

The Tribe

- Platform of Participatory Local Development and Management of Communal Rangeland Resources -

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Abstract: Sustainable development of pastoral and agro-pastoral systems, dominated by collective and/or tribal ownership of rangelands, is a key issue for the West Asia and North Africa region. These two systems are located in arid and semi-arid areas and are increasingly threatened by desertification process. The policy responses to tackle this complexity have been a sectorial and fragmented, “top-down” approach, putting forward technical solutions and neglecting the social context. In response to the frequent failures, methods of “participatory development” emerged during the 1970’s within international development arenas. Adoption of participatory approaches by national governments and its translation into actual implementation appears not only partial, but also particularly slow. Recent experiences suggest that integrated and participatory approaches may lead to more sustainable resource management and to more effective poverty oriented policies. Promotion of local/community development is the most recent approach to face the challenges of rangeland development. It aims at organizing people on a decentralized basis and applying participatory programming which could lead to effectively empowering the local people. In this context, the collaborative research program conducted by ICARDA and IFAD in Southern Tunisia has led to the development of tools and methods adapted to the development of collective desert rangeland ecosystems based on the empowerment of local rural poor communities and using innovative participatory approaches. The pilot action conducted showed that participatory natural resources management in such areas can be instrumental in institutionalizing participatory approaches. In both democratic and non-democratic settings, these approaches foster inclusiveness, transparency and accountability of public services and policy making processes. The tools developed play an essential educational role in changing bureaucrats and people’s mind-sets and communication patterns.

Key Words: Empowerment, Participatory approach, Pastoral community, Rangeland degradation, Sustainable development

1. Introduction

Previous development projects failed to adequately address real community issues and concerns in agropastoral dry areas in North Africa. Decision-makers and all research and development partners are increasingly aware that “the heart of the rangeland sustainable management” is linked to institutional issues. Indeed, in the past the situation of rangelands was relatively better not only because population pressure and demand for meat were lower, but also because the management of rangelands was more strictly controlled by traditional institutions (jmaas in Morocco, Myaad in Tunisia) that enjoyed effective power. Numerous policy and institutional reforms have been carried out in several countries of North Africa. In most cases, policy and institutional reforms weakened pastoral institutions. These institutional reforms can be classified into three main approaches: state appropriation of rangeland resources, strengthening customary

tribal claims, and privatization with titling (Ngaido and McCarthy, 2004). The major objective of this work is to develop participatory methodologies and tools that empower local communities and promote sustainable livelihood and conservation of agropastoral resources in dry areas.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research framework

ICARDA and IFAD worked together (2000-2005) to design the IFAD-funded project PRODESUD (Programme de Developpement Agropastoral et de Promotion des Initiatives Locales du Sud-Est Tunisien/ Program of Agropastoral Development and Promotion of Local Initiatives in South-eastern Tunisia).

ICARDA support was requested to (i) identify beneficiaries, (ii) develop and validate a methodology of participatory agropastoral development and to (iii) to train and backstop the project team.

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The project has been implemented in the Governorate of Tataouine, Southeastern Tunisia that covers 38,889 km² representing 24% of the country's surface and covering 7 administrative districts. Tataouine also includes 90% of collective rangelands of the country where extensive small ruminants and camel herding is the major source of income. The total population is estimated to 9000 households with a total number of 143,524 people.

2.2. Identification of beneficiaries

Collective rangelands have different land tenure status distributed similarly to tribal composition that does not fit with the administrative division. The first task was to convince national and regional decision makers to build up the project based on the tribal division and not on the administrative division.

Hopefully, the decision makers understood the issue and accepted the challenge; indeed the “modern Tunisia” banned the tribal facet since its independence in 1956.

To most appropriate way to identify beneficiaries is to determine the different fractions of the tribes, named socio-territorial units (STU). This has been achieved by building up the tribal map of the target area. This task was completed by using the “old reports” of the French army who circulated in the region in 1913 and the know-how of the elders of the region who accompanied the research team during the mapping of tribes' lands using GPS.

