

(MFI) The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) adopted in 2000 by the member states of the United Nations, to be attained by 2015, serve at present as the guideposts for cooperation between France and the African continent. The French Foreign Affairs Ministry used them as a basis for earmarking seven sectors for priority action by France. For each of these a strategy has subsequently been drawn up by inter-ministerial working groups and submitted to non-governmental actors.

The seven priority action sectors will guide the activities of all participants in France's cooperation effort, whether they work in a bilateral framework or multilaterally. They are: education; health and combating AIDS; agriculture and food security; water and sanitation; protection of the environment; infrastructure development in sub-Saharan Africa; and private sector development. France sees its action in all these fields within the framework of NEPAD, the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development, thus responding to the need for a sharing of responsibilities.

Regarding education, France puts the emphasis on three sectors: support for basic education through the Education for All initiative aimed at the broadest possible primary school enrolment with equal access for girls and boys; support for scientific research; and support for the strengthening of higher education (through North-South partnerships between establishments, the creation of doctoral courses, and specific computer programmes). In the field of health, French aid seeks to strengthen health care by supporting the development of mutual health insurance and the training of professionals, by fighting AIDS and the main transmittable diseases (notably through the Esther initiative providing for partnerships among hospitals) and by improving access to medicines, notably by supporting national pharmaceutical policies. In agriculture, France is working along three main approaches: reducing rural poverty (by helping to create crisis prevention and management mechanisms and supporting infrastructure development); improving the performance of family farming (support for producer organisations, progress in competitiveness); and supporting research and training.

France is committed to doubling its aid to the water sector, with a priority for improving sanitation, which does not preclude efforts in such areas as access to drinking water and resource management (water treatment and economy measures). As regards environment, the strategy aims at supporting African states in their efforts to live up to their commitments under international conventions, in particular those concerning global warming, the preservation of biodiversity and the struggle against land degradation. It also includes French contributions to international environmental funds, and the activities of French local communities and civil society.

Regarding infrastructure, the aim is to improve the institutional structures to ensure better governance as well as physical infrastructures, especially in heavily populated urban areas. As for the productive sector, French cooperation is above all aimed at reducing the marginalisation of the continent in international trade. France therefore contributes to multilateral funding of efforts to improve the continent's negotiating capacity and has established its own instruments, such as the Programme for capacity-building in trade. It is also working in specific areas such as the cotton sector, with the adoption in 2004 of the Euro-African cotton partnership. Inside the European Union, France is keeping a special watch on the negotiations on Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) due to be completed by 2008.

Fanny Pigeaud

Zooming in on... contributions to fighting AIDS

(MFI) France at a very early stage joined hands with developing countries in the fight against AIDS. In the G8 (who committed themselves at their latest summit to work for universal access to treatment, if possible by 2010) France urged the need for a global response to the pandemic by combining prevention, access to treatment and care, and community-based action. One of the targets of the MDG provides for *halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and beginning to reverse the present trend...* But there is no longer any hope of achieving this goal by 2015. The pandemic has not been stabilised but is likely to worsen. While 40 million people were infected by the virus in 2005, experts now fear the figure could rise to 100 million by 2020 – a projection which shows the magnitude of the challenge still ahead.

France worked very actively in support of the creation in 2002 of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. It has regularly raised its annual contribution to the Fund, from 30 million euros in 2002 to 90 million in 2005, and is currently the second biggest donor next to the United States. France expects its total contribution to reach 300 million euros in 2007, including 180 million for AIDS. Since 2002, all major French players (the Foreign Affairs and Health ministries, as well as AFD) consider action through multilateral channels as a priority. Bilateral aid continues and is supporting innovating or pilot multilateral actions, notably through non-governmental organisations. France's strategy thus is to provide strong support for the Global Fund together with the European Union which contributes 55 percent of the total (including France's share). But it also considers there is a need for stronger support for the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UNAIDS and for the financing of research, in particular into the development of a vaccine against AIDS.

The targets for access to treatment, be it those of the Global Fund or those of the WHO with its "3 by 5" programme (treatment of 3 million people in 2005), have obliged these bodies to introduce special protocols and instruments. Experience has shown that there is, for example, a need to develop simplified procedures for treatment that can be administered by well-trained persons who are not medical doctors. Thanks to its know-how in this field, and its National agency for AIDS research, France facilitates cooperation between French and national research institutions.

Claire Viognier

Zooming in on ... the choice of co-development

(MFI) Intended initially to help better control migratory flows through cooperation with emigration countries, co-development has become a more ambitious component of France's policy of aid for Africa. The Inter-ministerial mission for co-development and international migrations, set up in 1997 by the government of Lionel Jospin, received a fresh impetus from 2002 onwards, notably through the creation of a post of Ambassador delegate in charge of co-development – at present held by Christian Connan – attached to the Minister-delegate for cooperation.

The concept of co-development has henceforth two main objectives: first, the introduction, in cooperation with private operators (banks, micro-credit networks) of suitable instruments for the rapid, safe and reasonably priced transfer of the savings of migrant workers to their families back home, and the channelling of part of these funds into productive investment in their countries of origin. And, second, providing support for projects developed by highly skilled migrants (company executives, doctors, engineers, university teachers or research staff) and the establishment of partnerships between the French institutions employing them and similar institutions in their countries of origin.

French cooperation at the same time provides for activities such as the co-financing of projects launched in their regions of origin by associations of migrants established in France. It also offers aid to migrants who want to return home to start a business or other economic activity. Programmes are under way with Morocco, Mali, Senegal and the Comoros and others are being planned with other partner countries. Paris also envisions cooperation with other European countries like Spain to promote co-development in Africa and would like the European Union to take part. President Jacques Chirac has emphasised that if clandestine immigration represents a problem, the underlying cause is that the migrants are forced out by poverty, and that they must therefore be given the means of making a living in their home countries.

Marie Joannidis