

**SHARED
MANAGEMENT OF
COMMON
PROPERTY
RESOURCES IN
THE SAHEL**

**A Regional Action-
Research Programme**

**1999-2002
Final Report**



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International
Institute for
Environment and
Development



ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

From January 1999 to June 2002, SOS Sahel International (UK) and the IIED Drylands Programme jointly implemented a regional action research programme on “*Shared Management of Common Property Resources*” (SM CPR). Funded by Comic Relief, the Department for International Development (UK) and NORAD, the programme worked with seven field-based projects and one regional network implementing activities in Sudan, Ethiopia, Mali and Niger.

The programme aimed to research and inform ways in which common property resources in the Sahel (such as community forests, rangeland and water) can be managed in an equitable, peaceful and sustainable way by the many people who rely on them for their livelihoods. Of particular concern was how to ensure mobile groups such as herders, whose livelihoods depend on periodic access to these resources, play an active role in their management.

Programme Goal

To create the conditions for equitable, sustainable and decentralised management of common property resources in the Sahel.

The programme was based on the hypothesis that equitable and sustainable management of common property resources depends on:

- All local stakeholders participating in a process of informed dialogue and negotiation through representative local institutional arrangements; and
- A policy and legislative framework that recognises and upholds these arrangements.

Based on this hypothesis the programme set out to address three key questions:

1. What are the institutional arrangements needed at local level to ensure that forests and rangelands are managed in a sustainable manner while also providing livelihood opportunities in an equitable manner to all those who depend on them?
2. What policies are needed at both local and national levels to support these institutional arrangements?
3. What support do development practitioners need to put these changes into practice?

This final report highlights the main results and learning points from the programme’s work.

A list of the key outputs generated by the programme is provided at the end of this document. They are available on request.

“Institutional arrangements” refers to the rules and regulations for resource management as well as the organisational structure required for their enforcement.

MANAGING COMMON PROPERTY RESOURCES IN THE SAHEL

Competition to control access to land, water, forests and other natural resources in rural Africa is growing. This is particularly true for common property resources that are used by many people to meet their basic needs. These resources provide millions of people with grazing for their livestock, timber and fuel wood for their homes and a wide range of other products such as famine foods, fruit, medicines and honey for domestic use and sale. Poor people, or those on the margins of society or without easy access to land, are especially dependent on these resources for their livelihoods.

Decentralising resource management

Across Africa, governments are implementing new policies to hand over their responsibility for the management of common property resources. However, there remains a big question over who should have this responsibility. Policies that favour private investment have led to large areas being allocated to well-connected individuals or groups, reducing the area of land available to local communities. With a growing population and several decades of repeated droughts, this has led to increasingly frequent and violent conflict over the resources that remain.

Policies that hand over control of the remaining common property resources to local communities are fraught with practical difficulties.

- Communities tend to be highly diverse with the poorest or most socially marginalised being excluded from decision-making.
- Existing customary institutions enjoy high levels of authority in the eyes of local people. However, they are often unrepresentative and fail to defend the interests of all local user groups, especially women.
- Newer institutions rarely have the same levels of authority in the eyes of local people and in practice are also often weak and unrepresentative.
- All local institutions are faced with the dilemma of how best to manage ever increasing levels of commercial exploitation in response to growing demand from urban markets and increasing poverty.

Defining common property

Communal resources are resources exploited by many different users at the same or different times.

When the rights to use resources are controlled by an identifiable group, and there are rules defining how the resources may be used and by whom, this is said to be a **common property system**. Such a property system depends on members of the group agreeing to limit their individual claims on a resource in the expectation that the other members of the group will do the same.

Resources are often managed collectively either because it is difficult to demand or apply exclusive rights over them, or because their value is too diffuse to warrant individual control.

Where there are no rules controlling the levels of resource use, and resource users act independently, the system is in fact one of *open access* and not common property.

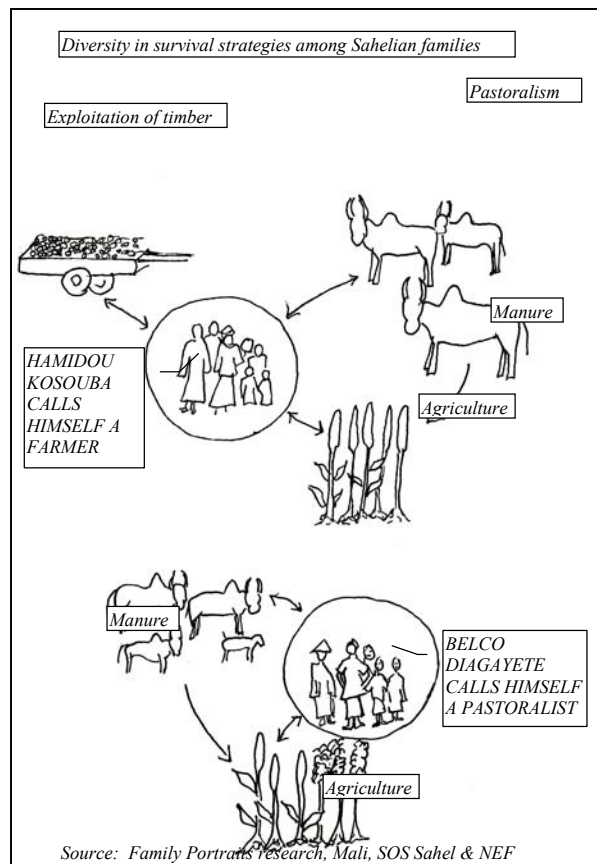
Source: Ostrom, E. 1990 *Governing the Commons*. Cambridge University Press, UK.

