor cannot effectively exercise their right to hold the public authorities – who claim to be fighting poverty – to account for their management of public affairs. Worse still, the poor are not a homogeneous group, inasmuch as almost half the population lives below the poverty line, estimated to be around 72,690 CFA francs per year, for an adult. Moreover, they are not sufficiently well organized to influence government policy effectively. It is true that there are many civil society organizations that claim to speak in the name of the poor, but they are too scattered and disunited to form a united front to face the State. Finally, as regards access of the poor to the rule of law, this assumes that they have access to the courts to enforce their rights. Unfortunately, the psychological, geographical and sociological distances that separate illiterate people from modern State justice

¹ The illiteracy rate in Burkina Faso was estimated to be 30.01% in 2002. For 2004, a rate of 31.11% is expected. Source: Ten-Year Plan for Developing Basic Education 2001–2010.

constitute a serious obstacle to the effective exercise of this right. Indeed, these groups are used to traditional forms of administering justice which were, unfortunately, done away with when the customary law courts and custom were abolished as the formal source of positive law in Burkina Faso.

Almost all observers – both Burkinan and foreign – acknowledge that the parliamentary elections of 5 May 2002 marked an important stage in the process of consolidating democracy in Burkina Faso. These elections were held on the basis of a new consensus-based electoral code passed by the National Assembly. This code enshrined substantial guarantees of equity and transparency in the electoral process, leading to record participation by political parties in the elections held in May 2002. Since then, the political landscape in parliament has looked quite different, with a remarkable degree of representation by the political opposition, of all hues. The balance of the National Assembly, which had been heavily dominated by the presidential party, was shifted in favour of the opposition. Since the abolition in January 2002 of the controversial Chamber of Representatives, with its purely consultative powers, the National Assembly functions alone as the parliament of Burkina Faso. This means that it is now better placed to play its role effectively, especially when it comes to acting as a check on the executive.

In fact, parliament seems now to be playing quite a substantial role in government measures to reduce poverty in accordance with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) prepared by the government. Before the PRSP was communicated to international financial institutions, the Finance Minister presented it to parliament. The members were therefore able to approve almost unanimously the policy choices made by the government as well as the selective and realistic approach underlying those choices. This means that parliament became party to the fight against poverty, as would be expected in that it is the body representing the grassroots groups at whom the PRSP is primarily targeted. Nevertheless, the National Assembly is not well equipped to monitor application of the PRSP or other poverty reduction programmes effectively. This is because methods of scrutiny (written or oral questions) are too weak for the purpose, whereas sanctions (through commissions of enquiry) are too cumbersome to implement. Unfortunately, there is no independent system within the Burkinan parliament to assess government policies and enable MPs to make up their own minds about the effectiveness of these policies. Meanwhile, people are asking questions about the effectiveness of poverty reduction programmes and the government, for its part, is announcing encouraging results. Consequently, lacking independent economic and statistical information, Parliament is obliged to rely on material provided by the government, whose civil service actually designs, implements and assesses all programmes and documents relating to poverty reduction. Certainly, with the advent of PRSPs, the government and its administration are trying to implement some measure of participation that includes, in particular, civil society. However, efforts in this regard are still insufficient; it is still experts within the public administration who retain control of the PRSP.

2.1 Power relationships and theoretical mandates between the various institutions

The Burkinan Constitution asserts the separation of constitutional powers (executive, legislative and judicial) characteristic of all democratic States. The Constitution provides for a two-headed executive comprising the republic's President, who establishes the main thrust of Burkinan policy, and the Prime Minister, who is head of the government appointed by the President and responsible for directing and co-ordinating government action. The task of the National Assembly is to enact laws and monitor government action. Judicial power is exercised by the courts, whose task is to administer justice while ensuring that the rights and freedoms laid down in the Constitution are upheld.

Looked at vertically, Burkina Faso is a centralized unitary state. Public administration is based on the principle of a hierarchy and centralized procedures. The extent of decentralization varies from one governmental department to another, but efforts to reduce centralization are still insufficient, with almost half of the civil servants being concentrated in the country's two main cities: clearly a poor distribution of human resources. As a result of the decentralization process begun in 1993, some local authorities run by elected local councils were established. However, to date, this has affected only 49 towns. It is planned to extend the process gradually to the rural authorities, provinces and regions.

Furthermore, various factors appear to threaten the formal separation of executive, legislative and judicial power, as well as the formal distribution of State power between the centre and the periphery. First of all, we find in reality a hierarchy of powers, at the top of which is the executive and, more particularly, the power of the President, which tends to subordinate other sources of power to itself. In particular, the judiciary seems to be losing out. Its inadequate human, budgetary, material and logistical resources, and poor credibility in the eyes of public opinion – as well as the difficulty it is experiencing in ensuring independence from the various political and social forces – are making it particularly weak. Legislative power is embodied in the National Assembly. The smooth running of the latest parliamentary elections, which brought about a shift in the Assembly's composition to the advantage of the opposition, opened up many opportunities for increased capabilities and for it to assert itself. Finally, the dominance of the President's party, which controls the government, parliament and appointments to key posts in the judiciary, as well as the great majority of local authorities, tends to negate the principle of separation of powers, with the consequent interpenetration of powers being likely to lead to abuses.

2.2 The role of the army and law enforcement services

Officially, the task of the national army of Burkina Faso is to defend the integrity of the national territory, while the police force is responsible for general maintenance of public order. However, since the army's interference in the political arena in January 1966, they have shown no inclination to limit itself to this role of national defence. Article 7 of the 1970 Constitution broadened its field of activity to promoting economic, social and cultural progress and any activities to build the national economy.

The Constitution of June 1991, which is currently in force, does not explicitly define the armed forces' role, but the army has got into the habit of operating well beyond its traditional role. Domestically, the armed forces have become well known for their role in combating organized crime which, like cross-border crime, threatens the country's peace. Soldiers are sometimes called in to help maintain order within the country. On the international stage, the Burkinan armed forces have been deployed for some 10 years in peacekeeping operations within bilateral or multilateral frameworks under the command of sub-regional, regional or other international organizations.

In future, while continuing to support the security forces in the fight against organized crime, the army has ambitions to strengthen the education and training of its personnel, establish new gendarmerie (military police) units in the provinces and step up the search for appropriate solutions to military health problems and equipment for its troops. It is also planned to step up awareness-raising and information campaigns to combat sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS within the army.

The role of the law-enforcement services (ordinary police and gendarmerie) is to safeguard public order throughout the national territory and combat the growing insecurity in Burkina Faso. However, according to a recent study², their working conditions are anything but rewarding. Police forces are seriously lacking in human, material and logistical resources to carry out their role effectively. Around two-thirds of gendarmerie brigades have no electricity, and no means of transport, telephones or typewriters. Furthermore, there is a great need for initial and ongoing training for members of these forces. In terms of combating insecurity, and bearing in mind the resurgence of this phenomenon, the Ministry of Security's authorities are intending to implement a new strategy based on "local policing" with greater involvement of all Burkinan citizens. In this regard, there are plans for legislation providing guidelines on ways and means to combat insecurity.

The behaviour of the security forces and the role the government has asked them to play over the last decade have cast doubt over the "republican" nature of these forces and shaken citizens' confidence in the institutions ensuring the rule of law in Burkina Faso. Indeed, the persistence of repressive instincts, abuse of force, disproportionate repression of certain protest demonstrations, blurring of the roles and missions of the army and police, inadequate training of officers and the emergence of a culture of impunity have sometimes led to intolerable violations of fundamental human rights. In addition, the socio-political crisis that has affected Burkina Faso over the last few years has not spared the army, as witnessed by the demonstrations on Thursday, 15 July 1999, by several members of the military intending to claim payment of sums that the State had allegedly withheld improperly and that some elements of the hierarchy had apparently misappropriated. These signs of anger on the part of the military highlighted the uncomfortable situation experienced by the Burkinan army since the end of the revolution in 1987 and the

² Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mission to design a support programme for judicial reform in Burkina Faso, June 2001 report.

start of the democratic process in 1991. The bloody purges that it has undergone since 1983 have left deep scars, despite the return, since the advent of the Fourth Republic, to the concept of a “republican army”, essentially restricted to the task of defending the national territory. Apart from the rancour from the past, mention should be made of the increasingly unequal treatment seen amongst soldiers within the presidential guard. These soldiers come from the former garrison of Pô (a town some 140 km from Ouagadougou in the central southern area of Burkina Faso), once led by Captain Blaise Compaoré. Capt. Compaoré led his troops to carry out the military coup that brought Captain Sankara to power on 4 August 1983. They were posted to the former premises of the *Conseil de l'entente*, which had been converted into barracks, and subsequently acted as a praetorian guard. The same troops were behind the bloody coup that brought Capt. Compaoré to power on 15 October 1987 and later became the current presidential security regiment. The soldiers are a mainstay of the Compaoré regime and are favoured by the President who pays them handsomely, while the rest of the army has to make do with meagre salaries like other public officials. Following the soldiers' demonstrations for “corporatist” reasons and with a view to regaining control over the military apparatus, the armed forces were reorganized. Major changes were made to the hierarchy and many ordinary soldiers were given new postings, including within the presidential security regiment. These reforms enabled President Compaoré to strengthen his control over the military apparatus.

2.3 Approaches to decentralization and relationships between local, regional and national administrations

Burkina Faso is a unitary State, organized on the basis of geographical and administrative decentralization. Whereas, under the parliamentary systems of the 1970s, the democratization process was not backed up by a decentralization process, the governmental authorities seem to have made decentralization an essential component of the democratization process in progress since 1991 and an essential driving force for economic and social development. It was not until the Fourth Republic, in 1991, that a genuine process of decentralization started in Burkina Faso. The 1991 Constitution gives the legislature a remit to determine the fundamental principles of autonomous administration by local authorities. In 1993, the government set up the *Commission nationale de la décentralisation* (National Decentralization Commission, or CND), to draw up and implement a consistent policy for administrative decentralization. The CND was headed by a president assisted by a permanent secretary, directly answerable to the Prime Minister, reflecting not only the inter-ministerial and multi-sectoral nature of the decentralization, but also the desire to give the Commission genuine authority.

The CND also established two mechanisms to manage the decentralization and support it through donors (Canada, Denmark, Netherlands and Switzerland): the *Service d'Appui à la Gestion et au Développement des Communes* (Support Service for Management and Development of *Communes*, or SAGEDECOM) and the *Fonds de Démarrage des Communes* (*Commune* Start-up Fund, or FODECOM). The aim of the former is to

support the towns and similar authorities in terms of consultancy, research, training and institution building, while the latter's is to support them in respect of infrastructure, equipment and consultancy, facilitating their development to ensure success over an optimal period. Alongside these institutions, *commune* authorities were established, including those said to have comprehensive powers.

The role of development partners in Burkina Faso's decentralization process is extremely important. Their assistance provides a considerable boost to these activities, due to the amount (over 10 billion CFA francs a year on average) and diversity of support and approaches offered. There are several forms of assistance and co-operation, with 10 or so sponsors active in this field. The assistance consists mainly of funding for local investments and institutional support for the central and local authorities.

The CND has undertaken considerable technical work, resulting in adoption of the *Textes d'orientation de la décentralisation* (decentralization blueprint laws, or TODs), in August 1998:

- Law No. 40-98/AN of 3 August 1998, providing guidelines for decentralization in Burkina Faso, amended on 2 July 2001;
- Law No. 41-98/AN of 6 August 1998, on how the territory of Burkina Faso was to be organized, amended on 2 July 2001;
- Law No. 42-98/AN of 6 August 1998, on the organization and operation of local authorities;
- Law No. 43/98/AN of 6 August 1998, indicating a timetable for implementation of decentralization, amended on 2 July 2001.

The amendment brought in by Law No. 13-2001/AN of 2 July 2001 was mainly designed to bring a new entity, the regions, into the TODs. These would be both local authorities and administrative districts. The creation of 13 regions as economic areas and frameworks for planning and co-ordinating local development will make it possible to bring the geographical divisions into line with administrative authorities and decentralize services. In this way, the country has set in train a gradual decentralization process based on a certain number of principles: subsidiarity, distribution in terms of complementary functions and the concomitant transfer of powers and resources to the decentralized territorial authorities.

After the TODs had been passed, the CND continued to carry out its role as catalyst for the decentralized State services, people involved in development (projects and programmes) and civil society (through regional workshops). The first outcomes were the identification of measures to be taken and the adoption of schedules for implementing the TODs within ministries. The CND also chose to undertake forward thinking so as to clarify decision-making on decentralization in rural areas.

The process currently under way is as noted not purely administrative. It involves a substantial transfer not only of powers but also of financial resources; these are supposed to guarantee the autonomy (rather than the independence) of local authorities vis-à-vis central government. At the same time as this decentralization process, the government is trying to accompany and support the process by a policy of breaking into smaller units.

The pragmatism and progressive nature of the approach taken towards decentralization in Burkina Faso are therefore still topical. The training of local councillors is continuing through SAGEDECOM and the *Ministère de l'Administration territoriale et de la Décentralisation* (Ministry for Territorial Administration and Decentralization, or MATD). On the other hand, the regulations to enforce the TODs have still not been passed. This is especially relevant to those providing for effective decentralization of responsibility for managing the State's human, material and financial resources. These would give new powers to the people in charge of operations. Other provisions would set up appropriate financial arrangements designed to give the towns and other authorities the means to fulfil the remit that has now been given to them. Establishment of an efficient and impartial local administration that is attentive to people's needs similarly still seems a long way off. So does the achievement of citizens' participation in local development through civil society institutions; the delays relate both to defining objectives and resources and to carrying out and monitoring activities.

