

**West African Network on Land Issues  
LANDNET WEST AFRICA**

**FINAL REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP FOR LAUNCHING OF  
LANDNET WEST AFRICA**

**12 and 13 February 2001  
Hotel Indépendance, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso**

February 2001.

## 1. CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop for launching of Landnet West Africa was held at the Hotel Independance, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13 February 2001. The proceedings were chaired by Hubert OUEDRAOGO, co-ordinator (GRAF/Landnet Burkina Faso) while Bara GUEYE (IIED/Senegal) acted as facilitator, with Saïdou SANOU (GRAF/Landnet Burkina Faso) as general rapporteur of the workshop <sup>1</sup>. The opening and closing ceremonies were chaired by Mr. Bamory OUATTARA, who stood in for the Minister of Finance and Budget.

### 1.1. Context and objectives of the workshop

The context and objectives of the workshop were highlighted during Bara GUEYE's introductory remarks and the recallings made by Kasim KASANGA (Landnet Ghana) and Hubert OUEDRAOGO.

The Ouagadougou workshop is the follow-up of a process marking the renewed interest and constant concerns shown by the numerous land development actors and partners in Africa. At the Sunningdale meeting (United Kingdom) organised by DFID in February 1999 (Land rights and sustainable development in sub saharan Africa) the African participants expressed the desire to establish an African network on land issues. The DFID undertook to support this process<sup>2</sup>.

In January 2000 in Addis-Abeba (Ethiopia), the African participants reiterated their desire to work on the establishment of the network on land issues and discussed some of the modalities for effective take-off of the activities. It was decided to proceed sub-region by sub-region : West Africa, East Africa, Horn of Africa and Southern Africa. The Group of the west Africa sub-region decided to work, first of all, on the establishment of national networks which will then form the West African Network.

According to the Addis-Ababa declaration, the aim of the African network is: *to build an enabling environment for the formulation and implementation of people-centred land policies, laws and structures necessary for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in Africa*

Based on this objective, Landnet West Africa tried to better define its mission as follows " to build consensus on progressive, workable and acceptable land policies in the interest of all stakeholders for sustainable development

The objectives pursued were explained as follows :

- to share experience and proper land management practices ;
- to build institutional and individual capacities in land issues ;
- to provide support to the different actors to influence decisions and implementation of land policies ;
- to promote interaction and collaboration among stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> GRAF – Groupe de recherche et d’action sur le foncier ; IIED – International Institute for Environment and Development

<sup>2</sup> DFID – Department for International Development (UK)

Remarkable progress has been made in the different African sub-regions since the Addis Ababa meeting <sup>3</sup>. In West Africa, in particular, efforts have been made to disseminate the Addis documents, to initiate establishment of national networks and embark on activities at national level.

The Ouagadougou workshop for launching of the West African Network was convened after one year of activities at the national level. This workshop was preceded by a preparatory meeting of the focus group, *Landnet* West Africa, in January 2001 in Accra, Ghana.

The Ouagadougou workshop had two objectives :

1. To agree on a work programme for the sub-regional network, and
2. To establish the operational structure and mechanisms of the network.

More specifically, the workshop was aimed at the effective launching of the activities of the network on land issues in West Africa. The participants expressed the hope that the network would be an effective tool for influencing policies and practices in Africa.

## **1.2. Participants of the workshop and conduct of the proceedings**

The participants of the workshop come mainly from countries of the sub region : : Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. OSSREA (Ethiopia)<sup>4</sup> which co-ordinates the African Network on land issues (Landnet Africa) as well as several inter-african organisations (CILSS, the Liptako Gourma integrated Development authorities, SADAOC<sup>5</sup>, IPD/AOS<sup>6</sup>), ONGs, international institutions (OXFAM/UK, IIED Sahel, IUCN/West Africa's regional office) and bilateral co-operation organisations (French and British co-operations) also attended the meeting. Representatives of East and Southern African networks were invited, but could not attend the meeting. Complete list of participants is found in annex.