A complex environment

In the Sahel, the situation is further complicated by the unpredictable nature of the ecosystem and the critical role that common property resources play in securing many people's livelihoods. From one season to the next, and one year to the next, the people of the Sahel adapt to the local situation, and spread the risk of environmental uncertainty by adopting many different livelihood strategies, including livestock production, agriculture, fishing and charcoal production. All these activities depend to differing degrees on periodic access to common property resources. While some are complementary, others are not. Moreover, repeated droughts and conflict in the last thirty years have resulted in wide-scale migration, putting pressure on existing access agreements among different communities.

Policies to support the allocation of rights to local groups and individuals have paid little attention to these local complexities.

- At the local level, the process of defining how land and common property resources should be managed is monopolised by the most influential groups or individuals. Certain groups such as women and "outsiders" (including transhumant herders, migrants and the displaced) are being excluded.
- At the national level, legal and policy frameworks for the management of natural resources continue to favour privatisation or nationalisation. Many gaps or ambiguities remain regarding the rights and responsibilities of community level institutions over common property resources.
- Many of the planning tools for land and natural resource management are biased in favour of sedentary agricultural land use systems and fail to address either other land use systems or the unpredictable and dynamic nature of the Sahelian ecosystem.



Defining shared management

Shared management happens when at least two groups negotiate, define and guarantee an equitable sharing of roles, rights and responsibilities for the management of an area, or a set of natural resources.

Source: Borrini-Feyerabend, G. et.al 2000 *Co-management of natural resources: organising, negotiation and learning-by-doing*. GTZ & IUCN, Kasperek Verlag, Heidelberg, Germany.

THE PROGRAMME APPROACH

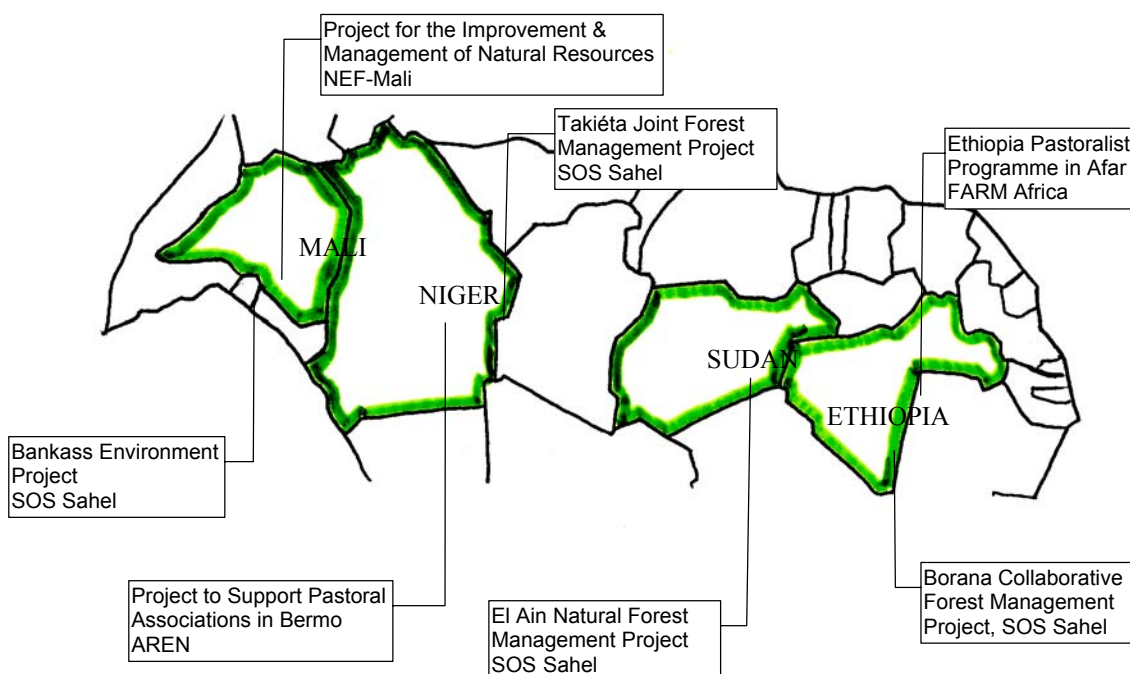
The critical role of common property resources, and the dynamic nature of these resources in time and space, demands systems of management that are locally defined in an inclusive and participatory manner. The core task of the SM CPR programme was to provide support to a number of partners with on-going NRM projects.

Working with partners

The programme worked in partnership with a group of eight projects and organisations that were themselves trying to support local resource management systems across the Sahel (see map). In this way, the programme was firmly rooted in practice, working together with development practitioners.

The eight partners were spread across four countries in East and West Africa. Four projects were involved in managing forest resources, two worked specifically on pastoral development and one was concerned with natural resource management in general. The eighth partner was a regional network in Mali supporting work on decentralised natural resource management. Although activities concerned projects, in practice the SM CPR programme worked closely with the institutions managing them: four SOS Sahel country programmes, FARM Africa in Ethiopia, the Near East Foundation in Mali and a pastoral association, AREN, in Niger. In this way, the programme was able to broaden its impact beyond the immediate partners.

