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Natural Resources Management 22101

Objectives:

Participatory, community-based NRM Projects have been implemented over the last 5 to 6 years in Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger with the support of France, Germany, Norway, USA, and the World Bank’s IDA facility. Furthermore, pilot operations concentrating on specific NRM issues are underway in Chad (pastoral perimeters) and Guinea (land tenure securement). Since 70 to 90 percent of the land in these countries is collectively owned, such projects are in fact trying to reinforce common property management systems, with the dual objective of alleviating poverty and improving the management of (crop) land, water, pasture, and forest resources.

Impact on the ground:

- Under NRM projects, local communities have rehabilitated village land through soil and water conservation measures (Burkina Faso and Mali), improved management of pasture (in Chad), and forest resources (in Niger, and in Houet and Bougouriba in Burkina Faso). Hundreds of thousands of hectares of agropastoral areas, savanna woodlands and grasslands which were formerly degraded by “open access” regimes are now being regenerated under effective common property management systems.

- Community-based NRM projects have helped to resolve land use conflicts, both between farmers and herders within the community and between communities and outsiders. In Chad, for example, community-level decisions on livestock rotation have reduced the need for crop protection, and in Mali, local communities have been able to agree on the boundaries of their territory (“terroir”) with neighboring communities; and have negotiated with transhumant pastoralists where livestock trails should be established.

- NRM projects have potential not only for improving the management of collectively owned lands, but also of government-owned resources. For instance, in Burkina Faso and in Mali, local community involvement in biodiversity conservation in gazetted forests has led to a remarkable improvement in their management.

Lessons learned:

- With the proper institutional environment, rural communities can bring bottom-up solutions to land tenure and other natural resource management problems.

- Governments should allow for innovative legal and regulatory measures suggested by local resource users to be tested in selected areas before proceeding to larger scale implementation.

- Rather than heavy-handed state intervention, improved NRM requires governments to recognize and if necessary help enforce locally designed solutions e.g., where governments have officially acknowledged locally agreed boundaries between communities, land tenure security has improved.

- Successful local-level management of natural resources necessitates investment in community-level capacity building and empowerment in the areas of organization, financial and natural resource management. Experience shows that this usually requires more time than is allowed for in donor-supported projects.

"While community-based NRM must eventually become integrated into the key line agencies (agriculture, livestock, forestry, etc.), a dynamic National Program is necessary to facilitate the initial spread of the participatory methodologies involved, and their progressive adaptation to local circumstances.

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Key Documents on Natural Resources Management


FAO, Annual Forest Statistics.

FAO, see documentation data.