The two-day workshop was conducted in the form of plenary and group sessions. The first day was devoted essentially to key note and thematic presentations (Cf. work programme of the workshop is found in the annex). Such key note presentations made it possible for the participants to note down the issues and broad ideas to be examined in detail during group discussions. Smooth communication between the English and French speaking participants was facilitated by simultaneous interpretation.

The group sessions were devoted mainly to search for concrete responses to the three major preoccupations of the workshop :

- activities to be carried out by the sub-regional network;
- structuring of the network and the communication mechanisms;

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. « Landnet Africa update », December 2000, « Summary report of the interim committee meeting » (Southern Africa), October 2000, « Progress report on West Africa landnet activities », January, 2000. East Africa planning workshop summary report, August 2000.

<sup>4</sup> « *Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa* » (Organisation pour la Recherche en Sciences Sociales en Afrique de l'Est et australe).

<sup>5</sup> SADAOC : Sécurité alimentaire en Afrique de l'ouest, centrale. (Food security in West, Central Africa

<sup>6</sup> - Institut Pan Africain pour le développement, Afrique de l'ouest et Sahel. (PanAfrican Institute for Development, West Africa and Sahel)

- funding of the activities of the network.

Apart from the conclusions of the workshop on the three points highlighted above, this report would deal with the main aspects of the following presentations\*\*\* :

- Stakes of land policies and legislation in West Africa of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Key note presentation);
- Success and sustainability of networking activities;
- Role of international and sub-regional organisations in networks on land issues.

## **2. STAKES OF LAND POLICIES AND LEGISLATION IN WEST AFRICA OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

This theme was the subject matter of the key note presentation made by Dr Chéibane COULIBALY of the *Centre Universitaire Mande Boukary*, Bamako. The objective of this presentation was to portray the general context of the current land dynamics in the West African sub-region.

The key note presentation placed emphasis on three important aspects of this dynamics :

### **2.1. Land as the most limiting factor for the highly rural West African economy**

The pressure on land, which was relative a few decades ago, tends to be very acute today. This leads to frequent conflicts and constitute a serious threat to peace in the sub-region. The policy measures implemented by the different States tend to deprive the local communities of the control over their land by giving impetus to a market logic. Yet, the market logic implies, at least, two elements :: (1) Unicity of law as opposed to the present diversity of laws and (2) unicity of ownership as opposed to multiple ownerships as it is the case today among the local communities.

### **2.2. Decentralisation often perceived as panacea**

Land legislation of the decades before 1990 were fraught with several shortcomings, including :

- Existence of different logics between these laws and those of land users at the local level;
- Difficulty in applying the laws due to absence of implementation laws, adoption of complicated, cumbersome and costly procedures, existence of internal contradictions among the different laws, etc.
- contradictions between the laws and the development logic,

The decentralisation programmes of the 1990s raised some hope in the different States as the option involving establishment of land charters for general orientation, was capable of ensuring more flexibility (taking of local land management rules and interests of the local communities into consideration). The on-going decentralisation programmes are however facing several difficulties related to :

- Adoption of an institutional homogenisation strategy under a context where local institutional life is rich and varied and where the local structures are characterised by their great capacity for resistance due to their flexibility..

- The «totalitarian temptation» as reflected by the emphasis placed more on decentralisation than devolution and control of the forms of representation of the communities.

### 2.3. Towards forms of more consensual management of "transboundary issues"

The integration efforts in West Africa do surprise political observers and analysts because of the present capacity of sub-region to overcome some constraints to the integration process. But this process has been experiencing several lapses, including mainly :

- Temptations to fight for sub-regional hegemony ;
- Difficulties in harmonising monetary policies ;
- Difficulties in harmonising economic policies;
- Risk of duplication of sub-regional organisations ;
- Multiplication of decentralisation programmes.

However, there are two dangers which should, today, exercise our minds: (1) increasing urbanisation which endangers the food security of rural producers and the food security of all (2) the present improper management of transboundary zones by the State thus, increasing the risk of armed conflict in the sub-region.