The MATD's name, "Ministry for Territorial Administration and Decentralization", replacing the "Ministry for Territorial Administration and Security", illustrates the government's political will to promote decentralization in Burkina Faso and ensure that its decentralization policy is more consistent. Moreover, in line with this new approach, the government has recently given the MATD responsibility for the CND and its two instrumental agencies, FODECOM and SAGEDECOM. These have become respectively the Local Authority Start-up Fund (i.e. no longer dealing only with the *communes*) and the Support Agency (instead of Support Service). The agencies' functions have not altered fundamentally. In addition, the establishment of a *Collège national des économies locales* (National Committee on Local Economies, or CNEL), chaired by the Director of Decentralization, shows that the government has the will to strengthen local authorities' capabilities by implementing a programme to revive local economies. This programme is designed, *inter alia*, to facilitate the involvement of central ministries in implementing the revival programme, ensure consistency with national policies and synergy between policies and activities to revive local economies, develop facilities to store information deriving from the programme and boost discussions about improving services provided by central government to the local authorities.

So far, decentralization has affected only 18% of the population: those living in the 49 *communes* said to have comprehensive powers. This means that we are basically looking at an urban phenomenon, so there is a need to extend the process to rural areas. This objective, on which the CND is now working, is entirely consistent with the development policy of the government which, in 2000, approved a policy paper on decentralized rural development based on a number of principles:

- full empowerment of grassroots communities, which involves bottom-up planning of activities, as well as putting local communities themselves in charge of projects;
- broadening the scope of investments funded to meet the priorities set by the communities themselves;

- refocusing the role of the State and involving private operators and civil society;
- co-funding by means of external subsidies and local contributions;
- dialogue and consultation;
- flexibility.

Along the same lines, the government adopted a *Programme national de développement rural décentralisé* (national programme for decentralized rural development, or PNDRD), which can be seen to be an attempt to capitalize on participatory rural development experiments, including village land-use management schemes. This programme, which is supported by several development partners including the World Bank and UNDP, involves:

- backing up the decentralization policy by transferring resources and responsibilities to rural communities and gradually giving rural authorities the means to undertake village development programmes;
- training and increasing the capabilities of rural communities and suppliers of services to them;
- helping participants in the rural development process to expand the scope of their efforts, harmonize their approaches and improve the quality of their work;
- reducing rural poverty through a decentralized and participatory strategy, designed to improve rural communities' access to basic services and infrastructure and develop the productive potential of the rural sector while protecting the environment.

The grassroots development process set in train by the dynamics of decentralization should enable local people, particularly the disadvantaged, to participate more directly in managing local affairs and realize their potential. The 1998 law on how the territory of Burkina Faso was to be organized provides members of local communities with the right to information about the management of local affairs. This right may be exercised through public debate, access to the budget and accounts of the local authorities, access to council meetings (except closed sessions) and publication of committee discussions and local authority proceedings. However, very few people are aware of this right to information, with the result that these helpful provisions are not used to hold the local authorities to account for their management. Nevertheless, decentralization does generate opportunities for development that are fair for the population as a whole and ensure closer contacts and sharing of information between the various stakeholders in local governance. It provides a framework for drawing up development programmes appropriate to local community needs, especially for vulnerable social groups (such as women and children). These groups generally crave satisfaction of their fundamental needs, including access to basic social services (education, health, etc.) that are often lacking in rural areas. Being located as close as possible to the grassroots, the local authorities should in principle be able to prepare and implement programmes likely to meet the community's demands.

In this respect, the laws providing guidelines on implementing decentralization provided for a transfer of powers and resources enabling local

authorities to meet the above-mentioned concerns. These laws enshrine the transfer of powers in the fields of land ownership and management, local and regional planning, town planning, environment, natural resource management, economic development and planning, health, sanitation, education, occupational training, literacy training, culture, sports and leisure activities, civil defence, welfare and emergency services, funeral arrangements and cemeteries, water, electricity, markets, abattoirs and fairs. The new legislation recognized real powers in respect of estates and land ownership, particularly through creation of an estate under local community administration, by breaking up the national estate (State-owned property). The 1998 law gives local authorities power to create or acquire movable or immovable property in order to meet their operational needs or support their activities. In addition, the law provides for a transfer of financial resources in the form of an overall allocation for local authority operating costs or of State grants. This allocation is included in the national budget and divided between the provinces and the *communes*. The law also gives provinces fiscal powers in respect of taxes and duties collected outside the *communes* (royalties, residential taxes and taxes on property “in mortmain”). The fiscal powers of the *communes* are expressed through the availability of revenue from taxes and duties collected within their boundaries (property tax, royalties, residential taxes and taxes on property “in mortmain”). In this respect, one might wonder how these resources are to be distributed since the provinces and *communes* have virtually the same income sources. In addition, the decentralized territorial authorities receive revenue from providing services and exploiting their property. The division of activities between the State and local authorities is relatively clear-cut even though there may be confusion over certain points.

There can be no cut and dried answer to the question of whether the local authorities have the necessary capability to take on the tasks allotted to them. In principle, as can be seen from the spirit of the TODs, all necessary resources will be made available to the local authorities. This is why the law indicating a timetable for implementing decentralization provides for a phased transfer of powers and resources:

- a period of five years before the powers and resources to be transferred to the local authorities are actually made available to them. This period is reduced to two years in cases where the transfer does not require the enactment of new laws or regulations;
- with the aim of achieving the actual transfer of powers in respect of health, education and culture as quickly as possible, a period of three years from enactment of the law to assess the resources (equipment, personnel and finance) needed by local authorities to fulfil their remit in each of these areas.

Decentralization is aimed at promoting local economic development through more-balanced arrangements benefiting outlying regions and grassroots groups, especially the poor. As the local authorities tend to be close to those groups, while the State is often at a distance from people's concerns, the former are often better able to tackle the needs of poor people and children. However, success with this transfer of powers and

resources is partly dependent on the government genuinely having the political will to see the decentralization game through to the end, ensuring that the human, material and financial resources – without which local authorities' ability to operate would be constrained – really are transferred.

The process currently under way is as noted not purely administrative. It involves a substantial transfer not only of powers but also of financial resources: these are supposed to guarantee the autonomy (rather than the independence) of local authorities vis-à-vis central government. At the same time as this decentralization process, the government is trying to accompany and support the process by a policy of breaking into smaller units.

Nevertheless there is a human resources problem posed by the dynamics of decentralization. Indeed, one of the main characteristics of the staff of local authorities is their inadequate quality and quantity. In 1995, the staff of territorial authorities was estimated to number 2,632 people, of whom 1,338 were employed by the provinces and 1,294 by the *communes*. This is fewer than in 1970, when local authorities employed 3,383 people. However, generally speaking, the skills available are not very competitive. Local councillors therefore need more-comprehensive training in order to prepare them for taking over the management and control functions devolved to them as part of the decentralization process. For example, the staff of publicly provided social services, especially healthcare, form the bulk of employees. Improving the quality of services provided by local staff requires placing particular emphasis on their training before and during employment. In its three-year programme, the CND designed and provided educational materials and decision-making tools for councillors and local administrators, and also literacy and training programmes for local councillors, especially in rural areas, in preparation for the establishment of *communes* in those areas. In all cases, staffing needs will probably become more pressing when powers are transferred. Local leaders must therefore be supported so that they can propose and justify local development strategies within their communities.

As far as oversight is concerned, the law on decentralization in Burkina Faso provides that the State, as guarantor of national solidarity, will share responsibility with the local authorities and organize arrangements between them. The State's relationship with the local authorities involves partnership, association and supervision. In practice, the system of oversight is still, in principle, supervision. The seven ways in which, according to the law, the State may oversee the local authorities are all divided between supervision of the local councillors themselves and supervision of their actions. With regard to the actions, the line ministry has powers to approve, to require prior authorization and to annul. With regard to the councillors themselves, the line ministry may suspend, replace, inspect or dismiss them. The Minister for Territorial Administration ensures oversight of purely administrative matters. As regards budgets, especially prior approval of local budgets, the Minister for Territorial Administration and the Minister of Finance are jointly responsible for oversight.

Since the colonial era, the traditional authorities have often played a supporting role to the government, but these relationships have not

always been smooth. Under the First Republic, President Yameogo attempted, as part of his strategy of political control, to sideline the traditional authorities with a view to gradually abolishing them and replacing them with ordinary citizens elected by universal suffrage to act as village chiefs. After the fall of the First Republic, the new State authorities became reconciled with the traditional authorities which, in return, were supposed to assist the State in collecting taxes. Relationships with the State were to become antagonistic especially following the revolution led by Thomas Sankara. Considered by the revolutionary government as conservative forces opposed to social change, chieftaincies were fought against and marginalized, while their functions in the legal, land ownership and administrative fields were abolished in favour of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, set up by the revolutionary government. The policy of reconciliation implemented after the Popular Front took power resulted, amongst other things, in rehabilitation of the chieftaincies. Since then, chiefs seem to have played an increased political role alongside the presidential party. Some have even embarked on political careers, becoming local councillors or members of parliament. The increased number of MPs who are also traditional chiefs (four in 1992, 20 or so in 1997) is puzzling. This political involvement by the chiefs is in fact extremely controversial, particularly by reason of the contradiction between the respect due to chiefs and the criticism that it is often directed at MPs. Consequently, there must be an in-depth analysis of the place and role of traditional chiefs within Burkina Faso's democratic system. Some observers think that traditional and customary authorities should remain politically neutral and are calling for a law defining their rights and duties.

There is currently no legal framework governing relationships between elected representatives and the traditional authorities. Traditional law no longer has effect within our system of positive law, as it was explicitly abrogated in the law on individuals and the family enacted in 1990. However, in practice, there may be all kinds of links between the two types of authority. Elected representatives very often co-operate with traditional leaders, frequently for strategic reasons. For example, when national elections are held, the first people that elected representatives seem to speak to are traditional leaders, as the latter play a relatively important role in determining how people at the grassroots will vote. Traditional chiefs always receive the consideration and respect due to their rank within the rural social order and thus are closely involved, usually for specific tactical or strategic reasons, with elected representatives.

Despite the shortcomings in implementing decentralization on the ground, noticeable progress is beginning to be made. With the forthcoming appointment of regional governors and the establishment of the rural *communes*, the political dimension of decision-making by the local communities will be in place. This last phase in the decentralization process could be a catalyst for grass-roots development. The process of transferring political, administrative, financial and economic skills and capabilities (so that local communities can take charge of their own development) is progressing slowly but surely. It could, however, be seriously delayed by lack of ability to mobilize financial resources, so decentralization cannot be restricted merely to administrative functions.

2.4 Respect for political institutions, and the rule of law

Looking at the existing legal arsenal in Burkina Faso, it is not unreasonable to claim that there is a basis for the rule of law, even though effective application of the principle is doubtful in that existing laws are not always enforced. Overall, the situation seems to be relatively satisfactory as regards the rule of law in Burkina Faso. This is largely due to the democratic progress achieved in the country since the 1991 Constitution was adopted. However, it is also true that shadowy areas remain, having regard to the many unpunished crimes, the dysfunctional operation of the judicial system and the abuses committed by the law enforcement services, whose officers often work under unrewarding conditions, lacking appropriate resources.

Nevertheless, in the event of an abuse of power by government officials, citizens are entitled to refer the matter to the relevant court to seek redress in respect of the rights that have been violated, as recognized by the Constitution, which asserts that all Burkinan citizens are entitled to have their cases heard by an independent and impartial court (Article 4). However, this right is not always upheld, precisely because of the inadequacies of the Burkinan judicial system. There exists the institution of the Ombudsman in Burkina Faso, and this authority has power to mediate in disputes that arise between citizens and the government. However, the Ombudsman has no power to sanction the latter.

2.5 An independent electoral authority

The electoral code enshrined in Law No. 014-2001/AN of 3 July 2001 institutes a permanent *Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante* (Independent National Electoral Commission, or CENI) with an extensive remit, covering the run-up to an election (preparatory operations), the conduct of the election and the period following an election. The problem of ensuring independence for the body responsible for organizing elections has always been the source of disputes and frustration within political circles in Burkina Faso. CENI's independence needs first of all to be guaranteed by law, but also by its members, since independence also depends on the goodwill of members and their attachment to democratic values. Even though current laws assert such independence, the composition of CENI might cast doubt on the independence of its members. In fact, two-thirds of them, i.e. 10 people, are representatives of the various political parties, so their impartiality cannot be absolutely certain. CENI is also a permanent institution.

Participation in elections is undoubtedly an important indicator of the good democratic health of a country in transition and, secondarily, of the legitimacy of those who govern the country. In Burkina Faso, participation remains low, having regard to the issues that the country needs to tackle, even though a substantial improvement has been recorded. The turnouts in the 1991 presidential election and the 1992 and 1997 parliamentary elections were 25.28%, 33.8% and 44.53% of registered voters respectively.

