

Project Name Mali-Arid Rangeland Biodiversity (@)...
Conservation

Region Africa Regional Office

Sector Central government administration (100%)

Project ID MLGE52402

Implementing Agency
 co PGRN
 Address: BP 2382, Bamako
 Contact Person: Hamid Ag
 Mohamed Lamine
 Tel: 223 24 36 03/13 83
 Fax: 24 13 83
 Email: biodiver@malinet.ml

AFVP
 Address: BP 1721, Bamako or AFVP, Douentza
 Contact Person: Nomba Ganame
 Tel: 223 23 09 31,
 Douentza 45 20 11
 Fax: 22 35 17
 Email: nganame@yahoo.fr

DNCN
 Address: BP 275, Bamako
 Contact Person: Namory Traoré
 Tel: 223 23 36 97
 Fax: 23 36 96
 Email: namoryt@yahoo.fr

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1. Country and Sector Background

Main Sector Issue

Wildlife & natural habitat - After Mali acquired its independence in 1959, it faced many development challenges and underwent periods of political turmoil. In such context, management of wildlife or conservation of protected areas rapidly became a law priority. Conservation was entrusted to the Forestry Department with command and control instructions. With the appropriation of land and wild resource by the colonial power, and then by the independent Government, ancestral rules for conservation practically vanished and a conflictual relationship settled between forestry guards and communities. The situation was worsen with the 1977-1992 national hunting ban. Past strategies were abandoned in 1995, but the country had to face its 35-year outcome: Wildlife and natural habitat had nearly disappeared while protected areas were poached out and to a large extent invaded by farmers or herders. Remnant wildlife and patches of natural habitat only remained in the most inaccessible areas.

Law national capacity - 35 years of top-down enforcement-based policy -- to implement a mission considered by the then-Government to be a low-priority -- had also dire consequences on human resources. Forestry staff did not acquire professional skills for wildlife management, were not made aware of alternative approaches or were weakly committed to conservation. In addition, and until recently, unlike most countries of the region, the Government was not ready to explore alternatives for its biodiversity management system and institutions. This also has changed, but a lot of efforts are now required to accompany the country in making its institutions more efficient, better adapted to the current country context as well as to invest in its human resources. Conversely, empowerment of communes and communities present the opportunity to build the capacity of a new group that is not influenced by conservation history, can actually provide sensitive and widely accepted solutions and has the legal and traditional authority to enforce them.

High poverty & low awareness implies little incentive for alternative behavior - Policy changes in Mali are encouraging, but the basic forces against conservation of biodiversity remain. Poverty is high and awareness of the national or global value of biodiversity is low both locally and nationally. The country's development is strongly dependent on cotton and livestock; the expansion of both (at the expense of natural habitat) are the main pillars of economic growth. In such context, it is understandable that Government or communities incentives for conservation are limited. All conservation projects must therefore accept such context and propose alternatives that are locally applicable as well as provide solutions and benefits rather than new constraints to much needed development.

Government Strategy

The Project supports implementation of the Biodiversity Strategy. However, within the strategy, the approach selected for natural ecosystem conservation is enabled by the legal framework of decentralization and deconcentration of administrative services.

Decentralization - The adoption of the 1993 Decentralization Law and the subsequently institutional structures put in place with the establishment of local and regional authorities following local elections in 1999 are the culmination of a political process that started in 1990 and is considered as the center-piece of the reform of a highly centralized and inefficient public administration. Following the enactment of the new Law, a series of regulations for its implementation were drafted and approved. Not only the territorial structure has been impacted but also the structure of power and hence the way resources and local development will be managed. For example, elected Tuareg municipal leaders in the Gourma indicated that they felt they had gained political power which helped them deal with the aftermath of the rebellion. The Malian decentralization has genuinely emphasized local empowerment with a concern for building a participatory decentralization from the bottom up. Mali took concrete steps demonstrated by the participatory process by which the communes were delimited, the provision in the law to improve the accountability of local elected officials to the people and the recognition of nomad people through the "Fraction".

