

<p>Présidence de la République Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire</p> 		<p>APCAM/MSU/USAID Projet de Mobilisation des Initiatives en matière de Sécurité Alimentaire au Mali (PROMISAM)</p> 
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PROMISAM

PROJECT TO MOBILIZE FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES IN MALI

(Projet de Mobilisation des Initiatives en Matière de Sécurité Alimentaire au Mali)

http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mali_fd_strtgy/index.htm

Annual Report

October 2006 – September 2007

Bamako



Participants in the PROMISAM-CSA training session on developing local food security plans: local elected officials, civil society leaders, and local administration (Koulikoro, 2007).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Project to Mobilize Food Security Initiatives in Mali—PROMISAM (*Projet de Mobilisation des Initiatives en matière de Sécurité Alimentaire au Mali*)—began in mid-September, 2004. Its objective is to help support Mali implement its new national food security strategy, or SNSA. Initially financed for one year (Sept 2004 – Sept 2005) by USAID/Mali’s Accelerated Economic Growth program, PROMISAM has been extended through December, 2007, and its activities expanded to cover all of Mali.¹ The program is implemented by Michigan State University through the Food Security III Cooperative Agreement. The work is carried out in collaboration with the Malian Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire (CSA) in the Office of the President. A key focus of the project is to help Malian townships (*communes*), counties (*circles*), and states (*regions*) develop their own local food security plans, in a mutually consistent manner, as part of Mali’s approach to implementing its decentralized food security strategy.

This report covers PROMISAM’s activities during its third and final full year, from October 2006 through September 2007. In 2006/2007, PROMISAM focused its work on three types of activities: (1) assuring that all rural communes, circles, and regions in Mali had developed their local-level food security plans; (2) assuring that these plans were well integrated into the National Food Security Plan (PNSA), and (3) completing all monitoring, evaluation and final documentation of project impacts. In addition, PROMISAM continued to coordinate with the agricultural market information system—OMA—to assure that its reports, critical to food security planning in Mali, continued to be produced in a timely manner. Improving the timeliness of these publications had been a key objective of year 2 of the project, and continued coordination helped assure that the improvement in timeliness achieved in the previous year was sustained. PROMISAM also continued to include rural journalists in the workshops it ran for local leaders on food security planning in order to contribute to improved public discourse on the food security challenges facing Mali.

At the beginning of year 3 of the project (Oct., 2006), local plans had been completed and officially adopted in all the communes of Gao, Sikasso, and Tombouctou, and Gao had also completed its circle-level and regional syntheses. In addition, the training of local officials and civil-society leaders in the use of food security planning approaches (a necessary step to the development of the local plans) had taken place in Kayes, in addition to Gao, Sikasso, and Tombouctou. Therefore, year 3 activities focused on completing the training of local leaders in the four remaining regions of the country—Mopti, Kidal, Koulikoro and Ségou—and supporting the subsequent development of the local plans in these zones, as well as the remaining circle-level and regional syntheses in the earlier zones.

Local officials (mayors, NGO leaders, etc.) have embraced and taken ownership of the local-level food security planning. This strong involvement, however, had an unintended consequence for the project schedule. Because local-level officials and NGO leaders insisted on being involved in the plan development, but were also involved heavily in the presidential and

¹ The annual reports for the first two years of the project are available at:
http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/mali_fd_strtgy/index.htm#progress

parliamentary election campaigns in the first part of 2007, completion and official adoption of the plans and (in the Koulikoro region) the food security training sessions slowed considerably during the first part of 2007, making it impossible to finish all the plans by August 31, as originally planned. As a consequence, MSU requested and received from USAID/Mali a no-cost extension through December 31, 2007 in order to complete all project activities.

Key indicators of PROMISAM's success during year 3 of the project include:

- The local-level food security training sessions were completed for all regions of the country. During the year, a total of 1610 local leaders (295 women and 1315 men)—mayors, CCC members, NGO members, members of the local administration, leaders of local farmer and private-sector organizations, and local radio journalists—in the regions of Kidal, Koulikoro, Mopti and Segou completed 2-day training programs in concepts of food security and their use in the development of local food security plans. These leaders subsequently returned to their communities and led the development of the commune-level, circle, and regional food security plans. Over the 3-year life of the project, 3860 individuals (714 women and 3,146 men) from all rural communes in Mali have participated in these training programs. This training program represents a large contribution to the human capital base of rural Mali in terms of local elected and civil society leaders now familiar with the concepts of food security and food policy and their use in local development planning.
- PROMISAM continued to include journalists and rural radio personnel in the local food security planning sessions, as part of an effort begun in year 2 of the project to improve the quality of reporting and public debate on food security issues in Mali. During the year, 55 journalists and local radio personnel from the regions of Mopti, Segou, Koulikoro and Kidal participated in such training.
- Local leaders completed commune-level food security plans and circle- and regional-level syntheses for all communes in the regions of Kayes, Kidal, and Mopti and completed the circle and regional syntheses for Sikasso. In addition, during the year, 90 of the 118 communes in the Segou region completed their plans. Development of local-level plans was launched in all the remaining areas of Segou and in Koulikoro, and these plans are on track to be completed by December 2007. By September, 2007, 561 of Mali's 696 rural communes (81%) had completed their own local food security plans.
- The local-level plans were made available to local governments, NGOs, and donors via the PROMISAM and CSA websites and on CDs and were increasingly used to help target development assistance activities.
- The Malian government began implementation of the national food security plan (PNSA) in the Gao region, using the local plans as the key tool to identify actions to be financed by 500 million FCFA from the national budget.
- The GRM and JICA used the local plans to identify villages and sites for investment to improve local food security in the circles of Gao, Youwarou, and Badiagara, using 750 million FCFA in Japanese counterpart funding.
- PROMISAM continued to provide ongoing counsel to the CSA on a number of issues, including participation in the development of the government's 2007 food security action plan, developing plans for improving cereal marketing in light of the large production in 2006/07, and review of ongoing CSA activities.

- The OMA continued to meet all its production targets for the timely production of its market outlook and other reports.

Full details of PROMISAM's activities and copies of all its key reports are available at the project's website, http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mali_fd_strtgy/index.htm .

During the 3-month no-cost extension, PROMISAM will work with the CSA and the local communities to assure completion of the remaining local food security plans, coordinate with various stakeholders to assure the wide diffusion of these plans (via the CSA and PROMISAM websites, CDs, and paper copies), and complete all the remaining steps involved in the completion and closing of the project. Full details on the October-December work plan are available at:

[http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/mali fd strtgy/promisam no cost extension request web.pdf](http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/mali_fd_strtgy/promisam_no_cost_extension_request_web.pdf)

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

In September, 2004, USAID/Mali took a major step to support the Malian government's efforts to strengthen sustainable food security. In response to a request from the Malian government, the Mission worked with Michigan State University to design a program of technical support to the newly created Malian Food Security Commission (*Commissariat à la Sécurité Alimentaire*, or CSA) in the Office of the President. The program, known as PROMISAM (*Projet de Mobilisation des Initiatives en matière de Sécurité Alimentaire au Mali*, or Project to Mobilize Food Security Initiatives in Mali), is implemented through an Associate Award to the USAID/Michigan State University Food Security III Cooperative Agreement.

PROMISAM has worked closely with the CSA over the past three years to implement key elements of Mali's national food security strategy. USAID/Mali funding for this activity over the period October 1, 2004 through September 30, 2007 totaled \$2,479,567. USAID/Mali has granted a no-cost extension to the project through December, 2007, to allow full completion of project activities.

MSU implements the project through an office in Bamako (two full-time Malian professionals plus support staff) and campus-based support from MSU faculty and administrative staff. The project is implemented in cooperation with the CSA and the *Assemblée Permanente des Chambres d'Agriculture du Mali*, an organization that represents the largest grouping of rural organizations in Mali.

The year 2006/07 represented the last programmed year of project activities. PROMISAM devoted most of its effort to completing the training of local officials and civil-society leaders in the techniques of local food security planning and in facilitating their work to develop their own such plans at the commune, circle, and regional level. PROMISAM also worked closely with CSA staff in Bamako to help shape the National Food Security Plan (PNSA—*Plan Nationale de Sécurité Alimentaire*) so that it was firmly based on the foundation of the local-level plans.

The annual report for the first year of the project (http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mali_fd_strtgy/PROMISAM_ANNUAL_REPORT_LETTER_v2.pdf) presents full details about the general food security context in Mali, including an historical overview of Mali's evolving approach to food security, a discussion of Malian institutions working on food security issues, the nature of PROMISAM's support to the CSA (objectives, management and technical approach), and information on the CSA and PROMISAM roles in addressing the 2004/2005 food crisis.