This low participation in electoral contests raises serious questions and also weakens the legitimacy of those elected and, ultimately, their authority. If we take the case of the presidential election, we can see,

from the turnout and the number of registered voters (3.4 million people), that the Head of State was elected by 19% of voters, or 7% of the total population of the country (then around 9 million people). Similarly, the 107 members of the first parliament of the Fourth Republic were elected by 34% of registered voters, or 14% of the population. As for the results of the parliamentary election of 5 May 2002, despite the highest turnout for 25 years (around 64%), there can be no hiding the considerable drop in the number of those voting compared with the 1997 election (around 400,000 fewer voters). Even before the election was held, the Burkinan electorate had not shown much enthusiasm for registering on the electoral roll. In fact, fewer than 3 million citizens registered to vote, making a difference of between 1,200,000 and 2,000,000 voters in comparison with the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1998 and 1997 respectively. Many factors lie behind this low participation, including a change to the method of registering to vote, disenchantment with elected representatives, lack of civic culture, etc. The choice of the method of personal registration, on a direct and individual basis, although it may test the degree of citizens' civic consciousness, could have had a negative impact on participation by marginalized groups, who feel little concerned by elections as they no longer have faith in politicians. Consequently, there is a danger that this method could exclude from the electoral roll those citizens who have little or no faith in the usefulness of voting.

Poverty too is an obstacle to participation, when one realizes the difficulties faced by many citizens in getting hold of the necessary evidence of identity to register on the electoral roll. Efforts have been made by some civil society organizations to facilitate access by certain groups (particularly women) to identity documents and voter information, but these efforts are insufficient. It is therefore important to step up civic and voter education campaigns targeting both the poor and young people. Indeed, it is customary to say that young people are the future of the nation and, consequently, the future of democracy. It seems, however, that young people in Burkina Faso are disenchanted with politics and electoral contests, because of the behaviour of elected representatives, unkept promises and so on.

The fact that the voting age has been set at 21 may exclude a substantial fraction of young people, but one may wonder whether those under the age of 21 have the necessary intellectual capacity to understand the real meaning of voting, especially as their elders frequently stay away from the polling booth. The real reason for the disenchantment of young people seems to be more a lack of civic culture and the loss of faith in political leaders than the problem of the voting age.

Adoption of the electoral code by consensus amongst everyone involved in politics, together with CENI's satisfactory management of the last elections, has boosted the credibility of Burkina Faso's electoral system. This should help consolidate democracy, provided that the system does inspire confidence among both politicians and voters, especially the poor, who often feel excluded from politics. Nevertheless, much still needs to be done to increase participation by citizens, especially the poor.

2.6 Relationships between current structures and between formal and real powers

Since the 1983 revolution in Burkina Faso, traditional legal structures have been excluded from the legal and institutional scope of the modern State, despite the fact that traditional customs and structures still have great resonance. Custom is no longer applied by public officials and traditional structures no longer play any official administrative or jurisdictional role in the operation of government. Consequently, as regards individual and family law, the rules and regulations drawn up by the State, rather than custom, apply to all citizens. With regard to land ownership, the law enacted by the State on agrarian and land reform now governs land use. Additionally, village chiefs have been replaced by administrative officials appointed by the government. Of course, the real situation has not yet come into line with the universalism and standardization claimed by State law, and traditional customs and structures largely continue to hold sway.

As for access to basic social services provided by the State or international institutions, this is considered to be an essential component of sustainable human development. Basic social services are in fact the means by which people's wellbeing is attained, and making them accessible should be effective in reducing poverty. However, it emerges that these services are not always accessible to the bulk of vulnerable people in Burkina Faso.

The right to education is guaranteed by the Constitution, but the vast majority of the population of Burkina Faso is illiterate. The primary school enrolment rate is still only 41%, with a very large proportion of girls not being in school. Only 30% of the population could read and write in 2002. Poor households (18.8% enrolment) are three times less likely than rich households to send their children to school. There are several reasons why poor people lack access to basic social services:

- the cost and the lack of assistance, i.e. the high cost of schooling and healthcare for poor people;
- geographical distance, which is something that cannot be by-passed when considering the access of the poor to health and education services in particular;
- socio-cultural barriers. Some traditional views and practices in the rural areas seriously hinder access to basic social services. For example, geomancers may be consulted to decide whether or not a child should have access to education or even to healthcare.

Education – theoretically a right but not really free for everyone – is basically provided by the State, with an increasing role being played by the private sector, something that is even acknowledged by the Constitution. The number of primary and secondary schools open is continuing each year to increase. Some non-governmental organizations have taken up the fight against illiteracy and ignorance in Burkina Faso. For example, the FDC has set up community schools, whose aim is to provide children beyond the official school age with an opportunity to learn to read and write. This NGO has also instituted other projects such as school canteens and micro-credit solely for schoolchildren so that they

can develop other activities. However, in some regions, the lack of schools and teachers is still a sad reality, despite the efforts of the State and its partners to provide genuine universal access to education.

In July 1999, the government started to meet the challenge by adopting the *Plan décennal de développement de l'éducation de base* (10-year plan for the development of basic education, or PDDEB), which was officially launched in September 2002. Among other targets, this plan aims to raise the literacy rate to 40% and the school enrolment rate to 70% by 2010, with particular emphasis on girls and the most disadvantaged rural areas. Targets for the first phase of the PDDEB include 3,180 new classes, and teachers' accommodation, the printing and distribution of millions of books and thousands of educational manuals, etc. From this point of view, it can be seen as a plan designed to achieve universal education between now and 2010. However noble these ambitions might be, the plan has been criticized by some people in educational circles who fear that it will reduce the quality of the education.

The right to health is also recognized by the Constitution. Unfortunately, the serious poverty that affects population groups, the absence of a universal healthcare system and the inadequate resources and operational capabilities of the State make it very difficult for the vast majority of the population actually to exercise this right. Access to medical care, to give just one example, is far from being a reality for everyone. The HIV/AIDS pandemic, with an estimated 9.8% prevalence, is hitting the working population, who cannot afford the prohibitive cost of antiretroviral medication. National and international solidarity with AIDS sufferers did, however, find expression during 2002 in a reduction in the cost of drugs and the funding of treatment for the sick.

Generally speaking, the average rate of attendance at health centres, i.e. the number of sick people who consulted a doctor, was 39.5%, which is low for a population that overall is poor. It is hardly surprising that healthcare coverage is inadequate, as is staffing. As an illustration, there is only one State-registered nurse for 10,993 people, whereas WHO standards prescribe a ratio of one nurse for 5,000 people; similarly, Burkina Faso has one midwife for 28,233 people while the WHO recommends a ratio of 1:5000. As health is the cornerstone of people's wellbeing, lack of access to healthcare is a permanent source of poverty.

The government of Burkina Faso is undoubtedly making praiseworthy efforts to lift the country out of its poverty, thanks to relatively good governance applauded by sponsors, especially the Bretton Woods institutions. However, it cannot be denied that a large proportion of the population is still not enjoying the fruits of economic growth. The annual report on implementation of the poverty reduction strategy that has been applied since 2000 acknowledges this: good macroeconomic performance is taking its time to translate into significant improvements in a housewife's basket of goods and people's living conditions. The estimated share of health in the 2002 budget was 5.8% of the total allocation, while education had a share of approximately 10.9%. In an attempt to tackle the many challenges, the government is trying to allocate an ever-increasing share of the budget to the social provisions. Consequently, in the 2003 budget approved by the National Assembly on 19 December last year by a vote of 68 to 43, 38.21% of the State's own resources

(558,128,272 trillion CFA francs) will be allocated to these sectors. This will be on top of the HIPC (Highly Indebted Poor Countries) funding which amounts to 28.6 billion CFA francs. These budget allocations will not, however, suffice to guarantee the social entitlements of the population.

To sum up, the right to education and the right to health are not effectively guaranteed for everyone in our society, especially the population of rural areas. Despite this, access to basic social services for the poor should, among other things, result in greater participation, an improvement in the productivity of human resources, better control of demographic growth, greater equity and equality between men and women and, finally, the possibility of achieving a sustainable livelihood. Nevertheless, the situation is unlikely to improve if budget allocations to the government departments responsible for managing social services remain modest. Further efforts need to be made to reduce social inequalities. Redressing social imbalances between population groups and improving the groups' access to basic social services could lead to a change in how the poor think, greater legitimacy for the State, and greater political participation by the people.

2.7 The political party system

There can be no such thing as a party system unless there are at least two political groupings that reflect in the political arena the profound social divisions within civil society. In Burkina Faso, the Constitution recognizes a freedom to create political parties, a provision that cannot be overturned through a constitutional amendment. This produced a proliferation of political parties in Burkina Faso, the exact number fluctuating in accordance with personal interests. There are thought to be about sixty recognized parties in Burkina Faso, a large proportion of which barely exist on the ground. The number of parties contesting the parliamentary elections in 1992 was 27 as against the 67 that were recognized, and nine had representatives in the National Assembly. Five years later, in 1997, 13 out of 47 recognized parties took part in the parliamentary elections, again with nine parties having representatives in the National Assembly. In the latest parliamentary elections, of May 2002, 30 parties took part, and 13 won seats. Since then, new parties have been set up and some MPs have changed parties.

The results of the 2002 elections show that the CDP, ADF/RDA and PDP/PS received 70% of the total vote and 75% of seats in the National Assembly, with the other parties having from one to five representatives. If a threshold of 5% had been set for representation in parliament, as happens in certain countries, only the three main parties would now have representatives in the Burkinan National Assembly. One is therefore entitled to wonder whether Burkina Faso actually has a three-party electoral system and whether a limited multi-party system (like the three-party system of the Third Republic, between 1978 and 1980) might not be too problematical, especially as analysis of the party system in Burkina Faso reveals three major groupings:

- the presidential political spectrum, dominated by the CDP;
- what is called the moderate opposition, dominated by the ADF-RDA;

- what is called the radical opposition, dominated by the PDP-PS.

In reality, the Burkinan party system is similar to a multi-party system with one dominant party. The majority party – that of the President – has capitalized on the heritage of the “popular structures” of the revolution, and identifies with the existing political regime. It comes far ahead of the other parties in terms of seats: 73% in the first parliament, 91% in the second and 51% in the present parliament. The next largest number of seats was won by the CNPP with 12%, while the PDP had 5% and the ADF-RDA had 15.31%. Some analysts go even further, wondering whether Burkina Faso could be said to have, *de facto*, a one-party system, bearing in mind the marginalization of the opposition and the dominance of the majority party, which directly or indirectly controls the three constitutional powers, to which may be added the civil service. Such a system may mean political stability, but can in the long run lead to ossification of the ruling party and discourage the opposition, as well as opening the door to extra-political protests or activities, given that a democratic changeover between parties is unlikely. Being aware of this danger, the ruling party has accepted some of the opposition’s demands for institutional reform (re-establishing the clause in the Constitution limiting the number of terms the President may serve; adopting rules relating to the opposition, a law on funding political party activities and campaigns and a new and more equitable electoral system, etc.). These reforms, combined with natural erosion of the CDP, went some way towards reducing the dominance of the ruling party. As a result, this party only obtained 49.51% of votes cast and 51% of seats at the parliamentary election on 5 May 2002, as against 68.61% of votes cast and 91% of seats in the 1997 election. The new electoral system also seems to have resulted in the parliamentary opposition achieving a less peripheral position. This is particularly due to:

- the increased size of constituencies (and consequently the number of seats allocated), with proportional representation playing a larger part;
- replacing the “highest average” formula with the “largest remainder”, to allocate the remaining seats. This new formula is supposed to favour the small parties.

Public funding of political parties has two components.

- During electoral campaigns, each political party receives an amount proportional to the number of candidates put up by the various political groupings (in municipal, provincial and parliamentary elections); for presidential elections, the money is divided equally between the candidates (Article 8 of Law No. 12-2000);
- Outside electoral campaigns, a state subsidy is granted to all political parties that obtained at least 5% of the votes cast at the last parliamentary elections, distribution being proportional to the number of votes received (Article 14 of the above-mentioned law).

There are two main shortcomings in the relevant legislation: the absence of provisions regulating the private funding of political groupings and the lack of a cap on electoral expenditure. This produces an imbalance in favour of the “richest” parties, especially the ruling party. These political groupings are wealthy enough to afford the luxury of their own

“stewards”. Although these are not, strictly speaking, armed militia, they have already been in the news because of their violence against activists from other parties. This happened during public demonstrations inspired by the socio-political crisis following the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo, and during campaigning for the latest parliamentary elections, when clashes were reported in various localities.

In view of the fact that many parties have been set up based on personal ambition, their ability to come up with credible visions of society or programmes of government is limited. However, some parties do claim in their manifestos to give high priority to social aspects. During the run-up to the parliamentary election on 5 May 2002, the ruling CDP, which claims to be a social democratic party, made the theme of its manifesto “promoting education, health, the environment and food security for all”. The CDP said that these were “sectors that have received attention over the last five years, and the party’s commitment will be even greater over the coming years”³. The main opposition party (ADF/RDA), which claims adherence to liberal doctrine, asserted that its “purpose is to promote the sustainable human development of society through meeting citizens’ basic needs, i.e. health, food, water, education, housing, freedom, justice, peace, healthy living conditions and a healthy environment”⁴. It should also be stressed that, just before the debate on the Finance Bill for 2003, MPs in the CDP and the two opposition groups, ADF and “Justice and Democracy”, organized internal discussions about reducing poverty, while MPs in the PDP/PS held discussions about the discrepancies between citizens’ formally recognized rights and the reality of social exclusion which most of them experience. All this bears witness to a degree of sensitivity on the part of Burkinan political parties to social issues, especially poverty.

Whether they are on the government or opposition side, Burkina Faso’s political parties suffer from many inadequacies. Many of them have no social base and look as if they are parties created around political figures rather than built around a vision of society or programme for government. Consequently, the stability of the political regime – which merges into the CDP – and the apparent robustness of that party are equalled only by the unity around a single man, the President of Burkina Faso. It is no secret that, hiding behind the seamless façade are various factions led by the system’s dignitaries, competing to control the distribution of strategic government appointments and jostling for position with a view to the fall, however hypothetical that may be, of President Compaoré.

