Project No. 4-2

Region: Africa
Countries: Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Côte d’Ivoire, Benin, Mauritania, Cameroon, Guinea, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo, Rwanda

Project:
Joint action network among development actors in health mutual societies in West and Central Africa

Donors:
ILO (STEP programme), USAID, GTZ, Association Internationale de la Mutualité (AIM), Alliance Nationale des Mutualités Chrétiennes (ANMC, Belgium), Organisation Solidarité Mondiale (WSM, Belgium), Réseau d’Appui aux Mutuelles de Santé (RAMUS, France), Union Nationale des Mutualités Socialistes (UNMS, Belgium), Mutualité de la Fonction Publique (MFP, France), Mutuelle Générale de l’Education Nationale (MGEN, France) and AWARE (United States).

Project Description:
Almost half of the world’s population does not have access to health care, and the vast majority of people do not enjoy social protection. For some years now, people excluded from social protection systems and the international community have mobilized to find solutions to the dual challenge of improving health and sustainable financing of care. In Africa in particular, the number of social protection systems is increasing (community-based mutual societies, trade union and employer mutual societies, micro-insurance schemes, etc.). They have been created by non-State actors, especially organizations of employers and workers, cooperatives, care providers, micro-finance organizations, etc. These mechanisms for spreading risk have drawn the attention of a growing number of international institutions because of their potential to reduce social risks and to extend coverage in the social field within the framework of the fight against poverty.

In Africa, the mutual society movement has grown considerably, even though the systems are often small-scale and have limited powers. An exchange of information among these systems is needed to ensure development of the movement. In this context, various international partners decided in April 1999 to create a network for the exchange and sharing of knowledge, entitled, “Joint action network among development actors in health mutual societies in West and Central Africa.” It covers a large number of French-speaking countries in Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Togo.

The “Joint action network” is an innovative form of partnership among many actors in the formal and informal economy, in particular mutual organizations, social partners and formal public bodies. It has managed to bring together in large measure action taken by the principal actors at the national and international levels.

After five years of existence, the “Joint action network” groups more than 150 organizations which support the African mutual society movement. The network offers various services:
- A website that has around 400,000 hits per year (www.concertation.org)
- A newsletter (Courrier de la Concertation) which issued its 14th edition in 2005
- A follow-up system for the development of health mutual societies, in particular an inventory of systems in French-speaking Africa
- Organization of thematic workshops, including 8 national workshops and 3 international forums. The most recent forum, organized in Bamako in November 2004, brought
together around 372 participants from 26 countries (compared with 80 participants at the first forum in 2000).

While the network’s activities principally reach French-speaking Africa, other countries have expressed an interest in joining it. In Asia, the main micro-insurance systems (22 systems in 7 countries) have launched a similar mechanism called Asia Micro-Insurance Network (AMIN - www.amin-net.org) with the support of the ILO (STEP programme). At the global level, the ILO and important institutions such as AISS, AIM; ICFMIF, and Belgian and French mutual societies have reached agreement on the creation of a global network.

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Contact details for all countries of West and Central Africa covered by the joint action network are available on the website.

**Project Website:** [www.concertation.org](http://www.concertation.org)