A specialized ministry was created in early 2000, the Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et des Collectivités Locales (MATCL) to lead and coordinate the implementation of the decentralization policy and address the needs of the decentralized institutional levels more effectively. Given the above, for the first time in its recent post-colonial history, Mali has now the foundations for a more effective local government system and a more efficient territorial administration. But while these significant progress has profoundly reshaped the country's territorial structures they are not without difficult challenges which explains why the implementation of the 1993 Law has been so slow. The current clarification efforts of the regulatory framework will help

remove some of the constraints faced by the implementation of the Decentralization Law.

Mali has set-up a two prong mechanisms to provide support to municipalities: (i) a financial support mechanisms the Fund for Investment in Territorial Collectivity (French acronym FICT) which is managed by a parastatal the Agency for National Investment in Territorial Collectivity (French acronym ANICT) and (ii) a technical support mechanisms which is a network of Center of Communal Councils (CCC) which is charged to provide technical advise to commune who want to mobilize funds from the FICT.

The law establishes that communes have a public and a private domain. Communes are responsible for managing and maintaining their domain that may comprise forests, waters, wildlife, etc. Implementation is not fully effective yet, but the government is in the process of (i) identifying the existing infrastructure and domains to be transferred to each commune; (ii) identifying transferable responsibilities for natural resource management; and, (iii) identifying the modalities of such transfer. Currently, the Decentralization Mission is working with the Ministry of Environment according to a specific canvas: (1) study of the attributions and functions of the ministry; (2) discussion with a working group of the roles and functions that can be transferred to local governments; (3) identification of related resources to be transferred; (4) validation. Principles of subsidiarity and simultaneous transfer of resources are guiding the process. Obviously, the situation is in flux and consecutive laws have created areas of confusion and even contradiction. The recent law on land management (Loi fonciere et domaniale) and the draft law on livestock management (Charte Pastorale) indicate, however, that local governments are being given increasing powers for organizing and managing local development either directly or through delegation to a variety of local associations and institutions.

Biodiversity - Following the 1993 Decentralization law, in 1995 Mali adopted several orientation laws including the Law 95-004 on Management of forest resources and the law 95-031 on Management of wildlife and its habitat. These laws were designed in such a way that their regulations could be coherent with the decentralization process. With the adoption in 1999 of the National Environmental Action Plan, the Government strengthened its "policy for the environment" with seven strategic axis including strengthening of national capacity, restoration of degraded areas, organization of a permanent system of control and monitoring of the environment. The NEAP proposes nine programs including a Programme for the conservation natural ecosystems in eight priority areas, parks and reserves including the Gourma. In 2000, the environment was attached to a prominent ministry with the creation of the Ministry of Equipment, Territorial Planning, Environment and Urbanism (MEATEU). The 2001 Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan now confirms the country commitment for the protection of the priority eight ecosystems. In coherence with the decentralization context, it states that the management of natural ecosystems must include (i) sustainable use of resources, (ii) empowerment of communities and local Government, (iii) ensure equitable distribution of conservation benefits. The line ministry is currently preparing a Letter of Policy for Management of Biological Diversity which is scheduled to be adopted in 2001. It is expected that several new regulations will be required including an institutional reform of the National Nature Protection Directorate.

2. Objectives

Biodiversity loss has taken extreme proportion throughout West Africa. While this loss is addressed in the Guinean Forest and Sudanian Savanna, the Sahel ecosystem located in the 600 mm - 200 mm isoyets across the West Africa landscape has not benefited from significant attention of decision makers or donors. Mali, a landlocked Sahelian Country with extreme poverty and vulnerability, has requested Bank assistance to implement its environmental &

biodiversity strategies in a priority Sahelian site, the Gourma. The Gourma spans 3 million hectares between the Niger River bend and the Burkina border. It possesses diverse landscape features -- lakes, dunes, low-land forests and inselbergs -- and unique biological features such as the world northernmost 700-strong elephant population. Like all other Sahelian areas, the Gourma is experiencing high degradation including local extinction of animal and plant populations and overall desertification.