Burkina Faso’s opposition has meanwhile been split between what are called radical and moderate wings, and seems to have many shortcomings.

- It is deeply divided and heterogeneous, and has on several occasions demonstrated its lack of genuine tactical instinct through its inability to unite or form strategic electoral alliances.
- It has negligible financial resources and few activists and leaders, although it does have some brilliant personalities.

³ CDP, Promoting education, health, the environment and food security for all, April 2002, page 18.

⁴ General programme of the ADF/RDA, see the party’s website.

- Its strategy to gain power does not look to the long-term, apparently neglecting work on the ground and failing to assert its presence in all available forums, whether institutional or other.

Many opposition political parties, especially those from the so-called radical wing, virtually confine themselves to protesting in the media (especially the press) against the dominance of the ruling party and their sidelining from politics and government action. Many of them also criticize social shortcomings, extreme poverty and a failure to respect the fundamental principles of the rule of law or the separation of constitutional powers. Above all, they assert the need to reform the judicial system, so as to end the succession of unpunished murders and economic crimes, and for greater respect for human rights. Other favourite themes are good governance, corruption, transparency in managing public affairs, and reducing poverty.

Women are poorly represented within political parties and representative institutions. In fact, only twelve women were elected to parliament at the May 2002 elections, following ten in 1997 and a mere four in 1992. At the 2000 municipal elections, a degree of enthusiasm was seen amongst women, with huge numbers actually voting. Unfortunately, there are only three women (including two district mayors) among the 53 mayors, and only 228 women among the 1,092 municipal councillors. Appropriate measures should be taken to encourage women to stand as candidates for elected positions, not only in the local authorities but also in the National Assembly. It is true that some progress has been achieved, but this is far from sufficient considering that women constitute more than half the population of Burkina Faso and seem, according to empirical observation, to have a relatively strongly turnout in elections. The under-representation of women may be due to various sociological factors. Generally speaking, society does not tend to look favourably on women's involvement in politics, trying to confine them to domestic work and thus exclude them from a political career, seen as the preserve of men. However, one may also wonder whether the upper echelons of parties dominated by men really have the political will to promote women's participation in political life.

3 Human Rights

3.1 Human rights violations

Having ratified several international instruments on human rights, Burkina Faso is obliged to send reports to the monitoring mechanisms set up by some of these instruments. This applies to the 1990 Convention on the rights of the child, the 1980 Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the 1984 Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Specific periodic reports, notably on trafficking in children and on deprivation of migrants' freedoms in Burkina Faso, have been submitted at the request of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. The report on women was drawn up by a committee led by the Ministry for Women's Development, while that on the rights of the child was drawn up by the Ministry of Social Welfare. However, Burkina Faso has never submitted a report on torture.

Article 62 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights provides that each State party must undertake to submit a report, every two years, on the legislative or other measures taken in order to give effect to the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed by the Charter. Burkina Faso, which ratified the Charter on 6 July 1984, fulfilled this obligation by submitting its initial report to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in October 1998. The second report – which was drawn up late in 2002, i.e. four years after the first one – was prepared jointly by the Ministry for Human Rights and several civil society associations. Generally speaking, it is noted that the government of Burkina Faso is not up to date in submitting periodic reports in fulfilment of the commitments it has undertaken vis-à-vis the international community in respect of human rights.

Moreover, the *Mouvement burkinabe des droits de l'homme et des peuples* (Burkinan Human and Peoples' Rights Movement, or MBDHP) produces and submits to international bodies an annual report on the human rights situation in Burkina Faso.

On the whole, the authorities show respect for human rights. Fundamental freedoms apply, providing this is in accordance with current laws and regulations. Civil liberties are generally guaranteed and quite widely respected, as is freedom of opinion, although human rights violations do still occur. But human rights are sometimes not fully effective because of

the Burkinan justice system not operating properly. In addition, the deterioration in security and rise in crime in Burkina Faso are reasons for concern, despite government initiatives to put things right. The overall human rights situation is, moreover, exacerbated by the population's growing impoverishment, diminished security and adverse humanitarian, social, economic and political impact of the conflict that is devastating Côte d'Ivoire, a neighbouring country on which Burkina Faso is to a great extent dependent.

The government has implemented institutional, legal and organizational reforms in an attempt to improve the Burkinan justice system. An action plan for legal reform is also now being implemented, aimed at making the system more accessible to the people and enabling it to play its part effectively. This action plan provides, in particular, for construction and rehabilitation of infrastructure and the recruitment of new judicial staff. But the seriousness of the crisis in the Burkinan justice system also requires a clear political will to guarantee the independence of the judiciary, and to let the judges work in the courts without direct or indirect interference. This is far from being the case at the moment. Burkina Faso, which has ratified most of the regional and international human rights instruments, has specific institutions responsible for promoting and protecting the rights of individuals. One example is the Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights, created on 10 June 2002. This ministry's main activities in relation to human rights comprise the provision of information, raising awareness, training, extending knowledge, receiving and processing non-judicial documents on violations and contributing to the adoption of standards to protect the rights. In addition, the National Human Rights Commission, created on 20 November 2001 and officially established on 10 December 2001, is ready to start work. It has a State-allocated budget for its activities.

In terms of combating insecurity, the government has produced, and is implementing, an action plan that provides for immediate, medium and long-term action. However, due to insufficient material, logistical, equipment and staff resources, the security forces have not yet managed to eliminate the problem. Moreover, their methods – which are often tough and speedy – are questioned by the human rights movements. The government does not yet seem to have found a satisfactory answer to the need to square the circle of guaranteeing people's safety whilst respecting individual rights. In the meantime, the government has decided to increase the Ministry of Security's capital investment by 59% for 2003. Despite recent progress in developing Burkina Faso's democracy, the marks of authoritarian regimes still appear to exist, as testified by the regular police repression of student protests at the University of Ouagadougou.

3.2 Relationship between the Constitution, laws and traditional legal structures

In any democratic state, the constitution represents the fundamental legal basis for all other laws. All laws must be passed in accordance with the constitution and must respect it as the higher standard. Indeed, there exists a whole hierarchy of legal standards, with the constitution at the

apex. The constitution must be respected by both the national assembly and the government. The traditional authorities no longer form a part of Burkina Faso's positive law. Consequently, the human rights enshrined in the Constitution cannot be challenged by the law, by the government's regulations nor by traditional customs. The Constitutional Court and all of Burkina Faso's lower courts must ensure respect for this hierarchy of standards by ruling against unconstitutional laws or regulations.

3.3 Introducing a peace culture into the programme and education

Peace undoubtedly contributes to respect for human rights. But peace is also a state of mind that needs to be not only accepted in theory but also reflected in people's behaviour. In this respect, it must permeate the education and training of children, young people and adults. In some local cultures, peace is a value that is instilled in community members from a very early age. However, with the dismantling of traditional society, it seems that this value is being lost. Unfortunately, in so-called 'modern' society, there are no real programmes aimed at promoting a culture of peace within the formal national education system. At the instigation of the Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights, numerous training sessions have been held for various social groups, particularly the law enforcement services, which are responsible for the protection and safety of the people. A human rights glossary in the country's languages has been introduced so that people have a better understanding of legal notions and terms, and to enable a smoother relationship between the people and the structures serving them. However, the action being undertaken by this department is, for the moment, limited. There are numerous human rights organizations in Burkina Faso, but very few of them are focusing on a peace culture, and very few are capable of reaching the whole of society. Programmes extending knowledge to illiterate groups are essential in order to promote mutual respect and safeguard neighbourliness.

3.4 Contemporaneous relations with NGOs and Burkinian community-based organizations

There are numerous civil society organizations that help monitor and assess the Burkinian human rights situation. One is the *Mouvement burkinabè des droits de l'homme et des peuples* (Burkinian Movement for Human and Peoples' Rights, or MBDHP), which has produced regular reports on the human rights situation in Burkina Faso. It has, for example, produced a report on the summary executions carried out by the security forces in 2002 during the "war" on insecurity. During 2001, the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights had to send a fact-finding mission to Burkina Faso following a complaint made by the MBDHP. It should, however, be noted that, in December 2002, the government-created National Human Rights Commission produced its first report on the human rights situation in the country, with the support of several civil society organizations. According to information from the Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights, the Commission's report will not be discussed and adopted until the next session of the Commission, to be held in Niamey during May 2003.

3.5 The implications of HIV/AIDS for the power situation

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, with an estimated 9.8% prevalence, is hitting the working population, who cannot afford the prohibitive cost of antiretroviral medication. National and international solidarity with AIDS sufferers did, however, find expression during 2002, with a reduction in the costs of drugs and the funding of treatment for the sick. But great efforts are still required before the right to an adequate standard of living for all can become a reality.

HIV/AIDS necessarily impacts on formulation of the government's development policies and programmes. The extent of the pandemic, and its negative impact on the economy and the grassroots sectors of society, have forced the government to react vigorously. It has established a Permanent Secretariat attached to the Presidential Office, to fight AIDS, and intends to focus on communication, information and education, the involvement of civil society and mobilization of the community.

But the spread of HIV/AIDS also raises a problem in terms of respect for human rights, in particular the rights to health, work, reproduction, a decent standard of living, etc. Despite an awareness-raising campaign on voluntary screening, people prefer to live in ignorance of their HIV status through fear or embarrassment of what others might think and the discriminatory measures to which they may be subjected. Discriminatory practices based on HIV status are not yet widespread but, unless care is taken, they could become so.

3.6 Implications of the presidential decree of 6 December 2000

Since the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo and his companions on 13 December 1998, the anniversary each year has become a day to remember such crimes. Protest marches are held throughout the country to demand that the truth in this case be brought to light. They are organized by the *Collectif des organisations démocratiques de masses et des partis politiques* (Coalition of democratic organizations and political parties), a group set up shortly after Mr Zongo's death. In order to curb the wave of protests, which threatened to undermine the regime's very foundations, the government – at the same time as undertaking institutional reforms – undertook a number of repressive measures, including the decree of 6 December 2000 prohibiting demonstrations in public places until further notice. Pressure from opposition parties and civil society, along with international opinion, forced the government to follow an appeasement policy, however, enabling a certain calm to be restored. Against this background, the controversial decree was retracted in 2001.

4 The rule of law

There can be no rule of law without a credible, independent, impartial, effective and accessible justice system capable of punishing human rights violations. On this point, it should be noted that most of the murders and economic crimes identified by the *Collège des Sages* (Committee of Prominent People) three years ago remain unpunished. To these must be added the heinous crimes committed over the last two years that have yet to be solved. The most famous of these cases, the crime to which journalist Norbert Zongo and his ill-fated companions fell victim, seems to have been suspended due to the apparently very concerning state of health of the only defendant in the case, Chief Warrant Officer Marcel Kafando. Everything points to the fact that his death would put an end to the proceedings, something that would not displease the government, suspected of having been behind the assassination.

It will apparently be difficult to get to the bottom of the crimes, and see justice triumph in the cases where government involvement is suspected. The reasons for this are difficult to establish. Does the complexity of the cases mean that trial preparations underway make no progress towards bringing the truth to light? Is it a lack of will on the part of the judges, who are subject to indirect pressure from the government? No-one knows. For some observers, the reasons are to be found in the lack of independence of the judiciary. This is the opinion of the *Collectif de lutte contre l'impunité* (Coalition against Impunity), which has no hesitation in describing the Burkinan justice system as “justice under orders”. For these pessimistic observers, only a regime change will one day enable some of these crimes to be resolved.

5 At village and community level

5.1 The exercise of power at village and community level

In Burkina Faso, there are “non-State” societies, described as lineage societies, and “State” societies, with a structure of customary leaders (chieftaincies). In “non-State” societies, political authority is not centralized but exercised through lineage chiefs or village heads, more often than not on the basis of seniority or gerontocracy. In chieftaincies, there is a centralized authority organized geographically in a pyramid arrangement.

In *Mossi* society, which comprises half the population, customary organization is extremely hierarchical and strong. One generally finds a village chief at the head of each village, assisted by a land chief. The village chiefs report to the canton chief, to whom district chiefs also report. But, since the revolution, the village chiefs have no longer been the official representatives of the government. They have been replaced by committees for the defence of the revolution and, since the end of the revolution, by village administrative officers, appointed by the Ministry for Territorial Administration.

5.2 Role and status of State bodies

The State of Burkina Faso is more a successor to the French colonial state than an historic product of local societies. Traditional authorities, customs and traditional structures are, for instance, not recognized by the modern State as forming a part of its institutions. This structural and legal dualism – which is, however, mitigated by the penetration of some traditional principles and values into the functioning of the modern State – results in the Burkinan State appearing to be a State endowed with little popular legitimacy, perceived as exogenous, distant from the cultures of most people, and this limits its capacity for intervention. Paradoxically, there is a strong popular demand for social services from the State, its leaders and elected representatives, these latter being supposed to defend the interests of the people. In practice, the people’s representatives deprive them of their sovereignty, are often cut off from the real world, and disinclined to be accountable.