1.2 Project Objectives for October 2006 through September 2007

The third and final full year of project activities had three principal objectives:

- assuring that all rural communes, circles, and regions in Mali had developed their local-level food security plans;
- assuring that these plans were well integrated into the National Food Security Plan (PNSA), and
- completing all monitoring, evaluation and final documentation of project impacts.

In addition, PROMISAM continued to coordinate with the agricultural market information system—OMA—to assure that its reports, critical to food security planning in Mali, continued to be produced in a timely manner. Improving the timeliness of these publications had been a key objective of year 2 of the project, and continued coordination helped assure that the improvement in timeliness achieved in the previous year was sustained.

Activities undertaken and intermediate results obtained during the period October 2006 through September 2007 are described below and listed by objective and result.

2. Activities and Impacts in 2006/2007

This section provides results and activities carried out under each of the project objectives identified in Section 1.2.

2.1 Objective 1: Complete the development of the local food security plans

2.1.1 Result 1.1: Training of trainers for the preparation of commune food security plans

During the year, 1610 local leaders (295 women and 1315 men), including all the mayors of the communes involved, were provided with the conceptual and planning tools they needed to develop food security action plans at the commune, circle, and regional levels. This completed the local-level training of trainers programmed under PROMSAM. Over the 3-year life of the project, 3860 individuals (714 women and 3,146 men) from all rural communes in Mali have participated in these two-day training programs (Table 1). This training program represents a large contribution to the human capital base of rural Mali in terms of local elected and civil society leaders now familiar with the concepts of food security and food policy and their use in local development planning. The training materials used at the local level, as well as reports of all the training sessions, are available at:

http://www.aec.msu.edu/agecon/fs2/mali_fd_strtgy/plans/index.htm#overview.

Table 1. PROMISAM Training of Trainers									
Number of Local Leaders Trained in Food Security Planning Concepts									
October 2004 - September 2007									
Region	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Totals	Region	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	Totals
<i>Gao</i>					<i>Segou</i>				
- Women	32	0	0	32	- Women	0	0	126	126
- Men	215	0	0	215	- Men	0	0	525	525
- Total	247	0	0	247	- Total	0	0	651	651
<i>Kayes</i>					<i>Sikasso</i>				
- Women	0	115	0	115	- Women	120	37	0	157
- Men	0	556	0	556	- Men	303	175	0	478
- Total	0	671	0	671	- Total	423	212	0	635
<i>Kidal</i>					<i>Tombouctou</i>				
- Women	0	0	6	6	- Women	0	57	0	57
- Men	0	0	72	72	- Men	0	294	0	294
- Total	0	0	78	78	- Total	0	351	0	351
<i>Koulikoro</i>					<i>Totals: Mali</i>				
- Women	0	0	120	120	- Women	152	267	295	714
- Men	0	0	508	508	- Men	518	1313	1315	3146
- Total	0	0	628	628	- Total	670	1580	1610	3860
<i>Mopti</i>									
- Women	0	58	43	101					
- Men	0	288	210	498					
- Total	0	346	253	599					

Carrying out the training program involved the following activities:

- Field visits to prepare for the training were conducted in Segou, Koulikoro, and Kidal. The training session in Kidal, originally scheduled for early 2006 but postponed because of the insecurity in the region, took place during the regional Kidal conference in June 2007.
- Sixteen training sessions were then organized. The distribution of trainers trained by region is shown in table 1.

2.1.2 Result 1.2: Development of Local Food Security Action Plans

The process of developing and adopting local food security plans is time-consuming but necessary to assure quality and local ownership of the plans. After the local leaders have completed the training session with CSA and PROMISAM, they return to their local communities and constitute a group to work with the CCC agents (*agents du centre de conseil communal*) to develop a draft plan. After completion, each plan is adopted by the communal council. Then, the plans are sent to the local representatives of the Ministry of Plan who edit them (for form, not content) and draft the circle and regional level syntheses. The circle and regional syntheses are adopted by the elected circle councils and regional assemblies, respectively.

After adoption, the communal plans and the syntheses are sent to PROMISAM staff in Bamako, and in some cases MSU staff in the US² for consistency and coherence checks. Comments are then sent back to the local level to correct any inconsistencies and incoherencies. After correction of any inconsistencies and incoherencies, the plans are posted to the CSA and PROMISAM websites and diffused through other media as well.