Moving away from centralized top-down management, the Government has launched an ambitious decentralization and administrative deconcentration reform. This reform, which is widely recognized as genuine, participatory and democratic, provides the framework upon which the proposed Project can be designed and implemented. It is registered, together with projects of other donors, in a decentralization program whose development objective is to ensure that "The rural populations have better access to public services, to socio-economic infrastructures and to productive natural resources".

Within the framework of the above-mentioned program, at the scale of the Gourma, the GEF & FFEM provide incremental financing with the 6-year Development Objective to ensure that Communes of the Gourma have successfully mainstreamed conservation of biological diversity in communal and inter-communal development. The project targets the GEF Operational Program 1 (Arid and semi-arid ecosystem) with the Global Objective that Biodiversity and range degradation trends are reversed in selected conservation areas and stabilized elsewhere in the Gourma.

Mainstreaming is defined here as the process whereby municipalities account for the concerns and knowledge of their constituency and the nation to register into municipal regulations, development planning, budget and actions provision for biodiversity conservation and natural resources management in such a way that results demonstrate lasting commitments and capacity.

The global and development objectives are sought via three operational outputs: (1) Improvement of awareness, knowledge & capacity of communes and institutions for management of biodiversity, (2) Establishment and management by inter-commune associations of seven new conservation areas, (3) Adoption of natural resources/biodiversity management in communal planning and development of eighteen municipalities.

3. Rationale for Bank's Involvement

GEF assistance would supplement other donors' efforts in support to the Government Program for Conservation of Natural Ecosystem registered in the Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan (French GEF in Baoulé & Adrar, EU in Bafing area, UNDP/GEF in Baoulé, IFAd/GEF and Holland in the Niger Delta) and complement operations geared at strengthening communes and their development financed by the Government, IDA & other donors (AFD, UNCDF). The Project would not only finance biodiversity conservation activities above and beyond activities targeted by other projects. It would also help improve livestock, agriculture, natural resources management activities in relation with conservation area management.

By financing the incremental costs of improved biodiversity conservation, GEF participation in the Project will help fulfill its mission with respect to the Convention on Biological Diversity. It is expected to enhance the security of global biodiversity assets by (i) broadening participation of communes in stewardship of wildland, (ii) ensuring that communities share in the economic and environmental benefits of improved biodiversity management, and (iii) leveraging additional financing from other donors for assistance after the Project. In the absence of GEF financing, the Government could not shoulder the incremental cost of improving management of biodiversity or providing incentives to communities and rural residents for adopting better stewardship practices.

The Bank has acquired developed significant experience in preparation and implementation of participatory natural resources management operations, with CBNRM, CBRDP and the new generation of Community Action Programs (CAP). The regional Bank team is at the forefront of the approach and has been piloting it with a strong biodiversity and wildlife dimension in Burkina, Cote d'Ivoire and Benin.

4. Description

The Project will be implemented through four components:

Component 1: Capacity building of populations and institutions

Component 2: Support to inter-communal management of conservation areas

Component 3: Support to commune-based initiatives

Component 4: Project administration and Monitoring

Component 1: Capacity building of populations and institutions - This component is divided into two sub-components: (1.1) National capacity building and (1.2) Local capacity building.

Sub-component 1.1: National capacity building - This sub-component will provide support for (i) international coordination with GEF PRONAGEN in Burkina Faso by an NGO or consulting firm, (ii) training and awareness building to national staff of the National Directorate for Nature Protection in protected area planning, management, monitoring, etc., (iii) national studies and workshops geared at improving the national policies, legislation and institutions in the framework of decentralized management of biodiversity, (iv) specific studies on (a) setting up a result and incentive-based system for sustainable financing of national and communal protected areas, (b) hunting & ecotourism concessions and related economics and fiscality, (c) survey of wildlife in priority protected areas and preparation of management plans for submission to other donors, (v) the design and establishment of a national web portail and conservation database, (vi) the design and establishment a small documentation center at the National Directorate for Nature Protection.