2.3. Development of the methodology of participatory local development

A methodology is developed through the joint inputs of all stakeholders including community members, agricultural specialists, extension services, researchers, local institutions, and decision makers. The methodology consists of the following steps: characterization of the community, diagnosis, planning and programming, institutional set-up, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The final product is the community development plan resulting from a negotiation process between all stakeholders.

Figure 1 summarizes the different steps of the whole process that includes 5 consecutive steps: Characterization of the community: this a learning process for both the research team and the community. It is implemented using household surveys and the community map as perceived by community members. The final product is a data base on the community and the “community knowledge book”. Participatory diagnosis and planning: Problems and potential solutions to alleviate constraints to the development of the community are identified, negotiated and agreed upon by all stakeholders. The major result of this phase is the development plan of the community;

it reflects the vision of all stakeholders and particularly the community members.

Participatory programming: This step determines what will be implemented each year and where, and the source of funding. It clarifies the responsibilities and the duties of the development agencies and the community members.

Organization of the population and promotion of community based organization: this phase is crucial. The community elects a body that is responsible for negotiation and implementation of the development plan at the community level. It is the first step toward empowerment and democracy.

Implementation of the community development plan and monitoring and evaluation: This phase is the final step and the product is a set of agreements between the development agencies and the community.

2.4. Promotion of local institutions

Traditionally tribes have their own informal local institutions named “Myaad,” which is in charge of managing communal natural resources (grazing sources and water points mainly) and collective actions to be undertaken by the community. The “Myaad” is composed of representatives/elders of the different “fractions” of the tribe.

In order to be in full alignment with the “modern” regulations and laws, two major changes have been made: (i) instead of tribe we use the “socio-territorial unit” and instead of “Myaad” we adapted new local institution, democratically elected and in full conformity with the law and named “GDA” (Groupement de developpement agricole/ agricultural development association).

3. Results

3.1. Socio-territorial units (Tribes)

Twenty five tribes have been identified and the results validated during a workshop with all stakeholders including local and national decision makers (**Fig. 2**).

3.2. The community development plan

The pillar of the methodology is an effective communication where all stakeholders negotiate community development plan (CDP) on an equal basis and where all sources of knowledge are explored, encompassing both indigenous and research-based knowledge. So far there is little integration of indigenous knowledge into development planning, thus concerned communities are becoming more powerless. It is suggested that development agencies should use indicators extracted from local know-how of agropastors to prepare relief instead of just relying on satellite imagery. This participatory approach has been accepted and embraced by