In the civil service, the authoritarian relationships inherited from colonial times do not seem to have been challenged, even though the

demands of the rule of law are being increasingly internalised. Great effort is still required to make Burkina Faso's government a participatory one that consults the people and takes account of their needs and demands. Improving the governmental machine's effectiveness would also give it more legitimacy. It is for this reason that the Burkinan government is implementing a comprehensive reform of the administration through a number of laws and regulations. The most important of these are:

- a law on intervention methods and the division of responsibilities between the State and other development players in Burkina Faso;
- a law on standards for the creation, organization and management of governmental structures, aimed at putting an end to the anarchic creation of administrative arrangements, and ensuring greater co-ordination within the administration;
- a law on the legal system applicable to public employment and employees;
- an administrative order governing standards for drawing up programmes and activity reports in government departments;
- an administrative order indicating the general approach for procedures manuals and operating reports in government departments in general.

However, almost five years after these laws and regulations were passed, administrative governance in Burkina Faso does not seem to have undergone much of a qualitative shake-up.

5.3 Role of the private sector, religious institutions, traditional healers, harmful practices and community-based organizations

The private sector at village and community level is in its embryonic stages but plays an essential role insofar as it forms the engine for local economic development by producing goods and services. It comprises primarily small agricultural and livestock farmers and people working in the informal sector, such as craft workers. Its lack of structure and low level of support hinder its development and growth. However, it does enable the survival of communities in rural areas, through informal sector activities.

As regards the religious institutions, they have played a key role in Burkina Faso's development. Their areas of intervention are primarily healthcare, education, training and food security. They are, however, increasingly getting involved in female circumcision and HIV/AIDS work through awareness-raising sessions in mosques, churches and temples in villages and within communities. They are also guarantors of peace and morality. There is generally a peaceful co-existence between the different religious groups.

Given the great impoverishment at village and community level, traditional healers are increasingly coming to represent an essential support and reference-point in healthcare. Given their influence and the mystical curative powers the people believe they possess, the State realizes that it can no longer sideline them from its public health policies and

strategies, and so attempts are now underway to organize traditional healers more effectively and link them into modern treatments.

Of the harmful traditional and customary practices, first and foremost must be noted female circumcision. This practice, which is very harmful for women, has its origins in the system of social symbols at village and community level. The reasons most often cited for the practice are of a moral, religious, anatomical, aesthetic or financial nature. For many village community members, women who are not circumcised have a bad image; hence the extent of the practice. And yet it has terrible consequences for the women: problems during childbirth, the risk of illness and infection (including by AIDS), psychological problems and sexual trauma. To this must be added the fact that female circumcision is often combined with symbolic social practices that tend to reinforce the subjugation and marginalization of women. In fact, it transpires that the main reasons – both overt and covert – underlying the practice of female circumcision relate to respect for tradition and the submission of women, through a strong desire on the part of society to control women's sexuality. Aware of this situation, and of the harmful nature of this practice, the State – through the National Commission for Combating Excision and various civil society organizations – has launched a relentless war on this scourge, with support from several traditional and religious authorities. Despite this prevention and suppression policy, initiated by the State several years ago, the practice – considered as a crime in the criminal code – seems to have survived in a good number of communities.

5.3.1 The role of community-based organizations

Community-based organizations play a very important role in the village socio-economic development process, and provide a guarantee of social cohesion in rural communities. Acting as intermediaries between NGOs, the State and the grassroots, they carry out a variety of activities aimed at meeting the needs and concerns of local people. Some of these organizations have developed into modern forms, and their activities now extend beyond the village boundary. This is true of the Naam groups, who have organized themselves into federations.

5.4. Possibilities for poor women and men to promote their interests by influencing the decision-making and resource-allocation process

The great majority of poor people in Burkina Faso are farmers, living in rural areas. In addition, poverty primarily affects women. The current mechanisms for participation make little provision for them and give them few opportunities to discuss policies. For example, the Economic and Social Council, which forms the State forum in which civil society's views can be expressed, does not really allow the poor to express themselves or play a strategic role in economic and social policy. The Council is, in fact, rarely approached by government to give an opinion on policies, and when it is, its opinions – which are purely advisory – are rarely followed.

Despite the State's widespread rhetoric of participation, women and men who are poor have few possibilities to promote their interests by

influencing the decision-making and resource-allocation process in Burkina Faso. For example, despite efforts made to involve civil society, the process of drawing up the PRSP was never truly based on a genuine participation involving release of creative energies and synergy between all parties in society who were fighting poverty, especially those representing the poor themselves. The government has now undertaken to widen participation for review of the PRSP. Consultations between the State and civil society around problems of poverty have not thus far given rise to real communication enabling the final choices to be informed and guided ones. Similarly, due to their lack of organization and political punch, poor social groups and those who represent them have little possibility of influencing the budgetary resource-allocation process in their favour. Overall, despite its advantages, civil society in Burkina Faso is not sufficiently organized and does not have the technical capabilities to analyse the State's draft budgets or influence the choices made by the government and MPs when passing the national budget. Nonetheless, in recent years and with the support of the international community, the government has endeavoured to allocate a growing share to social activities as part of poverty reduction.

As regards the commitment of the government towards the social sectors, we can see that efforts have indeed been made by the government over recent years, with increasing resources being devoted to these sectors, as part of the 20/20 Initiative, the 1995 Letter of Intent on Sustainable Development Policy, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and, now, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. However, overall, these efforts are considered insufficient by civil society, especially having regard to the enormous deficits in these areas affecting communities in Burkina Faso.

Meeting peoples' essential needs for health and education is an essential means not only of attacking poverty, but also of increasing people's participation in society and decision-making, while fostering equity and equality between men and women. A sustainable reduction in poverty can only be envisaged if individuals have the necessary resources to take responsibility for themselves as a result of better investment in their basic abilities. It is therefore important that Sida should promote and foster universal access – with particular emphasis on poor or disadvantaged households – to health and education services. Moreover, this will help combat the effects of poverty and broaden opportunities for individuals, increasing their productivity. For all these reasons, Sida's activities in the fields of health and education will certainly assist the emergence of a more just and democratic society in Burkina Faso.

5.5 Rural populations as subjects rather than citizens

The great majority of rural inhabitants perceive themselves as subjects rather than as citizens concerned with their rights and duties in a modern State. Most people from village communities still have a parochial attitude, in which their political horizons stretch no further than their own community. The State is consequently perceived as being something distant. This situation is aggravated by the fact that, ever since colonial times, the authorities' relationship with the people has been an authori-

tarian one. And these people are distrustful and prefer to limit the occurrences of contact with their elected representatives and the authorities, unless they have no choice or must resolve a particular problem. Focused on improving the conditions of their lives, poor village people have neither the time nor the inclination to take an active part in managing public affairs by contacting their representatives and making constructive criticisms or suggestions, particularly when the authorities do nothing to encourage such political participation. Institutional mechanisms for participation are, of course, occasionally established, but the attitude that prevails in the villages continues to be one of being dependent subjects vis-à-vis the State. However, with the experience gained from increasing numbers of elections, along with the actions of NGOs, the media and civil society more generally, the emergence of a civic awareness can be noted among rural populations, who are making increasing demands on the State, the authorities and their elected representatives. This can be seen in the increasing criticism and protest action directed against the State and elected representatives. This reveals a desire on the part of the people to be treated with more respect, as adult citizens in their full right, and not as subjects.

6 The political culture

6.1 Public and political forums for the human rights debate

A survey carried out by the Ministry of Economy and Development, with support from the UNDP as part of the “Burkina 2025” national survey, showed that out of 1,520 representative people from Burkina Faso’s ten planning regions, almost 43% of those questioned stated that they knew nothing of the idea of democracy. Less than a third had a positive image of the Burkinan democratic system or thought it was a promising system for the future. In other words, a democratic culture is still weak in Burkina Faso.

The political parties and parliament form favourable political forums for dialogue on subjects of national interest such as human rights, democratization, poverty reduction, the war on corruption, etc. Within parliament, for example, there is a mechanism for MPs to address oral and written questions to government members on any issue they consider worthy of interest. The press (in particular private and independent publishers), radio and television also constitute public forums for free expression and discussion. Very often, political parties (opposition parties in particular) use the press and other media as a channel to make their voices heard and criticise government policies or action. But the media in Burkina Faso suffer from a number of inadequacies, such as the self-censorship practised by journalists and, in some cases (particularly in the State media), the failure to respect ethical principles, such as the desirability of pluralism, impartiality and balanced information.

6.2 Assessment of pluralism, tolerance and dialogue between the State and others involved in politics

Since the start of the democratization process in Burkina Faso, marked particularly by adoption of the June 1991 Constitution, principles of political, union and associative pluralism have been recognized. This has led to a proliferation of political parties and groupings, union movements and other bodies and groups all relatively independent in terms of management and representation, expressing their opinions in complete freedom. From this point of view, Burkina Faso’s population is generally quite tolerant of different, and even dissident, opinions. But the press sometimes publishes intolerant comments, leading to criticism and warnings from the *Conseil supérieur de l’information* (Higher Information Council) or independent civil society organizations.

Political dialogue between the parties, particularly between the majority and the opposition – and also between the State and civil society – is sometimes difficult given the weakness of democratic culture, dialogue and consultation, and the lack of trust between the players. Very often, the government or the majority party is accused by civil society or the opposition of imposing its decisions unilaterally, without consultation, in the name of the democratic majority. When they are forced to negotiate with other players, they do everything they can to avoid implementing the decisions reached through such consultation, or simply do not take the opinion of those consulted into account. Burkina Faso is a country in which civil society, the private sector and the opposition are still weak, and the government generally acts unilaterally instead of building a partnership with other stakeholders. Partnership implies mutual trust and respect. Very often, the government's partners (civil society, the private sector, opposition parties, etc.) are of the impression that the government is merely seeking to legitimise and obtain approval for decisions that have already been made. On the other hand, civil society, and in particular the unions and the opposition, are often accused of having ulterior motives – seeking to weaken or destabilise the government – when they engage in dialogue. It should however be recognized that, in recent years, the desire to emerge from the socio-political crisis that followed the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo has forced the various players to talk to each other, consult and each make concessions in order to keep the peace. There is, however, no certainty that these gains in terms of democratic dialogue will be preserved, given the persistence of certain authoritarian reflexes on the part of the government.

In view of the unfavourable socio-cultural and economic context, the weight of tradition, illiteracy, the widespread poverty affecting the population and the long years of authoritarian rule, it is not at all easy clearly to identify potential agents of democratic change in Burkina Faso. However, confining ourselves to the democratic progress recorded over the last decade, we can highlight the positive role played by:

- some components of civil society: organizations defending human rights and promoting democracy, trade unions (despite their ambiguous role), the privately-owned media, professional associations and grass-roots communities;
- some opposition parties, sometimes in spite of their often extreme claims in respect of democratic reform;
- some moderate factions within the ruling party. The CDP is not actually a monolithic party. There are leaders within it who are more open to dialogue and prepared to compromise with the opposition, for example the group led by the current president of the National Assembly, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, who was Prime Minister from 1994 to 1996. Moreover, it was his reputation for being moderate and prepared to engage in dialogue that obliged President Compaoré, at the height of the political crisis, to call upon him to take charge of the CDP and to accept his candidature for the position of President of the Assembly on behalf of the CDP, despite the fact that it is common knowledge that the two men “cordially detest each other”, since Mr Kaboré is seen by some as a potential rival and successor to President Compaoré.

The combined efforts of all these players may result in consolidation of the democratic process in Burkina Faso. We are convinced that the best way for a development partner such as Sida to promote democratic change is by supporting civil society, the parliamentary opposition and the moderate wing of the CDP.

6.3. People as citizens or subjects: the role and status of women, young people, children and the disabled

In general, women, young people, children and the disabled hold a subordinate and dependent position within social structures. This means that members of these groups have the status more of subjects than of full citizens. Women, who constitute 52% of the population, come under the authority of the head of household, who holds power and assigns women a reproductive and productive role. Women face various forms of discrimination (for example, in access to education, training and jobs) and are more affected by poverty than men.

According to the 1998 Population and Health Survey (EDS 98), there is also high maternal mortality in Burkina Faso, of 484 deaths per 100,000 live births. In some *départements*, the figure is substantially higher, even when considering only deaths at health centres: 1,170 in Soum, 1,634 in Gourma, 2,032 in Oudalan and 2,145 in Séno.

The reasons for this high mortality rate are basically:

- the relatively low level of antenatal care. The coverage rate of 61% means that in just over six out of ten births, mothers have received antenatal care from a health professional (EDS 98/99, preliminary report).
- the very low level of detection of high-risk pregnancies (4.8% of pregnancies).
- the fact that few women (because of cost, distance or psychological reluctance) follow the recommendation to give birth in hospital when a high risk has been identified.
- the low number of births assisted by qualified staff (27%, EDS 98/99, preliminary report).
- the difficulty of obtaining rapid transport to a hospital (apart from a few cases in the two major cities), in the event of difficulties encountered during delivery.
- inadequately spaced pregnancies, abortions, etc.
- fatigue due to the women's overwork and, in many cases, poor nutritional state.

However, over the last few years, the government and NGOs have been attempting to reduce this mortality rate. After the national health development plan was adopted in 2001, there was a substantial reduction in the maternal mortality rate. In principle, there is no direct link between this high rate of maternal mortality and the low level of political participation of Burkinan women in general, although it is obvious that the more access women have to health care, the more able they will be to take part in the management of public affairs, at least at local level. However, the reverse relationship seems more likely, i.e. that increasing

women's participation in politics could reduce the maternal mortality rate. Indeed, it appears that the more women participate in decision-making, the more their concerns and interests are taken into account in the public agenda. Tackling women's fundamental needs, such as access to health care, might accordingly become a priority for the governmental authorities.

