



COUNTRY CASE STUDY - MOROCCO

01 March 2010

Country	Morocco
Region	Arab States
Key Result Area	Biodiversity Conservation
Project Title	Transhumance for Biodiversity Conservation in the Southern High Atlas
Project ID	852
Project Activity Dates	Start: 2001 End: 2010

SYNOPSIS

The Transhumance for Biodiversity Conservation in the Southern High Atlas (CBTHA) Project is a nine-year project (2001 - 2010), with US\$ 4.252 million GEF financing and US\$ 5.387 million co-financing. The Project aims to conserve globally significant biodiversity in the productive landscape of the southern flank of the High Atlas through an innovative approach integrating pastoral range management with biodiversity conservation in a grazing-dependent ecosystem. The project addresses the causes of biodiversity loss through the revival of bio-friendly mobile pastoralism and traditional common property management regimes, land use planning, and innovative incentives for rangeland and wildlife biodiversity conservation. Simultaneous global and local benefits are pursued, which would ensure both a demonstration effect and a self-sustaining local process after project completion. The project is designed to achieve its objectives through four major outcomes: 1) designing integrated biodiversity conservation and sustainable management plans as a support to land use planning; 2) implementing these management plans; 3) providing incentives for biodiversity conservation and mobility; and 4) integrating biodiversity issues into policy debate at provincial and national levels.

PROJECT OUTCOME

The project aimed at responding to Millennium Development **Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability; Target 7b:** Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss; and **Indicators: 7.6** Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected and **7.7** Proportion of species threatened with extinction.

PROJECT OBJECTIVE

The project addressed several issues, barriers and constraints during its implementation:

- Ownership and land tenure issues: ethnic territorial boundaries did not correspond to governmental district limits and boundaries and resulted in a disconnect between customary use and administrative allocation;
- Weak capacities at local level, namely those of local leaders and their inability to plan efficiently and to enforce rules and regulations relative to resource management;
- Inadequate enforcement of viable customary and traditional natural resource management systems by governmental representatives;
- Lack of recognition of pastoralist lifestyle and productive patterns as having an economic and ecological benefit;
- Absence of specific expert profiles to conduct the thematic studies on pastoralism as this field has not been studied or analyzed in the past.

PROJECT RESULTS

The project achieved effective participation of all partners at all levels; promoted a decentralized and participative communal planning, which is now used as a model for the development of communal plans; established strong coordination mechanisms and partnerships to mobilize additional funds and human resources, contributing to sharing of know-how and to strengthening the workforce; built capacities of various partners and stakeholders and in particular of the pastoral community itself through organization; provided incentives at institutional, systemic, market and individual levels to conserve biodiversity and to revive the practice of mobile pastoralism, or transhumance.

The project established alternative income-generating activities through the introduction of revolving funds. This enabled the local NGOs to rehabilitate traditional conservation practices, such as agdals, to reinstate over 74,000 ha of traditional pastures regulated by customary law – resulting in 12,000 ha declared as permanent reserve for Curvier gazelles. The revolving funds, as market incentives, have encouraged investment in energy efficient technologies (such as woodstoves), supported the development of 3 medicinal and aromatic plant production entities and the development of local products – thus improving the livelihoods of populations benefiting from these funds while also conserving critical species such as the Sahara bee - an endemic species threatened with extinction due to the introduction of the black bee.

As the region has a strong tourism potential, the project supported the establishment of guest houses sanctioned by the “green key” label, trained their owners on hospitality services and developed a tourism charter adopted by all tour operators of the region.

In terms of social incentives, the project set up mobile schools and dispensaries to provide educational and health services to mobile families, namely children, and organized health campaigns for inoculation of over 11,000 beneficiaries. These services have contributed to valuing the transhumant lifestyle, recognizing a forgotten culture and reversing the negative perception of nomadism.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

In general, capitalization of best practices combined with a motivated population with a strong will to build on its capacities has led to significant changes at the local level and will strongly contribute to “scalability”. Furthermore, the following achievements are also critical elements of success for the project:

- Lobbying on economic, social and ecological benefits derived from pastoral management systems to revive and value the pastoral practice and to introduce basic services to this mobile population (health and education) – mobilizing significant additional co-financing at local level;
- The introduction of economic collective ovens and LPG as long-term alternative to fuelwood for cooking and heating purposes; impacts of these two technologies on wood stocks and women’s labor have been measure and codified. This codification and communication around it have enabled quick voluntary uptake outside of the population that was directly targeted by the project;
- A strategy on sustainable management of key biodiversity sites and ecological hot spots based on traditional know-how of natural resource management and traditional conservation practices (ie. Agdals) has enabled effective conservation practices as opposed to top-down conservation measures;
- A strong documentary basis consisting of 40 thematic studies conducted during project implementation and covering various strategic sectors for development is guiding decision-making; although the preparation of these studies has taken and long time and delayed project implementation, they are now valued by all decision-makers, which in this context are both the administration and local population;

- A strong network of 70 local NGOs (women and men) working in the sectors of pastoralism, tourism, bee-keeping, oasis agriculture and agro-biodiversity - very well aware of sustainable management of natural resources - constituted the stronghold of the project and powerful interest groups advocating for the approaches promoted by the project;
- The development of a monitoring and evaluation system linked to a geographical information system to implement long-term management of natural resources has enabled decision makers to view the tangible results and outcomes of the project leading to the integration of its approaches in their annual budgets and workplans;
- A strong integration of the project's best practices and know-how within other national programmes such as the National Initiative for Human Development, the Oasis Programmes, the new agricultural strategy "Plan Maroc Vert", projects of the Belgian bilateral cooperation, and of the German bilateral cooperation.

LESSONS LEARNED

The project encountered situations that were not initially envisaged at its design and inception. These situations have become lessons learned and are summarized below:

- Robust and in-depth studies on ecological, social and environmental characteristics of the area and of the value chain are essential to articulate appropriate and acceptable responses. Even if these require time, funding and effort, they also guarantee better results;
- Adopting a territorial approach in land use planning which integrates tribal configuration from the beginning is an absolute necessity as customary practices are still very present despite the introduction of central administrative authorities, regulation and boundaries;
- Customary boundaries often correspond to ecological entities, resulting in more coherent and feasible management plans;
- The use of traditional local know-how and customary practices has enabled the development of integrated management plans adapted to the local context and favored population ownership, facilitating implementation in the field;
- Coordination between traditional institutions and local associations with support from local authorities enabled dialogue and negotiations for the implementation of management plans;
- Organization of the stakeholder population into NGOs and associations has empowered different interest groups (namely pastoralists who were previously marginalized) and promoted constructive participation;
- Mainstreaming social economy concepts and private sector development has been essential to provide incentives for all levels to adopt and apply more environmentally friendly practices;
- The use of decentralized management as an opportunity and the project's support for this government led

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