The diversity of partners enabled cross-fertilisation of ideas and learning between partners, as well as drawing out broader lessons at the programme level.



Building capacities

The process-led approach of the programme sought specifically to build the capacities of its partner organisations to:

- Improve their understanding of key concepts and issues underpinning common property resource management in their respective areas;
- Address these issues in a participatory manner with local people and their institutions; and
- Use their experience to inform and lobby national decision-makers.



The SM CPR programme provided training and sustained in-country support to partners while facilitating a process of peer-group learning and information dissemination.

Supporting a process and not a model

The SM CPR programme adopted a process-led approach rather than a single model to common property resource management, for two fundamental reasons:

1. The highly varied nature of Sahelian ecosystems and its resources that are used by many different actors over time and space.
2. It was working with different types of organisations with different capacities in different countries, coming from two different schools of thought and development as a result of their colonial heritage.

Each partner identified their own way of addressing the problem, adapted to the specific political and institutional conditions in their country and locality and according to their existing skills, experience and capacity as an organisation.

PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

The SMCPR programme implemented three types of activity with its partners.

Formal training and workshops

SMCPR provided partners with a programme of training to raise their skills base and understanding so that they might improve their capacity to respond to issues arising out of their work. The people that attended training workshops included government officials and technical experts, traditional leaders, and community representatives as well as the project staff of our partner organisations. Partners were responsible for agreeing the objectives, content and methodologies of the workshops and who should participate.

Poor understanding of pastoral land use systems by partners' staff and the organisations with which they work was identified as a major block towards greater involvement of pastoralists in resource management systems and decisions. Partners said they lacked the skills to include pastoralists in local level decision-making processes and so were in danger of proposing "solutions" that could create greater tensions and conflict among herders and farmers. In response to this situation, training workshops on pastoral production systems were implemented for all partners during the first year of the programme.

In all cases, however, further ideas and skills were needed to put strategies into motion to facilitate dialogue within and between pastoral and non-pastoral communities.

Subsequent trainings were country and partner specific, taking into account the experience and knowledge of the project staff as well as the national context. In each case, partners identified different "entry points" based largely on their specific working environment and the history of their involvement in the area: For example:

- In Ethiopia, a series of training workshops (on participatory approaches in pastoral communities, common property systems, conflict, and participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches) provided partners with a battery of tools and ideas with which to implement a phase of action research. The research would lead to informed dialogue and negotiation among different stakeholders. At the national level, training on advocacy gave partners ideas as to how they might use their experience in the field to advocate for changes in national policy and legislation.
- In Mali, partners needed methodologies that would allow them to help farmer and pastoral groups better understand how they all use the same common property resources and how these systems can both complement and compete with each other. Training on "family portraits" provided a practical tool to help local people start a process of informed debate. This paved the way for negotiated agreements between the different parties on access rights to disputed resources.

Follow-up support and practical opportunities

Providing one-off training workshops does not constitute capacity building. Individuals who receive training require time, space and opportunity afterwards to put new ideas or skills learnt into practice.

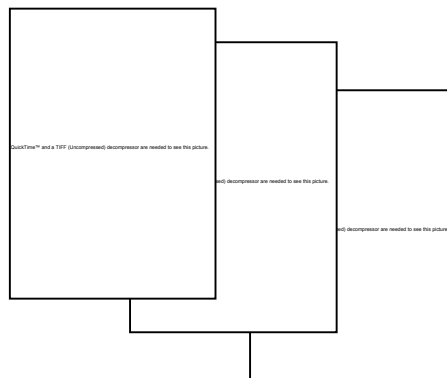
In addition to training opportunities, the programme provided funds for a limited number of activities. Implemented and managed by the partners themselves, they enabled partners to apply their newfound capacities and learn by doing. For example:

- In Sudan, training on conflict analysis was followed by: a series of meetings between a village and a pastoral group, facilitated by the project and local community leaders who had also participated in the training workshops; a mobile play about conflict; a series of workshops at regional and national level to disseminate their experience; and the production of a video.
- In Mali, partners' desire to influence a bill on pastoral land use systems prompted: a study on how policy processes work in Mali; a workshop for MP's, regional government staff and other NGOs and civil society groups to analyse a bill on the pastoral charter; and submission of briefs to the National Assembly on how to amend the bill.

To meet the differing needs of partners, the programme provided back-up support in the form of regular visits by two programme co-ordinators. These visits were used to create "space" for partners to analyse their activities in a critical manner with respect to the local context and the broader policy environment. Activities or approaches could be adapted in the light of this analysis. The visits also allowed the co-ordinators to ensure that activities remained within the logic of the overall programme, and to identify the need for tailored support in specific and specialist areas.

Peer-group learning and exchange

The programme provided an overall framework to promote learning and exchange between partners and other development agencies working in the Sahel. Specific activities included exchange visits for partners, annual programme meetings and participation in national and international conferences and workshops. Publications, a newsletter and two videos have been produced by the programme and its partners to share lessons and to inform debate over common property management and pastoral land use systems more broadly. Finally, less formal exchange of ideas and approaches also took place through the programme co-ordinators' visits to different partners.



RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNT

The effects of the SMCPR are found at three different levels:

1. Improvements in the capacity of the partners, which are directly attributable to programme activities.
2. Improved resource management systems (i.e. more equitable and sustainable) as a result of partners' activities at the local and national level. This can only partly be attributed to SMCPR as other factors may have also affected partners' approaches, ideas and capacity, such as other sources of information and changes in the political and policy environment.
3. Contributions to the broader international debate over common property resource management.

A final evaluation of the programme demonstrated a significant impact on partners' capacities, particularly in the field of improving knowledge and understanding of pastoral systems and land use dynamics, concepts of multiple stakeholder analysis, lobbying and advocacy skills, as well as in providing specific tools and methods for facilitating processes of dialogue and inclusive management on a sustainable basis.

The evaluation also confirmed that all partners have implemented processes that allow all local stakeholders to identify institutional arrangements for more equitable and sustainable management of common property resources.

Finally, the programme has contributed to the broader debate on common property resource management, through its publication series and participation in international fora. The programme's input has focused on two key areas: common property resource management in non-equilibrium environments characterised by multiple use systems; and the pastoral dimension of resource management.

This section highlights the results of the programme in each of the four countries where we worked before identifying the broader lessons learnt.

THE PARTNER IN SUDAN

The EI Ain Natural Forest Management Project (NFMP), SOS Sahel

This project started in 1989 to support the creation of Community Forests (CF) in the light of new Sudanese forest legislation. Although the project worked with village communities, by 1998, it had done little to actively involve pastoral groups (settled and mobile) who depend on periodic access to water and pasture in and around the community forest areas. This was creating conflict and threatening the achievements of the project and local communities.



The project needed to find a way to promote dialogue between the different resource users without alienating the villagers with whom they had worked for so long and without aggravating a situation where people were armed. They were also well aware that many of the small-scale conflicts occurring were due to external influences, in particular decisions over land use being made at state or even federal level, with little or no local consultation.

The SMCPR programme contributed to NFMP's on-going programme in three key areas.

Broadening perceptions of pastoralism and NRM

The training on pastoralism was the first of a series of activities to broaden the perceptions of project staff and their local partners towards natural resource management in the Sahel. Other activities included a workshop on inclusive natural resource management, and studies on pastoral and agro-pastoral systems, including legal and traditional aspects of land tenure and access to resources. These activities convinced project staff and their partners of the importance of social aspects of natural resource management (i.e. issues of rights, needs and social relations). The result was greater motivation to find "entry points" for promoting dialogue between conflicting groups. It also was the start of improved relations between the project and pastoralists.

Creating local conditions for dialogue

Having challenged the projects' perceptions of pastoralism and resource management, they needed new skills and confidence to broach the issue of conflict and the threat that it posed to the future management of community forests and other natural resources in the area. As technical experts in forestry and agricultural production, the project team had no experience of working directly on the sensitive issue of conflict. They also recognised that they could not work alone. They had to create new alliances with traditional leaders from both pastoral and agricultural groups who dealt with conflict within and between communities as part of their everyday roles and responsibilities. Through additional training and support on conflict management and resolution, SMCPR provided NFMP with a methodology for working with pastoralists and addressing conflicts. A process of consultation and negotiation between two communities contributed to mutual understanding between farmers and herders, and recognition of the complementary nature of their respective production systems. Through dialogue, pastoralists were awarded rights of access to community forests, water resources and grazing lands, management systems were made more secure and relations between the two groups were generally improved.

Disseminating the concept of shared management of natural resources

The experience at local level needed to be scaled up if it was to have broader impacts. With the help of SMCPR, NFMP organised several regional and national workshops to disseminate the concept of shared natural resource management. This helped foster a growing awareness at national level of the requirements for sustainable natural resource management.

NFMP ended in early 2001. However, recognition of the approach that the project had started to develop within the state resulted in a new unit being established, supported by SMCPR and later by UNDP, that continued to promote consultation between multiple stakeholders at local level and lobby for greater recognition of the need for shared management at the national level.

The National Context

Federalisation and decentralisation policies in place theoretically support local initiatives such as the creation of Community Forests. In practice, conflicts exist between local priorities (at village and state level) and national policies that support large-scale private investment.

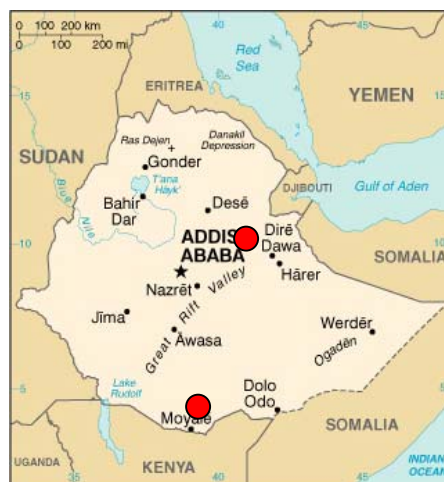
THE PARTNERS IN ETHIOPIA

Borana Collaborative Forest Management Project (BCFMP), SOS Sahel

This project, which started in 1999, aims to develop a collaborative management system for *Juniperus* forests exploited by multiple and competing stakeholders (e.g. small-scale and commercial agriculturists, ranchers and pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, military garrisons, urban and peri-urban populations).