Sub-component 1.2: Local capacity building - This subcomponent will provide support for (i) national technical assistance to commune councils for conservation planning and conservation area management, (ii) training for project staff and partners services in various themes such as participatory & ecological diagnostics, technics of negotiations, gender approach, holistic management, wildlife survey, habitat management, operation of GPS, etc., (iii) training to communities in functional post literacy, (iv) training to commune councils, village leaders and community members in planning and technics for accountable management of biodiversity micro-projects and conservation areas, (v) conservation awareness activities in schools, using rural radios, plays, etc., (vi) the creation and legal recognition of inter-commune associations for management of conservation areas, (vii) organization and moderation of local workshops and committees to foster local discussions on improvement of resource management practices, (viii) a Malian-Gourma/Burkina-Sahel wide study on pastoral tenure, traditional and current range management practices and rules, users rights and constraints.

Component 2: Support to inter-communal management of conservation areas - This component will provide support for (i) ecological diagnostics and basic studies in each of the targeted conservation areas, (ii) negotiation and delineation of seven conservation areas, (iii) design, write-up and adoption of management plans for each conservation areas, (iv) initiating implementation of the management plans by financing activities such as surveillance, fire and habitat management, building of trails, watch towers, small water infrastructures, materializing limits, installing sign posts, small tourism infrastructures, etc. (v) conducting participatory ecological monitoring, (vi) conducting aerial

surveys of wildlife and livestock, (vii) monitoring land use and producing local maps using satellite images.

Component 3: Support to commune and inter-commune initiatives off conservation areas - This component will provide support for (i) carrying out participatory diagnostics at the inter-commune level complementary to existing communal diagnostics, (ii) carrying out additional studies to identify constraints and solutions to local conservation, (iii) assisting commune council in discussing biodiversity issues at the inter-commune level and integrate biodiversity conservation and range management in the Commune Development Plans, (iv) providing advise for, or cofinancing, biodiversity-related micro-projects or micro-services registered in the Communes Development plans, (v) piloting holistic management of pastoral resources in at least one demonstration site adjacent to a conservation area, (vi) carrying out participatory ecological monitoring of micro-ventures' impacts and sustainability.

Component 4: Project administration and monitoring - This component will provide support for (i) coordination of project activities from planning to implementation and supervision, (ii) ensuring availability of funds at the field level, (iii) procurement of good, work and services in a timely manner, (iv) ensuring adequate management of project funds, (v) monitoring implementation performance, (vi) coordinating activities with other projects in the region and in the sector, (vii) enabling meetings of the national steering committee.

1. Capacity building of populations and institutions
2. Support to inter-communal management of conservation areas
3. Support to commune-based initiatives
4. Project administration and monitoring

5. Financing

Total (US\$m)
BORROWER/RECIPIENT \$1.34
IBRD
IDA
LOCAL COMMUNITIES \$0.46
FRANCE: FRENCH AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT \$0.50
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY \$5.50
FRANCE, GOV. OF (EXCEPT FOR MIN. OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS-MOFA) \$1.30
UN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND \$2.00
FOREIGN MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS (UNIDENTIFIED) \$1.00
Total Project Cost \$12.10

6. Implementation

The set-up proposed below is a preliminary attempt at organizing Project implementation. It is expected to be reviewed at preappraisal to ensure cost efficiency, adequacy with national institutions and municipalities, and availability of human resources.

Steering - A small Steering Committee will be established. It will be presided by the Director of DNCN but all of its other members will be from the Gourma area (the list is to be determined but it will comprise at least representative of the Mayors, of the Government to the three Cercles that contain the Gourma, of the civil society, etc.).

Oversight (maitrise d'ouvrage) - The Project would be under the overall responsibility of the National Directorate for Nature Protection (DNPN) within the Ministry in charge of biodiversity (currently it is the Ministry of Equipment, Territorial Planning, Environment and Urbanism - MEATEU).

Coordination (maitrise d'oeuvre) - The Project will be headed by the Conservator of the Gourma Conservation Service (SCG is a new deconcentrated service of DNCN). He/she will lead a small team of national experts (including at least a women), support staff located in Douentza as well as forestry agents scattered in the communes. Expertise sought include (i) wildlife management, (ii) socio-pastoralism, (iii) socio-anthropology, (iv) environmental awareness, (v) monitoring & evaluation. The SCG will be equipped with three vehicles to enable access to remote areas where TSU teams are stationed. Their role is to provide advise and supervision to TSU teams in terms of strategic planning, training, technical advise, coordination of activities, validation of proposals and management plans, coherence with safeguards and good practices, contact with the international community, etc. The SCG is fully responsible for component 1 and 4 of the Project as well as the parts of Component 2 and 3 that cannot be delegated (e.g. wildlife law enforcement).