There is a question mark : how are compromises based on the principle of *subsidiarity* which focuses on sharing of powers, responsibilities and resources built in West Africa today ? Dr Chéibane COULIBALY makes **the assumption that the role played "transboundary " between the states is the same as the one played by intercommunality between the "communes" of the same country**, i.e providing good opportunities for co-management resulting from compromise between state institutions and indigenous institutions, between the forms of public management and the forms of more community based management ; and between market economy and subsistence economy. He then expressed the hope that the works of the network "*participate in the formulation of such policy philosophy and practice, by devising solutions to land issues guaranteeing security of users, efficient and sustainable utilisation of resources and peace in the sub-region*".

## 3. SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE ACTIVITIES OF A NETWORK

Such thematic presentation was made by Bara GUEYE of IIED Sahel, based on the lessons learned from the West African study on network on land issues, prepared for the Addis Ababa workshop <sup>7</sup>. This presentation and the discussion which ensued can be summarised in four main points:

### 3.1. Dimensions and elements constituting a network

Such dimensions and elements have several aspects :

- Transactional content : objectives, activities, types of exchanges, etc.
- Nature of links : intensity, reciprocity, expectations and complexity/multiplicity of relations.

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<sup>7</sup> - Bara Gueye et Hubert Ouédraogo : Study for the implementation of a land network in West Africa. DFID, 1999.

- Structural dimensions : size, density of the connections, geographical coverage, etc.

### **3.2. Major characteristics of a network**

Six major characteristics were cited ::

- Sharing of aim and of common problem;
- Common strategy ;
- Capacity of each of the members to contribute ;
- Capacity of the network vis-à-vis development of new skills ;
- Adapted management (through a formal and informal structure) ;
- Capacity of the network to adapt, innovate and develop.

### **3.3. Sources of strengths of operational networks**

Analysis of networks which are operating smoothly reveals the existence of a number of conditions:

- to begin with a core group ;
- to have affinities or common interests;
- to develop an efficient and effective communication system ;
- to have a committed co-ordinator, accepting to make certain sacrifices (times and resources) ;
- to have connections and good contacts;
- to have opportunities to develop certain capacities or skills (for example, publications) ;
- to have a system for connecting members with the outside world (example : web page).

### **3.4. Sources of weaknesses of a network**

Five main sources of weaknesses of the networks have been highlighted :

- Absence of clear objectives ;
- Low degree of interaction among the members ;
- conflicts between the agenda of the network and that of members ;
- Lack of logistical support (telephone, office, etc.) ;
- Lack of co-ordination mechanisms.

## **4. ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

This aspect was dealt with at two levels :

- Judy LONGBOTTOM's (IIED) presentation on the role of international organisation ;
- The panel with sub-regional partner institutions participating in the workshop (CILSS, Liptako-Gourma Integrated Development Authority, IPD/AOS, OXFAM/UK, SADAOC et IUCN/West Africa) with Ibrahim Dia (Landnet Senegal) as facilitator.

The representative of IIED, first of all, reviewed the benefits gained since the Addis Ababa meeting before dealing with the possible roles of the international organisations.

There are three benefits :

- Establishment of working relations with the African colleagues;
- Establishment of relations between the civil society and the governments;
- Possibility of having several levels of networks.

As concerns the roles to be played, it should be pointed out, first of all, that there are several types of institutions (research institutions, regional organisations, NGOs, financial partners, etc.) and it is therefore necessary to know the different specialities available. Then, the expectations of the networks should be highlighted for the international and sub-regional organisations to determine their possible added value.

However, there are several ways of making contributions :

- Helping to publicise the activities of the networks ;
- Making contribution to theoretical debate, assisting in publication and search for funds ;
- Facilitating access to literature and other forms of information;
- Supporting exchanges between countries and regions etc.

The session with sub-regional organisations attending the workshop was conducted through a presentation by each institution of their on-going programmes on land issues and formulation of areas of interest for collaboration with the network. The discussion which ensued led to the following conclusions:

1. The need to adopt a collaborative approach by signing conventions for establishment of working partnerships with the different organisations. This should involve exchange of information allowing for harmonisation of agenda and programmes.
2. The participating organisations expressed the need for expertise in terms of analysis and work on land issues. Several programmes are being prepared and may need the collaboration of the West African network on land issues : Programme for evaluation of the state of the environment in the CILSS countries and the ECOWAS (UNEP and IUCN) member countries.; food production programme (characterisation of the state of degradation of the different zones – SADAOC); establishment of national observatory for land issues in the Sahel (CILSS), etc.
3. The need to place emphasis on advocacy, in collaboration with the partners who are requesting for it (example : SADAOC and OXFAM/UK).