As a result of these activities by the trainees and the continued technical support from PROMISAM and CSA staff, over the period October 2006-September 2007, all communes and circles in the regions of Kayes, Kidal, and Mopti completed and officially adopted their local-level plans and regional syntheses. In addition, 90 of the 118 communes in the Segou region completed and officially adopted their plans. Development of local-level plans was launched in all the remaining areas of Segou and in Koulikoro, and these plans are on track to be completed by December 2007. By September, 2007, 561 of Mali's 696 rural communes (81%) had completed and officially adopted their own local food security plans (table 2).

² Valerie Kelly of MSU has played an especially important role in carrying out these reviews.

Table 2. Status of Local-Level Food Security Plans September, 2007						
Region	Commune-level Plans		Circle-Level Syntheses		Regional Syntheses	
	Completed	Remaining to Complete	Completed	Remaining to Complete	Completed	Remaining to Complete
Gao	24	0	4	0	1	0
Kayes	129	0	7	0	1	0
Kidal	11	0	4	0	1	0
Koulikoro	0	107	9	9	0	1
Mopti	108	0	8	0	1	0
Segou	90	28	7	7	0	1
Sikasso	147	0	7	0	1	0
Tombouctou	52	0	5	5	0	1
Totals	561	135	51	21	5	3
Completion rate	81%		71%		63%	

2.1.3 Result 1.3: Information about food security plans and the process is made available to a wide range of actors to improve the integration of local and national food security programs.

PROMISAM and CSA undertook the following activities to spread information about the local food security plans and their role in the broader national food security strategy of Mali:

- Preparatory meetings with local officials prior to the local-level training, in order to inform them of the objectives and the policy context of the training
- The local training sessions themselves
- Distribution of completed local food security plans on CD and discussion of the process of developing the local plans at semi-annual meetings of the National Food Security Council (CNSA), chaired by the prime minister. The distribution of completed plans at this venue served as a demonstration effect, leading local officials in areas where the plans were not yet completed to push for completion of the plans in their own areas.
- Posting of the completed plans on the CSA and PROMISAM websites.
- Various networking and outreach efforts by the CSA's documentation center and PROMISAM staff, particularly with NGOs to make them aware of the plans.

The plans are increasingly being translated into action. At the level of the Government of Mali, the government and FAO agreed in 2006 that the local plans would serve as the foundation for implementing the National Food Security Program (PNSA) in terms of identifying priority villages, communes and investment priorities. This was reaffirmed by the Prime Minister at a meeting of the Conseil National de Sécurité Alimentaire in Ségou in January 2007. Examples of the use of the plans in the implementation of the PNSA include:

- In 2006, the government began implementing the PNSA in the Gao region, investing 500 million FCFA in national budget resources in projects identified in the local food security plans.
- In 2006, the GRM and JICA used the local plans to identify villages and sites for investment to improve local food security in the circles of Gao, Youwarou, and Badiagara using 750 million FCFA in Japanese counterpart funding.
- During 2007, the GRM (through the National Food Security Council—CNSA) used the plans to identify the 1000 most food-insecure villages in Mali (in the regions of Gao, Kidal, Tombouctou, Kayes, and Mopti). These villages will receive priority investments under the PNSA during 2007.

At the level of development partners, NGOs and PVOs are increasingly using the local plans to identify where to carry out their activities and on which activities to focus. For example:

- In 2006, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) used the local plans in the Mopti area to help identify areas for their seed-fair and other agricultural marketing support activities supported through Food for Peace and other donors.
- The French NGO AFVP (Agence Française des Volontaires du Progrès), which is planning development interventions in the cercles of Simby and Gavinané in the area of Nioro du Sahel contacted PROMISAM to obtain the local plans in order to better plan its work. The AFVP person in charge of the project has promised to contact all the other NGOs working in the area so that they can work together to help achieve the priorities identified in the local plans.
- ADER, an NGO focused on regional economic development, contacted PROMISAM and CSA in 2007 to obtain the local plans for the Bandiagara region to help target its activities in the region. It is also working through CC-ONG (an NGO coordinating group in Mali) to coordinate its work with other NGOs in the region in a way that will reinforce the priorities identified in the plans.
- In 2007, a representative of the Millennium Village Project requested from the CSA the list of the 166 communes classified as the “most vulnerable” in terms of food insecurity and the local food security plans for those communes.