Field implementation (maitrise d'oeuvre déléguée) - The 9 priority communes are regrouped into 4 clusters: Douentza, In Adiatefene, Mondoro/Gossi & N'Tillit. The Project will recruit NGOs or Consulting firms to provide technical assistance to each of these clusters. A standard team of technical assistant will be called a Technical Support Unit (TSU). A TSU will comprise one conservation specialist (called Communal Counselor), one accountant as well as several animators (the number will depend on the size of the clusster). The Counselor will berecruited in the subregion. Animators will be recruited in the Gourma. They will have high school degrees and will receive additional training in skills relevant to their task. Each cluster will possess one vehicles (mostly for group mission and security) and a motorbike (for the Counselor's work). The animators will be spread out in villages and fractions and equipped with camels. TSUs are to help the commune implement component 2 and 3 of the project (specific arrangement and role of CCC tbd at preappraisal).

Partner Government services - The SCG (or the TSU or the Communes - this is tbd at preappraisal) will sign protocols with relevant Government deconcentrated services such as (i) livestock, (ii) agriculture, (iii) education. These protocols will be result-based and drafted on a need-basis during implementation.

7. Sustainability

Sustainability is linked to the ability of the Project to provide incentives and capacities at all levels to improve (i) long term commune, communities and Government commitment to conservation, (ii) short and long term benefits, financial or otherwise, that balance conservation costs; and (iii) cost-effectiveness, quality and realism of proposed activities and investments. These depends first on the initial commitment of the Government, on the project approach and ability to stimulate local interests and draw on the human resources and biological potential as well as on a plan for a realistic exit strategy.

Government Commitment

The success of the Project for restoration of degraded habitat and policy changes to improve range, water, and wildlife resources management is inextricably linked to the national legal and institutional environment for conservation and to the Government willingness to improve it. The Governments commitment to sustainable natural resources use -- enabling revenue capture by the rural communes and improving both the knowledge base and field capacity for effective stewardship of biodiversity resources -- is encouraging and should contribute significantly to the sustainability of the Project results. Still, to improve further the national capacity, the GEF and other donors will help the Ministry of Environment improve the national legal and institutional framework for protected area management as well as improve its human resources capacity.

Financial sustainability of conservation areas

The project focuses on capacity building and not on physical investments. As a consequence, it does not intend to create an infrastructure expensive to maintain or a system expensive to run. Except for biomonitoring and minor surveillance, the maintenance of the conservation areas is mostly a non-activity (no hunting, no farming, no grazing). Community rules, and willingness to respect these, are the essence of the proposed design. Still, by the end of its proposed implementation period, it is not expected that financial benefit will fully balance the small financial costs of managing conservation areas, the opportunity cost of non-activity and provide sufficient incentive for long term commitment of Communes.

Some tourism and small game hunting will be organized during implementation. However, it is likely to remain marginal for several years and until wildlife restoration is high. Such financial benefits originating from improved resource management, tourism or hunting are likely to directly profit individuals (livestock owners, tourism guides, etc.).

Additional sources of long-term financing (estimated to be in the order of \$ 200,000 per year) are therefore needed for subsequent phases. The Project will therefore finance fund raising activities (using for example the elephant as a flagship species). The Project will also finance the design of a system whereby funds can be channelled to communes in the form of budget support in reward for successful achievement in biodiversity conservation. This system may take the form of a trust (either national or at the level of the Gourma) or a foundation. It is to be accompanied by an independent method to measure conservation successes.

