

DeLoG's second In-Country Workshop in Grand Popo, Benin



Mr. Raphael Edou, Minister of Decentralisation in Benin, opened DeLoGs second in-country workshop¹. Stating that there will be “no development without decentralisation” in Benin and the country could only “succeed together”, Mr. Edou calls the workshop a “starting point for the decentralisation process”.

This choice of words was remarkable since they reflected the overarching concept of the seminar very well: to bring together different levels of government and to include participants from key sectors as well as civil society representatives. Thus, the discussions took place in a constellation in which participants do not usually meet on a daily basis – even though their cooperation is crucial for the success of the reform. Over the next few days, this stakeholder-mix proved to have been an excellent decision.

Before Mr. Edou's intervention, Mr. Jean-Paul Monchau, Ambassador of France, elaborated on the role of local governance in the fight against poverty and accentuated that over 50 territorial entities in France entertain co-operations with communes in Benin. Mr. Hans Jörg Neumann, Ambassador of Germany, in his intervention stressed the importance of the National Policy on Decentralisation and Deconcentration² (PONADEC). He also emphasized that decentralisation is one of the priority pillars of the German bilateral cooperation.

¹ DeLoGs first in-country workshop was held in Maputo, Mozambique from the 18th to 20th of April 2012.

² Politique Nationale de Décentralisation et Déconcentration

During the next three days, dynamic discussions took place between all the participants. Topics addressed included:

- Political economy analysis in the context of Benin;
- The link between the decentralisation reform and the work of sectors;
- The transfer of competencies and resources;
- Coordination and local service delivery;
- Ways to strengthen the coordination between PONADEC and development partners.



M. Edou during his intervention at the opening ceremony

Challenges concerning the decentralization reform, which arose during discussions, mainly related to the slow implementation process of the PONADEC, the fact that sector ministries only transfer a small part of their resources via the Fund to support the development of communes (FADEC)³ that the amount of overall resources transferred to the sub-national level as a whole are not sufficient and that mayors sometimes neither have the necessary capacities in place to implement devolved functions nor the will to follow laws and regulations related to citizen consultation processes.

The seminar was conceptualized in a very interactive style with alternations between small group discussions and presentations, followed by questions and debates in the plenary. A more detailed final report containing the outcomes of the workshop is currently being prepared and will shortly be available on our website.

An initial evaluation at the end of the seminar revealed the participants' very high rate of satisfaction with the achievement of the seminar's main objectives. Namely, those were to deepen the participants' knowledge on aid effectiveness and harmonisation in the decentralisation context, to incite interaction between key stakeholders and to identify possible ways forward.

³ Fonds d'Appui au Développement des Communes