When it comes to children and young people, they are subject to the authority of their parents, and primarily the head of household. Their situation is hardly enviable, for most of them are the innocent victims of parental mistakes and traditional beliefs that actually violate recognized children's rights. They thus find themselves in various situations that prevent them from flourishing: unwanted pregnancies, lack of access to education and healthcare, abandonment, infanticide, inhuman work, sexual exploitation, etc. As a general rule, children and young people do not have a right to speak; it is the adults who decide for them. Some parents in particular difficulties abdicate all responsibility for their children, who choose to leave, make a life on the street, or even emigrate. In addition, there is the unemployment affecting young people, particularly in urban areas. These adverse conditions make them vulnerable and expose them to crime, illness, drugs, early sexual experience and unwanted pregnancies.

Given the difficulties of social integration facing them, young people – particularly in urban areas – sometimes express themselves through anti-social behaviour in order to get themselves heard. Such is the case of the pupils – and more often students – who protest against the deteriorating circumstances of their lives. Aware of all these problems, some young people – again particularly in urban areas – have organized into youth associations and movements to make themselves heard and demand that they be taken into account in national development policies.

According to the age range distribution given by the INSD (National Demographic Statistics Institute), there were 1,082,487 young people in the age range 15 19 (figures from the 1996 General Census of Population and Housing). Information from the Ministry for Territorial Administration and Decentralization [apparent omission in French source text] more than 50% of the population of voting age are young. According to the Burkinan Constitution, the age required for voting is 18. In accordance with the electoral regulations of July 2001 (Article 42), the age required for voting is 18. Young people aged 18 21 are therefore not excluded from the right to vote.

With regard to the disabled, they constitute a fairly significant proportion of the population and are certainly among the disadvantaged. The dominant occupation among this group is begging. For the moment, social integration programmes and projects affect only a minority. In general terms, social integration of the disabled is a real problem. They are indeed the victims of all sorts of discrimination, which marginalizes them and tends to remind them that they are not full members of society.

All these disadvantaged groups (women, children, young people and the disabled) are sometimes on the receiving end of political manipulation by politicians and political parties, who often use them as electoral fodder. This is another reason why they look upon themselves as subjects rather than citizens.

7 Corruption

7.1 Lack of a national strategy

Burkina Faso has always been credited with having relatively sound public administration. Indeed, compared with the situation prevailing in some African countries, one could certainly conclude that Burkina Faso has been spared the corruption that is endemic elsewhere. Yet since the democratization process began, in 1991, public-sector corruption has become ever more widespread. Supervision and public accountability mechanisms seem powerless. Supervisory institutions in particular (the *Inspection Générale d'Etat* and the various ministerial inspectorates, the Chamber of Accounts and parliamentary commissions) are paralysed by a lack of will on the part of the authorities to whom they are answerable (Prime Minister and other ministers). Of course, some departments do carry out inquiries. But these are generally politically motivated, directed against people not belonging to the political inner circles, or those suspected of disloyalty. The Chamber of Accounts, which became the Court of Audit in 2000, has the role of inspecting the accounts of public institutions and assisting the National Assembly in monitoring implementation of finance laws, but it has never really functioned since independence. With regard to the justice system, it is rare for it to hear cases of misappropriation of public funds or public corruption. The fact that public employees guilty of corruption or misappropriation are not routinely prosecuted harms not only the State coffers but also, and more damagingly, what is produced by the administrative machinery, through demotivation of the honest officials and workers. Critics from civil society, in particular the *Réseau national de lutte anti-corruption* (National Anti-corruption Network, or RENLAC) and, more recently, sponsors have pushed the State to react. And yet, up until now, there has been no national anti-corruption strategy, only an array of legislation and structures that are supposed to demonstrate the authorities' will to fight corruption. Examples are the *Comité National d'Ethique* (National Ethics Committee) created by administrative order 2001-278/PRES/PM of 5 June 2001, the *Haute Autorité de co-ordination de la lutte contre la corruption* (Anti-Corruption Authority) created by administrative order 2001-773/PRES/PM of 31 December 2001, and the Committee for monitoring reports and recommendations of the *Inspection Générale d'Etat*, created in 2000. But this has clearly not been enough to stamp out corruption. In

fact, one could be forgiven for wondering whether there is a real political will to tackle the corruption that is eating away at public administration.

7.2 Role of corruption in consolidating or challenging power relationships

One of the reasons behind this lack of will to fight public corruption seriously lies in the fact that corruption has a real impact on power relationships in Burkina Faso. Indeed, since the start of the democratization process, in 1991, public corruption seems to have become a means of mobilizing political support and voters, of building clientelist relationships and of cementing the loyalty of activists and leaders in the ruling party. Some opposition parties given a role in the management of power also indulge in corruption under the pretext of financing costly electoral campaigns, maintaining or preserving the loyalty of their leaders and activists in order to avoid losing them to the majority party, etc. The prevailing impunity helps encourage corruption throughout society, where money has become a common denominator. Corruption is therefore at the root of the moral and ethical decline in Burkinan society. It is also responsible for the neutralization of certain opposition parties, and the dismantling of some counterweights in the press, other media, the union movement and even some traditional and religious authorities which should, in theory, play a role in safeguarding traditional values of integrity, probity and honour.

8 The private sector

8.1 Analysis of trends in asset ownership

In 1990, Burkina Faso embarked upon a process of liberalising its economy at the instigation, notably, of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Since then, the private sector has been considered as the country's engine of economic growth. A policy of promoting and supporting the private sector was therefore developed, and a vast programme of privatising public-sector enterprises was implemented.

The process of economic liberalisation has, however, been accompanied by the selling-off of public assets to a number of groups and individuals close to the government. Some people even talk of “mafia-like practices” that have enabled certain government officials to grow rich while their business friends consolidate their dominant positions.

The relations between the State and the private sector in Burkina Faso are often characterized by interpenetration, meaning that there are “networks” engaged in a sterile race for personal enrichment, to the detriment of creative and productive activities. These “networks” benefit from government contracts and/or the privatization of public-sector firms and, in return, finance the activities or electoral campaigns of the ruling party, when it is not a case of those in power themselves or their cronies creating firms to which they award government contracts or sell on privatized firms at knock-down prices. It is difficult to name the guilty parties, but it is common knowledge that the two principal economic operators in Burkina Faso have a very close relationship with those in power. Although one had built his fortune before getting involved in a clientelist relationship with government that enabled him to profit over a long period from government contracts, the same cannot be said for the other who, having been a committee secretary some years ago, has probably become the most prosperous economic operator currently in Burkina Faso, doubtless in her capacity as mother-in-law of President Compaoré's younger brother.

According to the 2001 RENLAC report, contractors admit that the practice of offering bribes during public tenders is universal. A small group of businesses with links to the government, or which provide funds to the ruling party, almost always receive large public contracts or government protection in relation to their fraudulent or anti-competitive practices. These practices have often drawn criticism from the news

media, firms that have been harmed, civil society, and even some sponsors, who have demanded a reform of the law on public contracts. But without any real political will, it is unlikely that legislative reform will be enough to introduce more transparency and consideration of relative merits into the award of public contracts.

The other notable trend in the private sector is the marginalization of women. Indeed, few women have access to productive resources unless they have links with the government. In spite of the agrarian and land reform legislation, which provides for equality between men and women in terms of access to land, in reality women suffer from discrimination due, in particular, to the survival of traditional land management systems, particularly in rural areas. The few plots worked by women are generally of mediocre quality, difficult to develop and small in area. By way of example, only 6% of women own land in rural areas. Due to their inadequate resources and high levels of illiteracy, women are largely involved in the informal sector (trade and handicrafts), from which they do not manage to gain sufficient income to enable them to get on an even footing with the formal sector.

8.2 Mechanisms used to exert control over the business sector

Monitoring the management of public-sector enterprises is undertaken primarily by the *Inspection Générale d'Etat*, which is responsible for checking the use of public credits and the legality of operations, and also by the Court of Audit, which is responsible particularly for monitoring public finances, hearing cases relating to public accountants and officials in charge of authorizations, and penalising management errors. There are other mechanisms for general monitoring and regulation of the business sector. Examples are the tax and customs departments, and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Crafts. There is also a *Commission nationale de la concurrence* (National Competition Commission) and a *Coordination nationale de la lutte contre la fraude* (National Anti-Fraud Committee). However, these agencies lack resources and the real authority to be able to regulate business. Recently, the *Groupe professionnel des industriels du Burkina* (Burkinan Industrialists Group) drew the public's attention to the powerlessness of the National Anti-Fraud Committee against fraudsters benefiting from the complicity of some politicians.

9. The role and structure of civil society organizations

The process of democratization that has been ongoing in Burkina since 1991 has encouraged the emergence and expression of a civil society, following a long period in the 1980s when it had been stifled by emergency regimes.

9.1. Key players in civil society at national, regional and local level

9.1.1 Key players in civil society at national level

At national level, Burkinan civil society includes thousands of associations and organizations of a dozen different types: unions, religious organizations, human rights organizations and specific pressure groups, the private-sector media, NGOs and development associations, youth movements, associations of people who can be described as disadvantaged, farmers groups etc. There are legal associations, created to promote the economic and social development of such and such a region, or such and such a specific social group. In this respect, it could be said that they are championing the specific interests of a group or region, but these associations are recognized as legitimate from the point of view of their aims to promote development. There are, however, key players that have a national base, championing trans-ethnic or non-religious interests working to promote economic or social development and democratic governance. Of these key players in civil society, the following can be mentioned:

- the press and other media, which play an important information role by alerting people, raising awareness, training and educating population groups, and helping deepen the democratic process by demanding accountability from the authorities and forcing them to improve and create forums for democratic dialogue on essential issues of development and democratic governance;
- the unions which, in addition to defending the mental wellbeing and material interests of workers, are important training grounds for development of a civic culture among the workers and form a real counterweight to the government and private sector;
- development NGOs, which are devoted to promoting human development, good governance, decentralization, and reducing poverty

and HIV/AIDS throughout the country (but with an emphasis on the North, Centre North and East regions);

- movements for human rights defence and the promotion of democracy, which are key players in the democratization process;
- religious groups working to promote the physical, social and spiritual wellbeing of the population;
- women's organizations, working for the promotion of women and defence of their rights.

Unions play an ambivalent role in the democratization process. On the one hand, unions have been opposed to dictatorships and government restrictions on public freedom ever since independence. Consequently, the trades unions were the instigators of the popular uprising of 3 January 1966 against the authoritarian regime of the First Republic, the strikes in 1975 that prevented General Lamizana from implementing his plan to set up a one-party state in Burkina Faso, workers' resistance against the revolutionary regime of the mid-1980s, opposition to the abusive and arbitrary actions of the various regimes, and so on. On the other hand, it can be seen that the trades unions have also destabilized constitutional regimes, some of which were more democratic than others; and prevented the adoption of reforms that were often necessary, etc. The fact is that the trade union movement in Burkina Faso is extremely political and often torn between a moderate wing, which is generally prepared to engage in dialogue with the government, and a radical and revolutionary wing, distinguished by its rejection of compromise and sometimes even of dialogue. The Burkinan trade union movement is currently dominated by the radical wing, which claims to have its roots in revolutionary, and even Marxist-Leninist, trade unionism; this wing opposes the economic liberalization of the country and, sometimes, the democratic experiment in progress, which it refers to as "bourgeois democracy".

9.1.2 Key players in civil society at regional and local level

At regional and local level, Burkinan civil society is essentially made up of almost 12,000 peasant farmer and community-based organizations distributed among the 8,000 villages. They are associations freely created at local level by groups of young people, women, agricultural and livestock farmers, craftspeople and others, with the aim of promoting the economic, social and cultural development of grassroots communities. In spite of the impressive number, they are probably the least influential organizations in civil society, due to their lack of political weight, the illiteracy of most of their members and their focus being limited to their own community. But they are increasingly forming a channel for teaching, informing and mobilizing regional and local populations about their rights.

There is also only one bar association (which has around one hundred members) in Burkina Faso, as well as other professional bodies, particularly in the fields of health, press and other media, architecture, accounting, etc., most of which were set up in the early 1990s. However, they play a negligible role as collective stakeholders or groupings in Burkinan

civil society and in the democratization process, unlike what happens in other countries. There are several reasons for this, including their rather recent establishment (connected in particular with political liberalization in the early 1990s), the low number of members and the political “neutralization” of these professional bodies, whose leaders are close to the ruling party or uninterested in joining the struggle for democracy, etc.

9.2 Civil society organizations as agents for change in reducing poverty and promoting human rights and gender equality

Specific aspects of civil society organizations enable them to play an essential role in reducing poverty and promoting human rights and equality between the sexes.

9.2.1 Poverty reduction

The organizations have an advantage compared with governmental action insofar as they are able to better target their actions on the poor and respond better to the needs of the most impoverished. The NGOs, which have specialised in poverty reduction activities on the ground, have accumulated expertise and gained experience in the field. Some of them have devised innovative and participatory methods for designing, implementing, monitoring and following up poverty-reduction projects and programmes, and rightly consider that the poor must be treated as economic and social players in their own right, and not as passive beneficiaries. They help organize the grassroots groups, particularly the most disadvantaged, into powerful groups able to influence government policy; participate in economic and social activities; and access public resources. Currently, only organizations based in the capital have any political influence over poverty reduction, as they have access to information. Those located in the provinces, and thus directly active in the field, do not have access to information and consequently have little influence over the national poverty-reduction strategy. Civil society organizations are, when all is said and done, decisive agents for change in poverty reduction. But the consultation mechanisms between them need to be strengthened so as to make them more effective and efficient.