Financing of Government services recurrent costsBy empowering municipalities, the Project also minimizes the traditional role of Government services. Still, the Project will co-finance part of four Government Services recurrent costs (2.3% of total costs) for activities carried out toward Project objectives. This practice is common in Mali because Government revenues are not sufficient to allocate adequate budget to conservation. Nonetheless, the level is below the Government "after-tax" counterpart funding of 5.7%. In addition, counterpart funding for operation costs is initially set at 35% to provide adequate incentive for rational use of operation funds. In Year 4 to 6 this proportion will increase to 70%. This level (estimated at \$ 75,000 per year), if maintained after project end, will set the national budget allocation to a sufficient level for the Gourma Conservation Service to continue assistance to Communes. This is commensurate with the country commitment to maintain biodiversity in the Gourma.

Technical assistance

The GEPRENAF independent evaluation pointed out the success of the technical assistance component and recommended pursuing it for an additional phase. The main culprit of participatory conservation in the region is the low initial capacity of inter-village associations to take over the complex management of a conservation area. To palliate this, small teams of national experts will provide technical assistance for project implementation, innovation, community-approach and transfer of skills. Also, because, the success of the Project depends on such innovation and on the effective adoption by communities of alternative behaviors, it is important that such assistance be available until all fundamental evolution occurs and until the Communes and Inter-communes associations have the capacity to fully assume their role. Technical assistance to the Commune will continue until project end. However, technical assistance to the Gourma Conservation Service will be gradually phased out in years 4 to 6.

Other incentives

Financial sustainability is only one aspect of sustainability and may not always be the most relevant to the local communities. A 2001 review by the

International Institute Economic Development of community-based wildlife management indicated that "there are a few cases where financial benefits unequivocally exceed financial costs but communities themselves appear in some cases to have decided that the other benefits (livelihood security, biomass, employment etc) are worth the costs (labour, time, resource use restrictions and so on)." This appears to be the case in Burkina where GEPRENAF communities are even more appreciating externalities such as inter-community relationship, restoration of traditional land use rights and values, communities reach out, maintenance of a natural "patrimony", etc.

Sustainability depends finally on the perception, of the communities at large, of the Project benefits to their daily life, social comfort and capacity to produce. All operations implemented in the Gourma aim to alleviate these concerns and decentralized much decision-making and financing of community priorities. In addition, improved awareness of natural resources degradation and adoption of alternative behaviors, rules and technologies, may prove sufficient to sustainably diminish pressure on the natural ecosystem.

8. Lessons learned from past operations in the country/sector

ENV & QAG Review of GEF-supported biodiversity projects in Africa

Several reviews were consulted: 1998 QAG review of the Natural Resources Management Portfolio; 1997 QAG review of biodiversity projects in Africa; 1998 ENV bank-wide review of biodiversity projects. As a general rule, these review call for better upstream design, strong commitment & capacity by Government and other stake holders, mainstreaming in the country portfolio, setting up realistic and consensual development objectives, coordination with NGOs and other as well as more intense than normal Bank supervision. An apparently more recent QAG diagnostic of a sample of GEF-supported projects is " that future projects must [...]: (i) integrate the biodiversity conservation agenda into the broader national development agenda, (ii) biodiversity projects need to focus more on methods for dealing with socio-economic pressure in perimeter zones where populations may be dependent on forest exploitation, (iii) project design should take into account technical and stakeholders review of the final design, and (iv) clearly defined goals and objectives are essential to focus on project efforts, monitor progress, and demonstrate impact." The project accounts for the QAG recommendations as demonstrated by some of its strategic choices (i) Focus on conservation while coordinating and leveraging development (i.e. mobilize resources to foster development in perimeter zones to deal with socio-economic pressure), (ii) build on the national decentralization process and instrument to empower communities, (iii) identify and address the root causes of degradation by using a holistic approach (i.e. account for local stakeholders knowledge), (iv) provide small-scale support to improve biological resources management off sanctuaries (i.e. further deal with socio-economic pressure.) As recommended, special efforts are developed to set clear, realistic and measurable goals.