Ethiopia Pastoral Programme in Afar (EPP), FARM Africa

This project provides support to pastoral populations through a mobile outreach approach. Starting in 1999, the project aimed to support local management of pastoral resources and ex-state run irrigated land that has been returned to the Afar people. But the returned land was contested among different pastoral groups and private investors.



Both of these partners were starting at the same time as the SM CPR programme. Both projects were hampered by policies at national and regional level that failed to recognise the legitimacy of pastoral production systems and in particular the importance of mobility for those systems. Both also recognised their lack of experience in dealing with resource-based conflict, whether at the local level between two sub-clans or at a more regional level between ethnic groups.

The SM CPR programme contributed to these partners' achievements in five main areas.

Building a common perception of pastoralism and the need for shared management

The training on pastoral production systems was provided to project staff and local partners (state services). Not only did it help to change perceptions of pastoralism among project staff and local partners, it also opened up discussion about the need for development plans to take account of traditional systems and institutions. This increased local support for an approach that emphasises social aspects as much as technical ones.

Increasing knowledge of participatory approaches among the projects and their partners

The new approach taken by the projects demanded new skills among the project staff. Training and support from the SM CPR programme enabled project staff to develop participatory methodologies to enable them first, to understand the different interests and concerns of the many stakeholders in the project area; and second, to start a dialogue with them over how best to manage local level resources in a peaceful and consensual manner.

Translating relevant legislation into local languages and disseminating this information by radio has also enabled pastoralist communities better to understand government policy on NRM and encouraged them to engage in the work of the partners.

Capacity building in conflict resolution

Both partners identified the need for new skills and confidence to deal with conflict between different resource users if they were to encourage real dialogue among them. In Afar, skills provided by SM CPR training and support enabled project staff to help resolve an internal clan conflict over lands returned to local people by the state. In addition to their own analysis, the team called upon the mediation skills of traditional associations. As a result of this process those involved were able to start planning strategies for putting the returned irrigated land to productive use. In Borana, simple tools in conflict analysis enabled the project to make positive contact with conflicting ethnic groups.

Working with traditional institutions in both cases helped increase their legitimacy in the eyes of the authorities. However, it also highlighted weaknesses in the traditional system; for example, no women took part in this process.

Identifying methodologies to strengthen local institutions and capacities in NRM

The work on conflict was just one aspect of the action-research undertaken by the projects with the support of the SM CPR programme. Understanding who uses local resources and how, the way in which different stakeholders perceive their rights, and the strengths and weaknesses of the local institutions that represent them has been fundamental to enable partners to support dialogue between them. For example, in Borana, the project has adapted a range of participatory research techniques to understand the many different interests in the forests in terms of rights and resource needs. Methods used in the stakeholder analysis included relationship mapping, and a “3Rs” analysis (revenues, rights and responsibilities).¹

Building a common perception of shared management of common property resources

Collaborating with SOS Sahel and FARM Africa at national level, the programme contributed to various national symposia, supported newspaper reports on Borana pastoralism and provided training on safeguarding rights and lobbying for partners and individuals working on pastoral rights at the national level. At a more local level, workshops on pastoralism and common property systems have started to challenge common assumptions and attitudes of development actors are changing.

However, it is too early to see the impact of these lobbying activities because of the complexity of the political situation and decision-making mechanisms. At regional level, debate is still polarised between privatisation versus nationalisation, and work still needs to be done at a higher administrative level to improve the status of pastoralism in Ethiopia.

The National Context

National policies of regionalisation and decentralisation, have allowed for local policies that are more appropriate to local conditions. In practice, there are low levels of support to pastoral populations and conflict with central policies for privatisation and investment. Throughout Ethiopia, common property systems are generally considered to describe systems with little or no control over resource exploitation and are therefore inherently unsustainable and destructive. Development practice has been slow to catch up with the rhetoric of community participation.

¹ BCFMP, *Notes from the field: Field methods for collaborative management. The Investigation Stage: Stakeholder analysis, understanding rights, responsibilities, Revenues and relationships and setting up process monitoring indicators*

THE PARTNERS IN NIGER

The two partners in Niger were very different in terms of their organisational structure and remit, their capacity and their expectations of the programme.

Takiéta Joint Forest Management Project (TJFMP) (SOS Sahel (GB)) and SOS Sahel (GB)'s Programme in Niger.

This project, starting in 1995 and ending in 2000, aimed to support the development of a local management structure for the Takiéta forest reserve. In 2000, SOS Sahel (GB) in Niger proceeded to develop a new programme to support inclusive management of communal resources used by transhumant and semi-settled pastoralists and settled agricultural communities. The programme is focusing on facilitating local level dialogue rather than promoting externally driven solutions. At the start of SMCP, TJFMP had already started a process to engage with pastoralists, but found the institutional environment in which it was working very hostile to this approach.



Project to Support Pastoral Associations in Bermo (PAAPB)/ Association pour la Rédynamisation d'Élevage au Niger (AREN)

This project, started in 1997, supported local pastoral associations to strengthen their capacity to secure access to pastoral resources. One of the key elements of the project was to increase the capacity of associations to manage conflict over land access and tenure, and to defend pastoral resources against encroaching agriculture. The project needed ways to promote dialogue between the associations and other actors in the region.

At a national level, AREN was looking for support to build on its experience working with its members at grass roots level and at policy level.