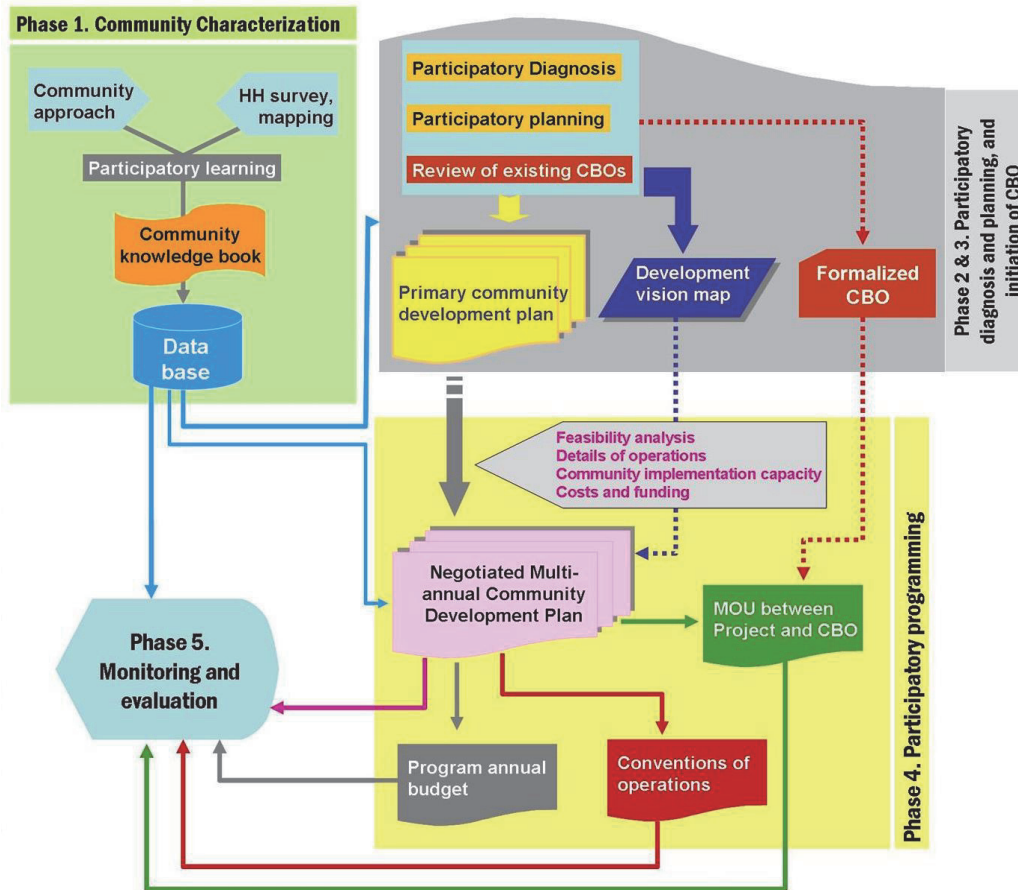


Fig. 1. The five steps of participatory community development plan (Nefzaoui *et al.*, 2007).