During the remaining three months of the project (October-December, 2007), PROMISAM and CSA will put a special emphasis on outreach activities to make even more development partners aware of the local plans and their usefulness for aligning development interventions with the priorities identified by the local populations. In addition to continuing to post all the plans on the CSA and PROMISAM websites, copies will be widely distributed on CDs and, when necessary, in hard copies.

2.1.4 Result 1.4: Improve the capacity of the CSA to manage and implement the decentralized National Food Security Plan

During the year, PROMISAM continued to provide technical advice to the CSA on the design and implementation of the national food security program and its articulation with the local plans. Activities undertaken included PROMISAM’s participation in:

- CSA's meetings to finalize and validate the plans for the initial implementation of the PNSA in the Gao region. The GRM allocated 500 million FCFA (US\$1 million) for this effort, which is targeting investments identified in the local food security plans.
- Meetings at the CSA in November 2006 to develop the government strategy to deal with cereal production surpluses, and possible low farm prices, in the 2006/07 crop year.
- Review of the 2007 CSA action plan (November 2006) and subsequent quarterly progress reviews on implementation of the program (in March, June, and September, 2007)
- Participation in the choice of sites and villages for the use of Japanese counterpart funds to promote local food security in the circles of Gao, Youwarou, and Bandiagara, based on priorities identified in the local plans.

2.2. Objective 2 : Strengthen CSA communications and outreach capacity

2.2.1 Result 2.1 : The CSA documentation center is completely operational

PROMISAM's only support to this activity during the past year was the provision of some small equipment and office supplies. Since 2006, the CSA documentation center has been fully operational, and the CSA website (www.csa-mali.org) is housed on a local Malian Internet service provider. After the closing of PROMISAM, the documentation center will be handling all outreach activities regarding the CSA and the local development plans.

2.3 Other Activities

During 2006/07, PROMISAM also continued two activities begun in the 2005/06 work plan: providing training to local journalists on food security issues in order to improve the public debate and reporting on food issues in Mali; and working with the market information system (OMA—*Observatoire du Marché Agricole*) to assure continued timely production of its reports, which are critical inputs to both public- and private-sector decision making regarding food marketing and supply in Mali.

- The training of journalists (all from areas outside of Bamako in 2006/07) was achieved at very low marginal cost by including journalists (mainly from and rural radio stations) to participate in the food security training sessions organized for local leaders as part of the development the local food security development plans. An advantage of this approach, in addition to the cost savings, is that the local journalists became much more familiar with the development of the plans in their own localities and thus reported on them in their broadcasts, helping building local involvement and ownership of the plans. Between October 2006 and September 2007, 55 journalists participated in these workshops. They came from the regions of Mopti (circles of Bandiagara, Bankas, and Koro); Ségou (circles of Ségou, Niono, Macina, Bla, Tominian, San, and Baraouéli), Koulikoro (circles of Banamba, Nara, Kolokani, Dioila, Kangaba, and Kati) and Kidal. Journalists from other regions participated in the training sessions in the earlier years of the project.
- PROMISAM continued to coordinate with OMA to assure that the increase in timeliness in the production of its information bulletins, achieved through project assistance in 2005/06, was maintained. PROMISAM's technical assistance was limited to Nango

Dembélé's participation in two market surveillance missions with the OMA in November 2006 and June 2007 that formed the basis of the OMA's semi-annual market outlook bulletins (*Bulletins de conjuncture*), which are published just after the main cereals harvest and at the beginning of the hungry season (*soudure*). During the year, the OMA met all its publication targets on time (52 weekly bulletins, 12 monthly bulletins, and 2 special outlook bulletins), indicating that PROMISAM's assistance been successful in helping assure timely production of the OMA's key information products.

2.4 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Project Administration

Monitoring and evaluation are ongoing activities in PROMISAM, as reflected in the process of reviewing the draft local plans described above; and the close collaboration with CSA and local food security committees to monitor plan completion, local implementation, and the use of the plans by government and development partners. The CSA's Department of Planning and Monitoring (Département Planification et Suivi, or DPS) will have responsibility for ongoing monitoring of plan implementation after PROMISAM closes in December. This will be a major challenge because as the plans begin to be implemented, the monitoring and evaluation needs requirements will increase exponentially. As explained in section 3 below, the implementation phase of the plans offers an unprecedented opportunity for Mali to benefit from cross-community learning and draw broader lessons about participatory development *if* the DPS can organize a system to monitor and analyze the results of the implementation and facilitate the sharing of experiences across communities.