Improving knowledge of pastoral systems

The training on pastoral systems at the start of the programme was used by the partners in different ways. For TJFMP and the SOS Sahel (GB) country programme, it motivated the project to resolve problems they were facing involving pastoralists in negotiations over resource management, in particular convincing government partners of the importance of the approach. For the project in Bermo, it greatly improved the partnership between pastoralists and local technocrats, which had important implications later in the programme for garnering administrative support for consultation initiatives. At a national level, it helped members of AREN to overcome an "inferiority complex", marshal arguments against the negative perception of pastoralism and be better able to defend their way of life.

Enhancing the capacity of pastoralists from Bermo to safeguard their rights

Support provided by SMCP enabled local committees representing pastoralists in Bermo to reorient their role and focus on facilitating negotiation processes. The emphasis has been on creating the space and confidence among project staff and local representatives to work with the administrative and customary authorities: stakeholders that have traditionally been seen as "the enemy".

A series of consultations and discussions among pastoralists, villagers and customary leaders, culminated in a forum, held in June 2001, attended by representatives of all the natural resource users in the region: farmers, herders, traditional chiefdoms, government departments and administrative authorities. This forum provided the opportunity to establish permanent contact between the different parties and create the possibility for conflict settlement. The process also helped improve the previously strained relationship between the administrative and customary authorities. With more self-confident grassroots communities, there is now reason to be hopeful about the sustainability of the decisions made at the forum.

Transferring skills

Since the initial training on pastoralism, both AREN and SOS Sahel focused their attention on the transfer of skills, ideas and knowledge between development agents and local communities. Collaborating with a Senegalese NGO,² with the support of the SMCPR programme, SOS Sahel (GB) developed an approach and materials for skills transfer (such as conflict analysis, PRA and monitoring and evaluation) that build on local knowledge and experience, translating development jargon (such as the concept of “participation”) into local languages. The experience of both partners has highlighted the enormous amount of time and resources needed for a real transfer of concepts and skills, both in terms of the capacities of development workers and the differences in terms of experience, interests and priorities between development workers and local communities.

Lobbying for shared management and pastoral rights in resource management

The initial training on pastoralism and their own experiences in the field have encouraged partners to use different ways to influence attitudes towards pastoralism and resource management.

- Radio broadcasts on local radio, including quiz shows and magazine programmes were used to disseminate ideas and provoke debate locally.
- A publication about the Takiéta project has been translated into English, French, Arabic and Hausa. The publication has been taken up as a case study by universities in Khartoum and Niamey, providing fieldworkers and researchers with a concrete example of common property resource management as a means of sustainable and equitable management.
- Both SOS Sahel (GB) and AREN are in the process of setting up a number of regional-level informal networks to formulate a lobbying strategy for equitable and sustainable management of pastoral and agro-pastoral resources.

The National Context

A national decentralisation process was put on hold for most of 1999 and 2000 following a military coup in April 1999. Nationally, there is no legal recognition of pastoralism as an active form of land use. The Rural Code of 1993 has led to insecurity of tenure and land grabbing throughout the country, at the expense of pastoral resources.

² Associates for Research and Development (ARED)

THE PARTNERS IN MALI

Project for the improvement and management of natural resources (PAGRN), Near East Foundation, and the Bankass Environment Project (BEP), SOS Sahel

The two field-based projects, which both started in 1992, support local groups to manage natural resources in an equitable and sustainable manner within a national context of decentralisation. Although both projects worked with well-established community-based institutions, they focused on settled communities with little active involvement of pastoral groups. By 1999, both projects were looking for ways to promote dialogue among the different resource users including pastoralists. This depended on the existing farmer-based groups being convinced of the potential benefits of sharing decision-making power with both resident and non-resident pastoral communities.



The Network for Decentralised Natural Resource Management in the 5th Region (GDRN5).

The main challenge for GDRN5 in 1999 was to develop a lobbying strategy to influence NRM policy at the national level that would both draw on and support the experience of its partners on the ground.

The SM CPR programme had significant impact on partners' on-going programmes in four key areas.

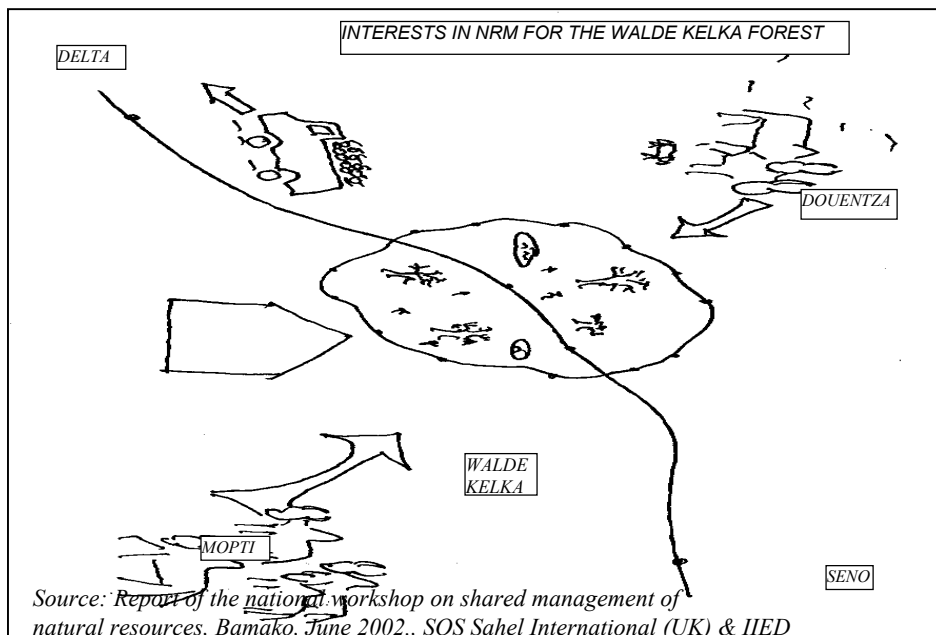
Changing partners' attitudes and working practices