The discussions showed convergence of interests and the possibility for some collaboration programmes to develop quite rapidly. Some of the partners (such as UEMOA and ECOWAS) were invited to the workshop but could not attend. It was agreed that this partners should be approached, as sub-regional and regional integration is an important aspect to be considered.

#### **4. MAJOR CONCLUSIONS**

These conclusions result from the thematic presentations <sup>8</sup> and the discussions of the working group and plenary sessions. They are also an attempt to summarise the proposals made in the two working groups, both of which reflected on the activities, structure and funding of the sub-regional network.

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<sup>8</sup> Particularly, the presentations of Harrisu SUFIANU (Landnet Nigeria) on a proposed subregional work plan; of Kasim KASANGA (landnet Ghana) on the structure for the west African network and of Ako AMADI (Landnet Nigeria) on funding of networks.

#### **4.1. Activities of the West African Network**

The participants deemed it appropriate to agree, first of all, on the objectives pursued. Thus, the overall objective retained is the one defined by the Addis Ababa Declaration : *to build an enabling environment for the formulation and implementation of people-centred land policies, laws and structures necessary for the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods in Africa.*

The specific objectives are to :

- build capacities for mutual learning, embark on exchange of expertise and research and comparative analysis
- Establish information systems at all levels and ensure their utilisation by all the actors (Governments, NGOs, community based organisations, researchers, private sector, training institutions, etc.)
- Support the different actors in their efforts to implement land policies and laws.
- Facilitate regional co-operation and linkages with other sub-regional networks in all issues related to development of land policy and more particularly to support establishment of networks in west African countries where there are no such networks.

##### **4.1.1. Short term activities (1 year)**

###### **Activities:**

- 1- Consolidating the existing national networks and helping to establish new ones.
  - Providing Methodological support based on the West Africa preparatory study (1999)
  - Putting people in contact with one another
  - Exchanging information on establishment of national networks
  - Supporting communications, if need be, i.e. financing of modem or email connection
- 2- Collecting and disseminating information among the different countries
  - Circulating information received from national or sub-regional networks
  - Publishing a bulletin
  - Creating a website or using existing ones
  - Translating important documents
- 3- Identifying themes of common interests in the sub-region
  - Summarising the main issues relating to land policy i.e: consensual principles; research findings; issues to be examined in detail, etc
  - Identifying themes of common interest and choosing a theme for a sub-regional workshop
- 4- Collaborating with the other sub-regional networks and West Africa's development partners
  - Analysing the programmes and strategies of the sub-regional institutions
  - Negotiating and signing protocols agreements for common activities.
  - Organising a meeting of the sub-regional co-ordinators

##### **4.1.2- Medium and long term activities**



The medium and long term activities prepared by the groups could not be discussed in detail at the plenary session. Such activities should be elaborated and finalised to provide Landnet West Africa with a programme of activities on a longer term basis (e.g. 3 years). The following activities were suggested :