Beyond the normal project administrative and reporting activities, the major administrative actions taken during the current year were the preparations for the closing of the project in December, 2007. At the end of August, 2007, the contracts of all local support staff were terminated, and a limited number (Abdramane Traoré—research associate; Maimouna Traoré—administrative assistant; and Hamadoun Guindo—office assistant) were hired back on short-term contracts to help with the final months of the project. The remaining administrative tasks for the team will include final administrative and financial reporting and the transfer of all equipment to the cooperating institution (CSA) at the close of the project in December.

3. Looking Forward to December 2007 and beyond

The main emphases of PROMISAM during the final three months of the project will be on helping assure timely completion and adoption of the remaining local food security plans, full documentation of project activities and data for hand-over to CSA and USAID/Mali, the writing of final reports and administrative shutdown of the project. The work plan for these remaining three months of the project is available at:

http://www.aec.msu.edu/fs2/mali_fd_strtgy/promisam_no_cost_extension_request_web.pdf

Looking beyond December, 2007, USAID and MSU can be proud of what PROMISAM and its Malian partners have accomplished and yet be concerned about whether the potential offered by these achievements will be fully exploited in the future. When PROMISAM began in September 2004, the government of Mali had just created the Food Security Commission in the Office of the President 4 months earlier; the national food security strategy was just a document on paper,

with only nascent structures at the national level and no structures at the local level to implement it; and Mali was facing its most serious food emergency in 20 years as a result of drought and locust attacks. As a result of assistance provided through PROMISAM, the country (and the young CSA) not only weathered the 2004/05 food crisis, but was successful in changing the focus of Malian food security policy from short-term crisis management to the creation of long-term structural food security through the creation and implementation of an integrated system of local, regional and national food security plans. These plans focus on strengthening food availability, access, utilization and stability *over the long-term* (rather than just crisis management) by increasing production, trade, incomes, and sustainable social safety nets. In just three years, Mali will have gone from a situation where there was just a national food security strategy on paper to one in which every commune, circle and region of the country will have, through a participatory process, developed its own local food security plan.

Already, these plans are beginning to be used to better target both government and development partner investments in improving Mali's food security. But capturing the full potential of the local plans will require actions that extend beyond December 2007. Through its decentralized approach to food security planning, Mali has launched an experiment in participatory rural development that is unprecedented in sub-Saharan Africa. This experiment offers large opportunities to learn about what does and does not work in terms of strategies to improve sustainable food security and to more efficiently mobilize and target investments. But taking advantage of the experiment will require actions that extend beyond the mandate and time of PROMISAM.

The existence of the local plans offers two fundamental opportunities to foster more successful economic growth and poverty reduction in Mali, where over 70% of the population remains in rural areas:

- By identifying locally determined and endorsed priorities to improve food security in different communities across the country, the plans represent a tool that government (both at the national and local levels), donors, NGOs, and the private sector can use to coordinate their efforts, avoid duplication of efforts and more effectively target resources to locally identified priorities. By reflecting local priorities, the plans should also help in the mobilization of resources, particularly at the local level, to respond to local felt needs. At the same time, the plans, by providing an initial description of conditions in the commune, establish a common benchmark against which progress can be measured.
- The plans also represent a huge opportunity for cross-community learning. Each of nearly 700 communes will be undertaking its own food security actions, and undoubtedly many of them will be trying similar, yet not identical approaches, and applying them in different environments. If an adequate monitoring and evaluation system can be put in place, there is a huge opportunity for communities to learn from each other (and for government and development partners to learn as well) about what works under what circumstances and why. Developing networks for cross-community learning, exploiting tools such as rural radio, visits of leaders from one commune to another to compare similar projects, and linking this into training of students from institutions such as IPR/IFRA (Mali's college of agriculture located in Katibougou) would create

opportunities to exploit more fully the potential that the CSA and USAID have created through their investment in PROMISAM. Taking advantage of the local plans will require political will, and more sensitization of NGOs, donors, and all the other actors involved in development efforts in Mali to use these plans as a coordination framework. This sensitization needs to be carried out by CSA, and USAID can help with the donor community.