The formal training on pastoralism not only changed partners' attitudes and perceptions with respect to pastoral land use systems, but more importantly it convinced them of the need to change their working practices with respect to pastoral groups in their project areas. Partners realised their existing methods and participatory tools while successfully reaching sedentary people, were ill adapted to more mobile livelihood systems. Highlighting the social and political dimensions of NRM, the training required project staff to review their existing skills and roles, and to recognise the need to develop new methods and tools better adapted to pastoral contexts.

Designing new methodologies and tools for inter-community dialogue

On the basis of this newfound awareness, the SM CPR programme helped partners to design and implement action-research activities to enable local government and local communities, including resident and transhumant pastoralists, to participate in a process of dialogue and inter-community exchange. "Family Portraits"³ was the specific tool that was designed and used in conjunction with a variety of PLA techniques to enable the different communities better to understand how they all use and depend on key common property resources for their survival.

³ THÉBAUD, B., *Guide d'Entretien pour l'Elaboration des portraits de Familles*, NEF Mali, March 2000



Transhumant herders from the Seno and the Niger Delta and commercial traders from Mopti make regular use of the Walde Kelka forest resources.

Establishing local institutional mechanisms for equitable and sustainable NRM

During the course of the SM CPR programme, the recently elected rural councils progressively assumed responsibility for managing inter-community dialogue and negotiation on NRM access issues. The role of the partners was limited to facilitating this process and ensuring that principles of equity and “quality participation” were respected. By the end of the programme, district and rural council level consultative bodies for NRM had been established in each of the partners’ project areas. These fora are composed of representatives from the different communities as well as local government services, and are responsible for ensuring that NRs are managed in an equitable and sustainable manner. Some of the key activities they have been involved in include identifying and delimiting livestock corridors through agricultural areas, making secure pastoral watering and resting points along transhumance routes, and agreeing dates for the planting and harvesting of crops.

Designing and implementing an effective lobbying strategy

The SM CPR programme directly contributed to raising the knowledge and confidence of the GDRN5 network to lobby the Malian government with respect to a bill on the Pastoral Charter. The initial pastoral training, followed by a workshop to analyse the proposed bill and a study on the decision-making mechanisms used to formulate laws all contributed to the network’s ability to change certain key aspects of the proposed legislation. The experience furthermore raised the profile of the network among national policy makers as a leading authority on pastoral and CPR management issues. A direct consequence of this has been the formal involvement of the network in the subsequent design of the regulatory laws for the application of the Charter.

The National Context: A decentralisation process has been underway in Mali since 1991. Rural communes were established in 1999 with responsibility for deciding how natural resources are managed within their jurisdictions. However, because there was no legal recognition of pastoralism as an active and positive form of land use, key pastoral resources were being lost to farming and other forms of land use. A bill to regulate pastoral land use (Pastoral Charter) is waiting for approval by Parliament.

LESSONS LEARNT AT THE BROADER LEVEL

In the Sahel, the different and often divergent demands made on common property resources by different resource users with different levels of power and capacity to represent their interests, presents a serious challenge to development projects. This challenge is more political, social and institutional than purely technical. And if this isn't difficult enough, the situation is further complicated by the fact that the availability of these resources is constantly changing largely due to rainfall patterns.

The SM CPR programme focused on the social aspects of common property resource management. In spite of the differences between them and the contexts in which they were working, during the course of the programme's final workshop all of the programme partners identified a number of common issues arising from their experience in the field.

1. Where control over natural resources has only recently been wrested from central government, **people will only be willing to share their newly found power if they can see tangible benefits.**

In the Sahel, where resources are used by so many different actors, the most common benefit that is immediately "visible" is social stability. In the longer term, however, if people are to continue to invest in the "costs" of shared management it is critical that the economic and ecological benefits be clearly demonstrated. Appropriate monitoring systems to allow communities to judge whether or not they benefit from the shared management of CPRs are thus of great importance.

2. Where one interest group has dominated decision-making over natural resource management, **genuine participation of more marginalised interests groups** depends on long-term support.

"Quality participation" goes beyond "consultation". It depends on all key stakeholders having the opportunity and capacity to play a well thought-out and effective role in agreeing the systems that will affect their lives. The challenge is as much ensuring everyone has the relevant information to be able to participate in a meaningful way as getting "those in power" to agree to give "weaker" groups the space to define how they want to be involved. Since this involves challenging existing power relations, resistance from dominant, better-established groups has to be expected. Appropriate entry points to address issues of power and participation need, therefore, to adopt a positive approach and focus on "win-win" scenarios in which the benefits to be had by all stakeholders can be clearly demonstrated.