At the time of writing of this study, the government has not yet worked out and adopted a complete national strategy to combat corruption. A few scattered measures have, however, been taken, generally under pressure from sponsors. There has also been a study, conducted by consultants with support from the UNDP, and establishment of the *Haute autorité de lutte anti-corruption* (anti-corruption authority) that was inaugurated at the end of April 2003.

9.2.2 Democratization

Civil society organizations – and in particular human rights associations, unions, the media and NGOs promoting democracy and good governance – assist the democratic process, by playing a role of counterbalancing the authoritarian drift of the State and ruling party, and of providing information, training and education on democratic principles and values. In this respect, they are some of the most politically influential civil

society organizations. Some of them have a national base; others work only in the capital. Over recent years, the ways that civil society has been organized in the movement against impunity set up following the murder of journalist Norbert Zongo has played a very important role in the Burkinan democratization process. There have been protests against impunity, the shortcomings of the justice system and the superficial nature of Burkinan democracy. This protest movement is partly responsible for the recent political and institutional reforms that have enabled the country to make some democratic progress.

9.2.3 Promoting human rights

There are a number of human rights defence and promotion organizations that are working to promote, protect and defend human rights in Burkina Faso. These organizations repeatedly denounce the impunity enjoyed by the regime's dignitaries and the various human rights infringements noted in the country. They are essentially concentrated in the capital. The most dynamic is unquestionably the MBDHP. With a presence in all provinces of the country, this organization has managed to impose a leading role in Burkinan civil society and become a real counterweight to the State, to the point where it is often reproached, rightly or wrongly, for being politicized and acting as an opposition party. Indeed, the relationship between the MBDHP and the authorities has steadily deteriorated since its leaders formed, along with other civil society organizations and opposition parties, a group denouncing police violence and blunders, and demanding truth and justice for economic crimes and murders, along with a democratic reorganization of the current regime.

9.2.4 Gender equality

There are numerous legal instruments enshrining equality between the sexes and condemning all form of sexual discrimination in Burkina Faso. Along the same lines, the State and numerous civil society organizations have made women's promotion an essential component of development policies, programmes and projects. Despite these efforts, gender inequalities and discrimination against women persist in a number of areas: access to education and healthcare, access to productive resources (land, credit, etc.), to elected and decision-making positions and so on. This is due to the persistence of reactionary mindsets. Many civil society organizations, and particularly women's organizations, are working to promote change in favour of gender equality.

In urban areas, through their advocacy work, women's organizations have managed to get positive discrimination measures adopted for the education of young girls. They are also trying, through the political authorities and heads of political parties, to promote a stronger representation of women in the lists of electoral candidates and in decision-making posts. Also, in rural areas, they are working to disseminate and ensure compliance with laws that enshrine gender equality and combat discrimination against women, and to promote income-generating activities for women, etc.

9.2.5. Opportunities and constraints to the development of a more dynamic and stronger civil society

Burkinan civil society enjoys a number of assets and potential advantages such as the extent and variety of social networks. There are, in fact, thousands of associations, village groups and non-governmental organizations in the country, and their activities have led to undeniable gains in terms of economic and social development and democratic governance. This pluralism, which can be seen as a clear expression of freedom of association, provides not only an assurance of the independence and empowerment of civil society, but also a counterweight and guarantee against possible misuse of political power. It has also encouraged aspiration to and the emergence of an organizational leadership and individuals within civil society who are increasingly aware of their ability to influence public opinion and government decisions, both by proposing and by opposing.

The particular attention that the authorities give to civil society is also a significant asset. Since the democratic process began in Burkina Faso, the government has in fact regularly included representation from civil society in consultative and regulatory bodies. In other words, the State has shown an inclination to involve civil society in the management of public affairs. It is thus up to civil society to seize this opportunity to make itself heard and throw all its weight into promoting good governance, in relation to economic, social and political affairs.

Despite these assets and potential advantages, Burkinan civil society is faced with a number of weaknesses and constraints hindering its development, of which the following can be noted:

- its lack of material, financial and skilled human resources, which prevents most of its members from fulfilling their tasks effectively. The general poverty that is characteristic of the country prevents civil society from extracting or obtaining from its environment the resources needed to implement its plans.
- the State's hold over the various social and economic groupings, which results in a heavy and nit-picking bureaucracy and prevents the optimal functioning of Burkinan civil society, in particular that of development NGOs.
- sociological constraints linked to the existence of cultural practices and values that are out of line with principles of democratic governance; these contribute to limiting the effectiveness of civil society and the impact of popular mobilization.
- civil society's weak organizational abilities. Civil society is, in fact, fragmented, and unable to overcome its divisions and differing interests to achieve synergy in action, or to form a credible negotiating partner to the State.
- the concentration of the most influential organizations in the towns, and the weak political influence of rural civil society.
- the lack of real involvement on the part of civil society in the State's strategic decision-making, and civil society's inability to exert a real and effective influence on State policies, despite official rhetoric on the need for participation from civil society.

- the risk of confusing civic action with political activism: the temptation for some civil society organizations to act as opposition parties, along with the temptation for some political parties and politicians to make use of civil society for their own ends;
- the lack of internal democracy and failure to respect principles of good governance within civil society.

9.3 A largely urban civil society

At the current stage of civil society's development, most of its component organizations are still concentrated in the capital; all the large networks, action groups and organizations of any repute are based in Ouagadougou. This can be explained by weaknesses in the structure and organization of civil society. Only organizations in the capital are consulted as representatives of civil society, although they often represent purely the concerns and interests of townspeople, whereas 70 80% of the Burkinan population actually lives in rural areas.

Civil society does exist in rural areas, however, although the ways it expresses itself and acts differ from those of organizations present in the towns and active in the public arena. This rural civil society is made up of development associations grouping together "mutual" or self-help groups, pre-cooperative groups, cooperatives (around 1,200 among the 8000 Burkinan villages) and umbrella organizations (of which there are around 20). However, rural civil society has little influence over the political operation of governmental affairs because it remains isolated in its grassroots communities and has no real political weight.

But the emergence of a group of organizations whose independence is becoming apparent in the search for solutions to development problems can increasingly be seen in rural areas. The product, for the most part, of traditional societies, these organizations were to a great extent organized by the State and NGOs following the 1973 drought, and then established themselves as a negotiating partner that could not be ignored in rural development. Rural people's participation in power, governmental affairs and judicial matters remains marginal, and often limited to voting in a propagandist or clientelist manner. Nonetheless, the NGOs, peasant farmer organizations and community-based organizations have formed a channel for teaching, informing, communicating and mobilizing in rural areas. Thus, in the face of action by the State, which is remote from the concerns of rural populations, the organizations have gradually learned to identify and design the strategy that is best for them, using forms of resistance to free themselves from State supervision.

9.4 How laws and regulations on freedom of association affect organized interest groups

All associations, of whatever nature, are governed by law 10/92/ADP of 15 December [1992] on freedom of association. This provides that associations may be freely formed without prior administrative authorization. However, they only enjoy legal status under conditions provided by the law and subject to formal requirements for establishing them and declaring their existence. This law is a very liberal one; it guarantees freedom of association and imposes no obstacles to the democratic

functioning of Burkinan civil society, provided the actions are in line with the current legal framework.

9.5 The potential role of local radio stations in the democratization process

With the process of democratization that began in 1991, Burkina Faso liberalised the information and communication sector. In fact, Article 8 of the June 1991 Constitution provides that, “freedom of opinion of the press and the right to information are guaranteed. Everyone has the right to express and broadcast his or her opinions as provided for in the laws and regulations in force.” In addition, the Information Code, passed in 1992 and amended in 1993, opened up the audiovisual media to the private sector. This resulted in the creation of a plethora of private radio stations. As of 1 June 2002, the number of FM radio stations in Burkina Faso was estimated at 65, including five international radio feeds such as Radio France Internationale, the BBC and Voice of America. In terms of the press, both private and public, the *Conseil supérieur de l'Information* records 144 newspapers covering the following areas: general information, opinion, satire, sport, culture, miscellaneous information, specialist information, religion, announcements/advertising, business & finance, cinema, radio and TV, culture, art and tourism, etc. In terms of frequency of publication, there are dailies, weeklies, bimonthlies and monthlies. Many of these newspapers appear irregularly, if at all, and are not economically viable due to the low numbers of potential readers (nearly 70% of the country being illiterate) and the weak advertising and publicity potential. This makes the press vulnerable to political and financial pressures. The issue of distribution is worrying, a press distribution service not yet having been developed in Burkina Faso. As in most African towns, vendors hawk on the main roads and at traffic lights, and there are a few newspaper kiosks.

The Burkinan press and other media fulfil their basic mission honourably, educating and alerting people to the various aspects of broad development problems. To this must be added the traditional task of disseminating information without hindrance or distortion, with a view to enabling the general public to reach a fair opinion. In a country with literacy of no more than 30%, the role of the audiovisual media, particularly services in local languages, is very important. These help consolidate democracy through education, training and awareness-raising among the illiterate.

However, in carrying out their tasks, the Burkinan press and other media suffer from many handicaps, including a lack of professional, technical and ethical training for journalists and presenters. Clearly, many people have come into these occupations more through the need to earn a living than out of vocation. There is a university department that trains journalists but the great majority now working in Burkina Faso's press and other media did not receive appropriate professional training. Moreover, the absence of a credible regulatory body for the media (outside of electoral campaigns) means that infringements of occupational codes of conduct are numerous and go unpunished. The press and other media are aware of these deficiencies. Initiatives are underway to remedy them but there is no real political will on the part of the State to support these initiatives and ensure the media are free, independent and strong.

10. Participation by the poor

10.1 Power relationships at all levels of society that have an effect on opportunities for participation by the poor

The poor, who are primarily rural farmers and/or women, are generally in a situation of subjugation and dependence, which prevents them participating fully in the making of decisions that affect them. In rural areas, where tradition survives, peasant farmers move in a socio-cultural environment that is not propitious to their civic participation. Indeed, they continue to be guided less by the State than by the “parochial” customs and culture governing their local community participation, as subjects required to obey elders and chiefs who take decisions on behalf of the community. This is particularly true in regions where chieftaincies constitute a powerful political institution. With regard to women, the persistence of traditions and social symbols that portray them as “junior partners” – individuals with no right to speak and who are supposed to be subject to men – also hinders their full participation in politics.

Opportunities for participation on the part of the poor, whether rural farmers or women, will only arise if these people can free themselves from their tutelage by organizing more, forming associations in which they will gradually learn to take responsibility for themselves through information, training, and the formulation and implementation of various projects. They will thus learn to develop an active citizenship. This is how the institutional capabilities of thousands of rural civil society organizations and women’s organizations working in the field to reduce poverty should be strengthened.

In addition, implementing a decentralized national rural development programme and extending the scope of the decentralization policy itself through the forthcoming creation of rural district authorities is likely to increase the opportunities for civic participation on the part of the poor at local level. But this will occur only if the State, with support from development partners, actually transfers the resources necessary for the functioning of these rural authorities.

10.2 Groups consistently favoured or discriminated against

There is no consistent policy of State favouritism or discrimination towards certain social groups. The social cohesion in Burkina Faso is quite remarkable. The various ethnic and religious communities co-exist

peacefully, and the authorities take care to respect broad regional balances, whether in relation to resource allocation or appointments to strategic State positions. Nonetheless, it cannot be said that there are no discriminatory practices – whether conscious or unconscious – in the management of public affairs. Moreover, some regions, such as the North and West (Bobo-Dioulasso) complain, rightly or wrongly, of being marginalized from development policy. In addition, certain groups of individuals, often linked to the government, seem to receive preferential treatment in having access to State resources, jobs and contracts. For them, what matters is to ensure that the Compaoré regime remains in power, so that they continue to monopolise and control business channels that strengthen their economic base. Favoured areas are public contracts, staff allocations and appointments, land management, bank credit, the creation of socio-economic infrastructure, trips abroad, employee training and work placements, information management, etc.

This situation has resulted in the emergence of a category of *nouveaux riches* whose prosperity contrasts with the worsening poverty in Burkina Faso. An increase in social inequality can thus be observed, along with various frustrations that could lead to increased socially irresponsible behaviour.

10.3 Is there a serious risk that discrimination or favouritism towards certain groups may lead to armed conflict or increased violence between the different ethnic groups in Burkina Faso?

Despite the above, it cannot be said that there is a serious risk of violence erupting between the communities in Burkina Faso. The State should, however, make efforts to achieve more balanced and harmonious social and economic development between the country's regions, and reduce the disparities between town and country. A land-use planning policy is underway, but this is taking its time to produce an effect on the ground.

Moreover, the political class must start to resist the temptation to mobilize the people along ethnic lines. Ethnicity does not really constitute a dominant variable in Burkinan political life but some politicians are quite happy to exploit ethnic sentiment during electoral campaigns or to mobilize the leaders in a particular region under the guise of promoting the economic and social development of that region. This could lead to discriminatory and exclusion practices that could threaten Burkina Faso's social cohesion.

11 The role of sponsors

11.1 The role of sponsors and the international system

Official development assistance (ODA) is an essential source of development funding for Burkina Faso, financing over 80% of the government investment programme. This illustrates the country's great external dependence and the crucial role played in Burkina Faso by sponsors. ODA is based essentially on two sources of finance: multilateral and bilateral aid. NGOs too form a significant source of funding. Since 1998, multilateral aid has formed the main source of finance, 52% coming from institutions of the United Nations (including the World Bank and IMF) and 48% from other multilateral financing institutions, especially the European Union and the African Development Bank. Thanks to the HIPC initiative, Burkina Faso will be able to reduce its external debt service to bilateral and multilateral creditors. Resources thus freed up will be allocated to implementing priority programmes and basic social services, in accordance with the PRSP. In fact, as in many African countries, the structural adjustment programmes being implemented in Burkina Faso since 1990 with support from sponsors have not prevented an increase in poverty among the people. This is why, in 2000, the government adopted the PRSP, with support from the international community.