Community-Driven Development

In many countries, limited government success in managing natural resources, providing basic infrastructure, and ensuring primary social services has led to the search for alternative options. One of these options is participatory community-driven development. The substantial experience of what works and does not work which has been accumulated to date has been drawn upon in designing the Project. In particular, for the government and outsiders to induce community-driven development on a large scale requires agencies to invest in local organizational capacity and support community control in decision making. Also, experience shows that community-driven development does not automatically include marginalized groups, the poor, women and ethnic minorities unless their inclusion is especially highlighted as a goal. Finally successful community-driven development is characterized by five main factors: (i) local organizational capacity or the existence of viable community groups, (ii) the appropriate fit of technology to community capacity, (iii) effective outreach

strategies, (iv) client responsive agencies, and (v) enabling higher government policies and commitment. All these factors are built into the design of the Project.

Pilot Pastoral Perimeter Program

The interface with the livestock sector is one of the most important dimensions of the Project. The experience of Pilot Pastoral Perimeters Program (PPPP), in particular in Chad and Senegal shows that proper utilization of rangeland, with rules set up by the community on a spatial and temporal basis, can lead to range improvement and improve the relationship among pastoralists and others (farmers and traders). The holistic approach adopted in PPPP will be taught to project teams to ensure that their analysis of the production and conservation system focuses on the causes of degradation rather than the symptoms.

Arid land ecology

Lessons from northern Africa (e.g. Tunisia, Morocco) indicate that, within an arid ecosystem, a 100,000 ha protected area can be adequate for proper conservation of most large arid land mammals. Northern Africa projects also show that significant habitat restoration, even with rainfall less than 150 mm/year, can be spectacular and lead not only to habitat recovery but also to the reappearance of locally extinct species.

Lessons from the Burkina GEF Pilot (GEPRENAF)

Since May 1996, community-driven development has been tested with its full biodiversity conservation dimension. The Diéfoula-Logoniégué area has received financial assistance from the GEF/Belgium through the Pilot Community-based Natural Resources & Wildlife Management Project (GEPRENAF). An independent evaluation of GEPRENAF was carried out which recognized the important achievement of GEPRENAF in term of local development & empowerment of local communities as well as building the foundations for adequate community-based conservation. The evaluation considers ecological achievement as limited (in term of wildlife recovery) but stressed that such recovery can only be the result of long-term commitment. It recommends (i) to pursue and expend the scope of GEPRENAF but maintain a similar level of national technical assistance; (ii) to focus future financing on management of the "conservation area"; (iii) to limit the institutional responsibility of the AGEREF to "concessionaire" of the gazetted forest but clarify the role of the local forestry department; (iv) to diversify sources of revenues by tackling the full range of wildland potential benefits. The recommendations of the independent evaluation are worked in the design of the Project.

9. Program of Targeted Intervention (PTI) N

10. Environment Aspects (including any public consultation)

Issues: The Project seeks to conserve and restore biodiversity which is highly threatened by over hunting and overgrazing. Expected positive environmental benefits are: (i) increased surface area maintained as natural habitat with associated increase in wildlife populations, including the Gourma elephants, and vegetation cover, (ii) improved management of grazing areas with consequential decrease in soil erosion, stabilization of dunes, reappearance of perennial grass-species, etc. Little negative environmental impact are foreseen. Still, it is possible that an improvement of the range's grazing quality conduct communities to increase further the number of livestock or attract herders from other areas. Both of these consequences may reverse the positive trends that the project seeks to establish. In addition, there are minor risks of local erosion or local degradation of vegetation is associated with the small water infrastructure that may prove necessary to build. Finally, the project seeks to stabilize the erratic motion of elephants along their ancestral migration route to decrease the potential of human-elephant conflicts;

it is possible that longer sojourn of elephants in some areas increases local degradation of vegetation in low-land acacia forests.

The primary stakeholders of the project are the Commune Councils and the estimated 200 000 populations of the 18 communes of the Gourma who are mostly involved in pastoralism. They are to be assisted by national technical assistance as well as by the deconcentrated services for nature protection.

11. Contact Point:

Task Manager
Jean-Michel G. Pavy
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington D.C. 20433
Telephone:5331-3421
Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

12. For information on other project related documents contact:

The InfoShop
The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 458-5454
Fax: (202) 522-1500
Web: [http:// www.worldbank.org/infoshop](http://www.worldbank.org/infoshop)

Note: This is information on an evolving project. Certain components may not be necessarily included in the final project.

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