3. The diversity and variation inherent in Sahelian natural resources and natural resource use demands **flexibility built into local institutional arrangements.**

Local institutions need to be able to respond to internal and external changes and risks in order to maintain their relevance and their legitimacy. The social, economic, political and ecological environment in which local people live is constantly changing in the Sahel. For example, periodic drought in one part of the country might push thousands of people and their cattle further south in search of better conditions. A local forest management committee in this area needs to be able to respond to this sudden influx of people and livestock, and find ways of accommodating their needs while defending local people's interests.

4. Where support is provided to strengthen existing traditional institutions, there is a need to **reconcile internal and external accountability and legitimacy**.

Legitimacy and accountability are not necessarily linked – traditional institutions are often most legitimate in the eyes of local communities, but rarely have formal systems to ensure accountability and representation, for example with respect to women.

However, traditional institutions run the risk of compromising their authority with local communities if they have to make too many changes. It may be better to create new institutions to resolve problems of representation and democratic principles, than to ask a customary institution to change and possibly become weaker in the process of doing so. However, it is essential that existing institutions be closely involved in this process.

5. Ideas and approaches **need to achieve a critical mass**, with enough like-minded individuals if they are to be practiced on a significant scale

The idea that development is as much a social as a technical issue needs to resonate with all kinds of development partners (government and non-government organisations and their staff at all levels). Information and arguments to support the approach need to reach a much greater audience for this to happen. This is particularly an issue in relation to supporting pastoralism in the Sahel where negative attitudes to pastoralism are so deeply entrenched in development approaches.

6. The diversity and variation inherent in natural resources and natural resource management in the Sahel also demands **flexibility in the implementation of projects** (from both development agencies and donors).

If local people are to take on responsibility for their natural resources, the programmes and projects that support them must follow their rhythm. Communities need time to take on new ideas and skills, just as development workers themselves do. Too often, projects must work within project cycles that are too short and output focused to allow the space that communities need to make sustainable progress.

7. Support to decentralised resource management demands **a new role for development workers and a new set of skills and understanding**.

Knowledge of participatory development, community planning and organisation, negotiation and mediation skills, institutional support and traditional and modern governance, the development of civil society and legal frameworks for decentralisation are all new skills required of development workers in addition to their technical capacity, for example, as foresters or extension workers.

This requires both time and investment that is too often overlooked by both development agencies and donors.

8. ***Influencing the policy environment*** is a complex task, highly dependent on the willingness of governments to listen to its citizens. The experience of partners during the course of the programme highlighted a number of issues:
 - Any commitment to lobbying needs to be long term and continuous. NGOs need the capacity and commitment to be able to follow the entire process of policy formulation. Drawing up and implementing new policy involves different stages with different people involved at each stage. Other ministries, influential individuals or lobby groups will be influencing the logic of those responsible at any one time for developing a new law or policy. The knowledge and information needed to formulate a lobbying strategy (decision-making mechanisms, etc.) are also varied and change constantly as the context evolves.
 - Lobbying at the level of local and regional administration can be highly effective, particularly where political decentralisation is a reality. Decisions are taken at different levels, and not always nationally.
 - Longer-term emphasis must be on strengthening the capacity of local actors to influence policy themselves. NGOs may be in a strong position to lobby on behalf of the communities with whom they work, but they cannot hold the same level of legitimacy or accountability as local institutions representing local interests.
 - Alliances between organisations at national and international level can have a far greater impact than individuals. However, where governments are not open to pressure from civil society, quiet lobbying using personal contacts can be more effective, if limited in terms of representation and accountability.
 - It is essential to put into place mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies – the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

WHAT NEXT?

Shared management of common property resources is essentially a political process. Many actors with different levels of power are competing for control over a diminishing resource base and using different institutions, and legal or social references to back their claims.

The SM CPR programme, with its partners, was promoting more open and democratic processes. The approach essentially required those “in power” to recognise the costs of exclusion (particularly social conflict and its consequences on livelihood opportunities) and to agree to consider more negotiated processes of access to resources. The programme was also trying to find ways to ensure that “weaker groups” (for example women and pastoralists) can be strengthened in order to engage in the process more fully.

This has been done with some success in the countries where the programme partners work. But there still remain a number of challenges which partners themselves continue to address within the context of their on-going work:

- Building a critical mass of common understanding among development practitioners and policy makers on the issues surrounding the shared management of common property resources. There is still widespread ignorance of the dynamics of Sahelian livelihood systems and its implications for policy. Poor understanding and even hostility towards pastoralism among many policy makers and development works continues to be a major problem.
- Designing practical tools and approaches to promote more inclusive processes at the local level.
- “Transferring” skills to local people so that they can fight their own cause and sustain process of dialogue and exchange at the local and national level without project support. Communities need support to understand the broader policy environment and how it affects them.
- Encouraging more marginalised groups (such as women, transhumant pastoralists, displaced and migrant communities) to recognise the need to engage in decision-making over natural resources and increase their capacities to address internal processes of change (i.e. ensure and maintain greater representation).
- Lobbying national government to ensure in the short term that policies and laws are designed in a participatory way. In the longer term, however, the challenge is to engage in a process of dialogue to see how best to change the overall institutional framework in which policies and laws are designed.

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⁴ This list is a summary and does not include all local workshop & training reports, programme management documents, planning reports, minutes from meetings and visit reports, etc.

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