11.2 Sponsors' influence over the distribution of power

Drawing lessons from the mixed results of structural adjustment programmes, sponsors now insist on the need for "policy ownership" and participation by civil society. Under pressure from sponsors, the government has begun to involve civil society more in the PRSP review process. Efforts are also being made to improve the State's budgetary control with a view to promoting greater transparency, acknowledging an obligation to produce accounts, and ensuring substantial budget allocations to the social sectors. To this must be added the pressure exerted on the government with a view to more effectively combating governmental corruption. All this is likely to strengthen the effectiveness of poverty reduction, to the benefit, in particular, of the poor.

The action taken by sponsors in the areas of education and healthcare could, moreover, improve the balance of power in society, benefiting the poor, who have difficulty gaining access to basic social

services. Special efforts are still required to increase dialogue on policies and resource mobilization, to harmonize concepts and operational approaches and to identify the most relevant activities in the areas of education, healthcare and poverty in general through access to basic social services. This action must also continue to be directed at community-based associations working in these areas, so as to reach the target populations in the most practical way possible.

12 Peace and security

The geographical location of Burkina Faso, a poor and land-locked country, results in a dependence upon its neighbours, particularly Côte d'Ivoire, where at least 3 million Burkinan citizens live. In recent years, political relations between Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire have worsened, particularly since the current Ivorian President came to power. Burkina Faso is accused, rightly or wrongly, of supporting the rebel forces that control the northern half of Côte d'Ivoire. In recent years, Burkina Faso has often been accused of being involved in the nearby conflicts (notably in Liberia and Sierra Leone) and of encouraging arms trafficking in the region. The country even received a visit from a fact-finding mission undertaken by the Security Council. With regard to intervention in Liberia, the Burkinan government officially acknowledged sending 700 men to support Charles Taylor's regime and, on 30 December 2000, a report from the Monitoring Mechanism on Sanctions against Angola called Burkina Faso an "essential operations country" for UNITA. It is difficult, however, to determine the truth about the accusations made against Burkina Faso with regard to other conflicts. One thing is clear, however: the nature of the regime, the concentration of power at the State's highest level, the absence of any real counterweight to the power of the President and the marginalization of parliament in relation to security and armed forces issues are all features that do nothing to encourage information and transparency in this area.

Turning to the domestic scene, given the social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between the various communities, there are no major conflicts between them. We must, however, note the emergence of conflicts of various degrees of seriousness over land ownership, accession to the traditional chieftaincy and marriage problems (cases of wife snatching). In some regions of the country conflicts between livestock herders and agricultural farmers lead to frequent violent clashes. These conflicts often relate to takeovers of fertile lands or control of pasture.

13 Prospects: the changing role of players and power relationships

According to the “Burkina 2025” national survey published in October 2002, most Burkinan citizens want to see a significant reduction in, and even the elimination of, poverty. For this, they advocate the creation of remunerative jobs and income-generating activities, promotion of food self-sufficiency and a strengthening of national solidarity. With regard to governance, they would like to see the emergence of a State providing education and healthcare, and defending the rights and interests of the people; a State playing the role of supervisor and arbiter, and ensuring transparency in the management of public affairs. They want a country in which democracy, political stability, social peace and national harmony reign. For this they propose consultation and dialogue between the players involved, along with a respect for democratic principles. In terms of administration and justice, they want a government machine that is closer to the people governed, encouraging local development, and where decision-making power is devolved to local people, along with a justice system that is credible and fair, independent and transparent, competent, decentralized and accessible to all. For the administrative decentralization process to succeed, they advocate a good mobilization and exploitation of local and national resources, awareness-raising and increased accountability between central and local partners, the provision of basic infrastructure to villages, plus a strengthening and acceleration of the decentralization process. With regard to the justice system, the strategies they propose are anti-corruption measures and compliance with professional ethics, physical and financial accessibility of the justice system, improved working conditions for judges and civic education for the people.

But these visions of the future come up against obstacles that complicate power relationships in Burkina Faso, shaped by a socio-cultural and political environment containing many unfavourable factors. Despite the social transformations taking place in Burkinan society, traditional local cultures still have a long future ahead of them. Social inequalities and power relationships originating in traditional society will not disappear in the medium term. At the heart of the modern State itself, power relationships between the key national players will turn to the advantage of the executive, and particularly the President, due to the lack of any real political counterweight at institutional level. One cannot, for the mo-

ment, see what could challenge the President's control over parliament and the judiciary, particularly with the prospect of a third consecutive term of office for President Compaoré, despite the letter and the spirit of Article 37 of the Constitution, which limits the number of possible presidential mandates to two. President Compaoré has not yet actually declared his candidacy but, if we just go by the way his close aides interpret the Constitution, everything suggests that the limit established in Article 37 will be sidelined.

The President of Burkina Faso is not authorized to alter the Constitution by decree. However, he can take the initiative with regard to amending the Constitution, meaning that he may table a bill on constitutional reform, but it is up to the Assembly in the final analysis to take a decision on the principle and on the text of the law amending the Constitution. However, it seems that the President does have the power to bypass the Assembly and ask the people to approve amendments to the Constitution by referendum, although this interpretation is contested by some lawyers. In view of the extent of illiteracy, which makes it easier to manipulate people politically and ideologically, and the dominance of the President's power, there is a strong possibility that any legislation that the President submits to referendum will be approved.

Article 37 of the Constitution, like other constitutional provisions, may be amended by parliament if a bill is tabled by the President of the country, by the majority of members of the National Assembly or by a population group representing at least 30,000 citizens with voting rights. However, as regards the controversy on the applicability of the present Article 37 (in particular the clause limiting the number of presidential terms of office), the only solution would be for the Assembly to pass a law interpreting the Constitution or for the Constitutional Council, which is empowered to interpret the Constitution, to take a decision.

With regard to the appointment of judges in the higher courts (there is no longer a supreme court, but there are three higher courts, namely the Court of Cassation, the Court of Audit and the Council of State) and lower courts, the Constitution provides that:

- the Supreme Council of Judges (presided over by the President of Burkina Faso, with the Minister of Justice as vice-president) should make proposals about appointments and postings of judges sitting in the higher courts and of the first presidents of the courts of appeal;
- the Council should give its opinion on proposals from the Minister of Justice regarding appointment of other judges;
- state prosecutors are to be appointed and assigned posts on the suggestion of the Minister of Justice.

It can therefore be seen that the Supreme Council of Judges, which is the body regulating the magistracy, can only make proposals and issue opinions, whereas the President of Burkina Faso and the Minister of Justice, who lead the Council and make the final appointments of judges to the various positions, are not obliged to follow such opinions and proposals. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that most members of the Supreme Council of Judges are appointed by the executive. This means that the executive may perfectly well use appointments to influ-

ence the course of justice. Bearing in mind the politicization that has influenced the administration of justice in Burkina Faso for almost 20 years, it can be seen that, in practice, most of the senior positions are occupied by judges close to the ruling group. Similarly, sensitive cases are allocated to judges who are loyal to the government. The executive does not need to give precise instructions, as these judges know what they have to do to demonstrate loyalty and defuse any situation that could reflect badly on the government.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the strengthening of civil society due to the socio-political crisis that has rocked the country over the last few years, along with the emergence of an opposition that varies in solidity within parliament, does constitute a significant counterweight to the President's power. However, this is not likely to form a real obstacle to the President's dominance either in terms of political life or in terms of the other institutions covered by the Constitution such as parliament, which is dominated by a majority party loyal to President Compaoré. The judiciary will always have difficulty in asserting – or assuming – real independence, if only because of institutional features, notably the “umbilical cord” that exists between the executive and the judiciary through the Ministry of Justice, the prosecution services and the *Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature* (Higher Judicial Council), chaired by the President of Burkina Faso. However, implementation of the Justice Action Plan, with support from the development partners could, in the long-term, improve the quality of the service provided by the judiciary, and increase its credibility.

The way things are currently developing, marked by increasing capabilities, Burkinan civil society will be increasingly called upon to play a crucial role in promoting good governance and democracy. The fact that the State and development partners are agreed on the need to strengthen “policy ownership” through a dialogue between politicians and civil society constitutes a major advantage for the emergence of civil society as a strategic player in governance. For the moment, this dialogue has got off to a weak start. But the fact that civil society organizations, aware of their role, are seeking to formulate consultation mechanisms demonstrates their will to influence development policies. In this context, implementation of a study on the skills and potential of Burkinan civil society and strengthening of its capabilities, along with the organization of the December 2002 “national civil society forum” by the *Centre pour la Gouvernance Démocratique* (Centre for Good Governance, or CGD) mark a very important step in the consultation process. Implementing the results from this forum will enable civil society to provide itself with the skills and means necessary to increase and improve its contribution to promoting democracy and good governance. However, it will need to show proof of credibility and effectiveness by cultivating its independence and also ensuring that principles such as democratic functioning, transparency, a sense of proportion and honesty apply within its own house.

Recommendations

There is no doubt that illiteracy – which affects more than 70% of the population – coupled with the people's poor health, constitutes an obstacle to a viable democracy. Ignorance, absence of civic education and ill health are conducive to dictatorship and all kinds of manipulation, while hindering the development of social capital, the expression of people's real concerns, accountability of leaders, etc. Effective intervention in the field of education and health could, therefore, have a positive effect, not only on economic and social development, but also on the emergence of a civic conscience and democratic culture. For this to happen, the health and education systems in Burkina Faso must really take on board the concepts of democracy, human rights, citizenship, empowerment, decentralization, etc. in a local socio-economic context that disseminates certain values inimical to democracy and human rights. It is therefore particularly important that reforming the content of education in Burkina Faso should also receive close attention. Support for decentralized management of health care systems and empowerment of grass-roots communities can also assist the emergence of grass-roots democracy.

The current democratization process in Burkina Faso is although, as emphasised above, proceeding well. Indeed, considerable progress has been made, with a Constitution and electoral code largely based on consensus and relative political stability. Democracy and good governance are, in our opinion, two facets of the same reality. Action undertaken in the area of good governance in Burkina Faso (in accordance with the National Good Governance Plan) are also aimed at strengthening the democratic process. The next National Plan is intended to be a flexible and well-structured framework to guide, ensure consistency and provide benchmarks, integrating all the action taken in the area of governance in Burkina Faso. However, various factors hindering the emergence of a healthy and viable democracy in Burkina Faso must be taken into account: the interpenetration of the different authorities provided for in the Constitution, the weakness of the country's political opposition, the weak capabilities of civil society, the lack of a civic culture, etc. In order to restore public confidence in the representative institutions, reduce the concentration of political power and promote more democratic governance in Burkina Faso, Sida could ensure support

for the following players, organizations and processes:

- building the capabilities of political parties and encouraging dialogue between parties, with a view to improving their internal governance and strengthening the party system;
- promoting participation by and political representation of women within the National Assembly and local assemblies, and in political parties;
- enhancing the capabilities of civil society organizations with a view to strengthening their role in promoting democracy, good governance and human development;
- increasing counterweights in order to act as a check on arbitrary power by actually separating the executive, legislative and judicial powers and by creating truly independent institutions. The judiciary has insufficient technical skills, offices and access to information. It would seem necessary to provide them with material, financial and human resources. Strengthening independent bodies, in particular, the Electoral Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the *Médiature* (“Ombudsman”) is another approach that would encourage the implementation of essential reforms and democratic practices, and subsequently defend those reforms. For example, it is essential for the Electoral Commission to have sufficient financial resources of its own to enable it to organize elections that are free and fair for all. The recently created Human Rights Commission must actually function in order to accomplish the tasks for which it was established, rather than appear as just one more administrative structure. Action must also be undertaken with a view to professionalising the civil service and the armed forces.
- strengthening the decentralization process through an effective and simultaneous transfer of resources and skills to the decentralized local authorities. Decentralization must not be limited to delegating power; it also requires a widening of participation to those who are often marginalized, such as women, minorities and the poor. There must also be an obligation for accountability on the part of all State employees at local level. Otherwise, decentralization will remain no more than rhetoric. The authorities must also resolve the problem of co-ordination between the decentralized structures at village and *département* level as there is currently insufficient co-ordination.
- strengthening freedom and independence of the media. Even though a vast proliferation can be seen in the independent media, a strengthening of the legal and constitutional guarantees regarding the right to freedom of expression and information is still required.
- strengthening the ethos of accountability is essential if we are to achieve a broad process of integrating democratic principles, practices and values into all areas of society in order to build a strong, lasting and integrated democracy that is more willing to listen to ordinary people.
- The war on corruption must form the object of clear political will through, above all, the establishment of a strategy plan to counter corruption in both central government and the local and regional authorities.

- The Burkinan [private/business] sector will have to get used to a new economic and regulatory environment marked by the combined effects of economic integration with adjacent countries and globalization. Faced with this challenge, preferential tax conditions may be necessary for firms operating in our country during a possibly transitory period of adjustment for national market conditions. The private sector, which forms a key player in economic governance, requires:
- strengthening of the sector's supervision arrangements, so that the sector's various components are better organized, and to ensure professionalization in major areas.
- Private operators will need to exploit all the potential offered by regional economic integration, particularly with the establishment of a stock exchange.

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