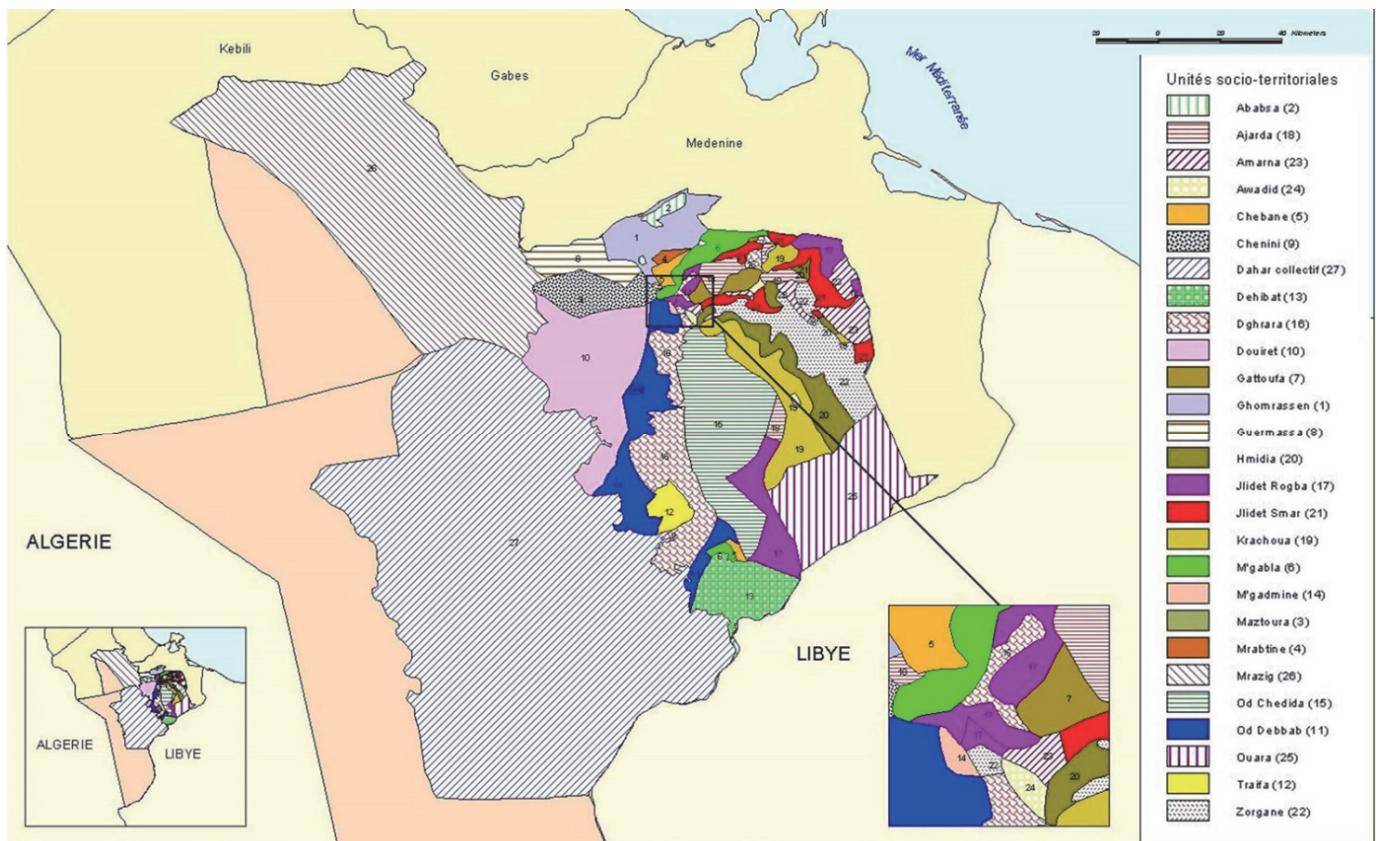


Fig. 2. The tribal map of Tataouine Governorate, Southeastern Tunisia.

communities and development agencies in Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. It has been documented and disseminated through different channels including: field manual in English and Arabic, linkage with Karianet network, and specific websites (www.icarda.org; www.mashreq-maghreb.org).

3.3. Promotion of local institutions (GDA)

The community-based organizations (GDAs) are built up on socio-territorial units that correspond to the traditional tribe boundaries. They are fully participating in the design and implementation of their integrated local development. The approach involves the real participation of agropastoral communities, in a new bottom-up mode, for the establishment of community development plan (CDP) that reflects the real issues and priority needs of the community. This is developed through the joint inputs of all stakeholders including community members, agricultural specialists, extension services, local administration and state representatives. Best-bet options for technical, institutional and policy issues are jointly identified for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The community is represented by a formal community-based organization (CBO), directly elected by community members and fully recognized by government authorities as their equal partner for implementation of all actions set out in the jointly developed CDP. This includes such crucial issues as management of communal pasture and rangelands (for example more than 50,000 ha of collective rangelands are put under rest and fully controlled by the communities), as well as the procurement of funds and necessary inputs and facilities, and the independent and transparent contact with all stakeholders and similar CBOs in the region for exchange of relevant information and experiences (Nefzaoui *et al.*, 2007).

4. Lessons Learned

Key lessons from this experience include: (i) participatory characterisation of communities is essential for cooperation and trust among stakeholders; (ii) recognition of local

know-how is an important step for successful diagnosis; (iii) the preparation of annual and long-term development plans approved by communities is an efficient tool to mobilize resources and ease project implementation; (iv) not to underestimate the ability of communities to identify appropriate technical solutions, to solve internal conflicts particularly relating to property rights and land use, and the importance of additional-income generating activities; (v) the success and the sustainability of the process depends on the promotion of elected community-based organizations that play a key interface role between communities and other actors (government agencies and decision makers, non-government agencies, donors, and other communities).

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