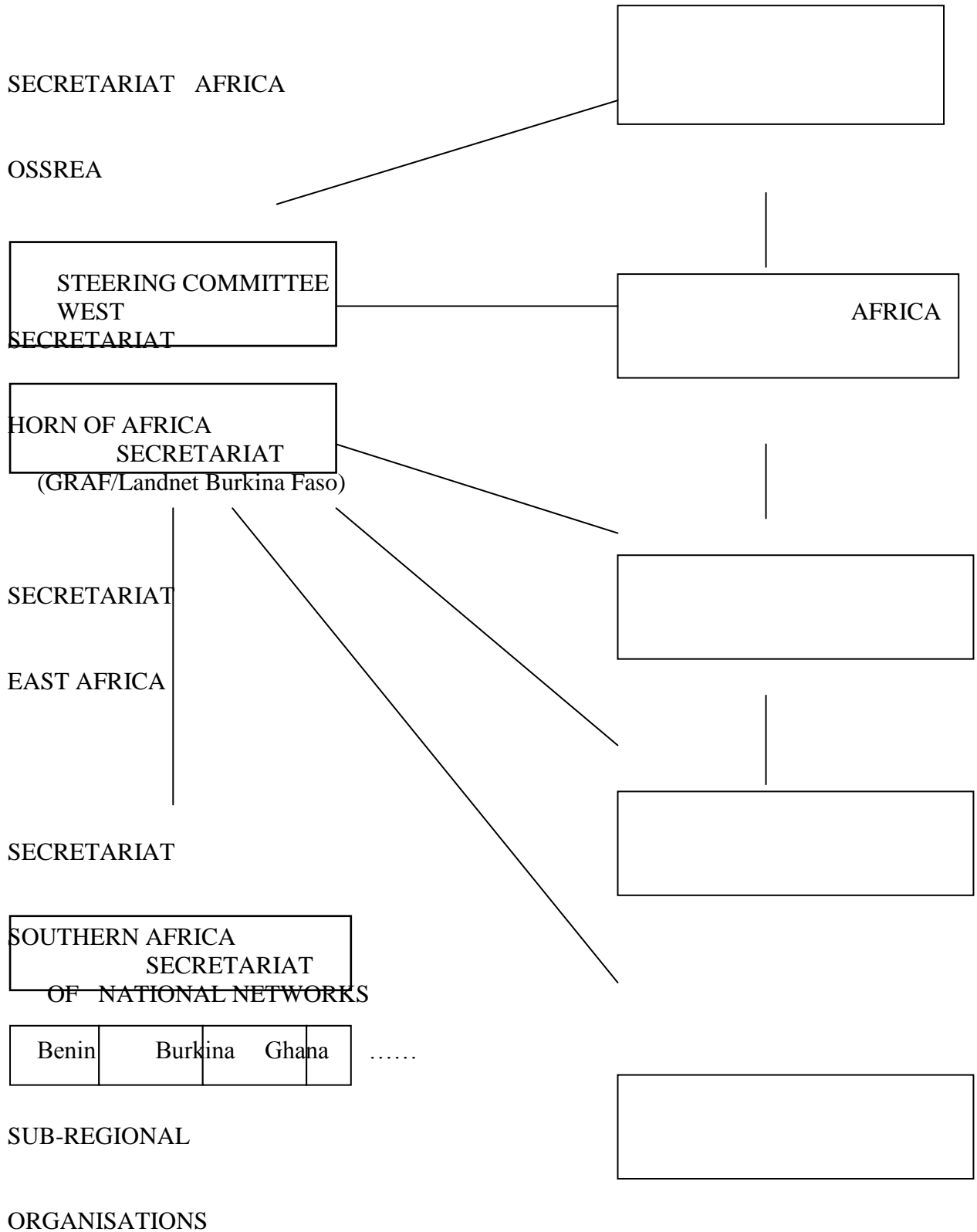
- Preparing and publishing a summary note which gives the already existing research a sub-regional outlook;
- Initiating research programmes and comparative studies on themes that were not sufficiently treated.
- Organising some training sessions, study and research tours;
- Organising thematic workshops such as land issues and poverty alleviation, gender and land tenure issues, land and pastoralism etc.;
- Initiating inter institutional internship and/or technical support programmes ;
- encouraging publications and compiling documents;
- Developing strategies in order to benefit from the support of sub-regional and international organisations ;
- Establishing a system for monitoring activities at the sub-regional level.

The discussions of the workshop were focused on the short-term activities to be carried out. It was agreed that the officials of the sub-regional structure, as soon as the latter is established, should quickly come up with a rational programme of activities in order to avoid conflicts of agenda at both national and sub-regional levels.

#### **4.2- Structure of the West African Network**

On the whole, the proposal made by Kasim KASANGA (Landnet Ghana) was accepted by the participants. A few additional observations and suggestions, however, made it possible to improve upon the initial ideas expressed. The following diagram incorporates such amendments :

**STRUCTURE OF THE WEST AFRICAN NETWORK ON LAND ISSUES**



The discussions held at the working groups and plenary sessions made it possible to retain several principles and decisions for the running of the network:

1. the steering committee shall be composed of representatives of five members countries of the West African Network.. It is to refrain from making the structure cumbersome and to reduce operational costs. Representation in the steering committee shall alternate in order to encourage empowerment of the national networks
2. The five countries whose national networks have been established shall be members of the first steering committee: Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigéria, Senegal and Togo.
3. GRAF/Landnet Burkina Faso has been designated secretariat of the sub-regional network for a period of one year. It was felt that the secretariat should also alternate according to a frequency to be determined.

Besides, some important tasks were assigned to the steering committee of the sub-regional network :

- Reflecting on the basic texts of the sub-regional network (statutes and internal rules) ;
- Evaluating the performance of the network after its first year of operation and proposing some more pertinent mechanisms;
- Establishing an editorial board for the publications of the network.

Finally, the workshop strongly stressed the fact that the sub-regional network "is a network of the national networks". This means that the dynamism of the regional network shall depend on the dynamism of the national networks. It is, therefore, important to ensure development of a chain commitment whose starting point is the individual members of the national networks. The national networks and the regional network should, therefore, reflect on the mechanisms to be implemented in order to put such dynamism in motion..

#### **4.3- Funding of the activities of the sub-regional network**

The presentation of Ako AMADI (Landnet Nigeria) served as basis for discussions at the plenary and group sessions on this theme. In particularly, some prior considerations were put forward in order to be sure of the destination of the funds to be raised. :

- Will the secretariat of the network recruit some staff ? Volunteers or salaried workers ? On part-time or full-time basis ?
- Will the sub-regional network finance the activities of the national networks or will the latter be the donors of the sub-regional network ?
- Will the sub-regional network acquire its own equipment or will it carry out some investments? Will the host country make any contribution in terms of infrastructure ?
- Etc...

After all, the sub-regional network will not necessarily need a lot of money (especially to take off) as it is expected to be devoted essentially to dissemination of information, organisation of seminars and workshops, capacity building and advocacy activities.

One of the main ideas developed in the introductory presentation to this theme is to say that "*one of the best ways of raising external financial resources is to raise them from within*"

With such considerations in mind, the participants of the workshop insisted, first of all, on internal funding through :

- Contribution from the national networks;
- Sale of the publications of the networks, cards, calendars, etc... bearing the Landnet West Africa emblem;
- Donations and legacies from members.

The external funding could include :

- Subventions from governments, international and sub-regional institutions and other partners interested in land issues,
- Provision of infrastructure and equipment to sustain the activities of the network.

However, some precise strategies should guide the sub-regional network in raising funds :

- to prepare a budget;
- to have an institutional development plan;
- to list out the potential donors and to know their agenda on land issues ;
- to publicise the network at the sub regional and international levels, and to involve the technical and financial partners in the activities it organises;
- to come with proposals for studies and research by ensuring formulation of immediate and long term objectives;
- to encourage establishment of a sponsoring committee constituted by some sub-regional and international institutions;
- to explore the possibility of affiliating the network to some international organisations pursuing similar objectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

The workshop for launching of the west African network on land issues has attained the goals set. It has a work plan and has established a steering committee. It is recommended that the members of the committee should hold their first meeting soon after the workshop in order to agree on the urgent measures to be taken. GRAF/Landnet Burkina Faso is designated secretariat of the network for one year, which is expected to allow for preparation and proposal of the basic texts of the network, a longer term programme and adoption of a permanent administrative organisation.

The steering committee of the West African network on land issues is expected to decide on some important issues left in abeyance in order to ensure a minimum of activities. Such important issues concern notably :

- Finalisation of the work plan for the year;
- Estimate of the resources needed for its implementation;

- Determination of operating mechanisms of the network, particularly, identification of contacts or focal points in the countries which do not have a national network. ;

The official establishment of the West African Network on land issues is a hope for the sub-region. It is an important milestone for sub-regional corporation which is expected to participate in the promotion and establishment of a policy philosophy and practice guaranteeing security of land users, permanent and sustainable utilisation of resources and peace in the sub-region.

**LANDNET WEST AFRICA (12-13 February)**

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