

Mauritania Technology Fosters Tradition (TFT)

PRESENTATION

July 2004

OVERVIEW

This Initiative aims to document the totality of property- and use-rights in a selected area of Mauritania through the beneficiaries themselves. The area comprises three ephemeral wetlands in Hodh Al Gharbi in southeast Mauritania, namely Chlim, Oum Lelli and Sawana. The Initiative would empower the beneficiaries to adopt their resource use-rights as the “law” governing their area, and observe whether the participants actually abide by these mutually agreed upon rules.

The Initiative is called “Technology Fosters Tradition” (TFT) because modern technological tools, such as computerized maps, GIS, combination of geographic data and text, and dissemination of data via the Internet will be utilized.

TFT is funded by the Government of Norway. The TFT does not provide any investments, but is a research-and-action project. All the people, projects, NGO, offices, etc., that have interests in these wetlands are considered as the partners to TFT.

ISSUES

The key issues faced by Mauritanian agricultural and rural economic systems are:

- The rural-to-urban migration,
- Pastoralism provides high returns and is the only feasible form of resource use in large areas of the country, yet receives low priority compared with rain fed and irrigated agriculture,
- Desertification (man-induced and through the southward movement of the 400 millimeter isohyet) and deterioration of wet lands and marginal areas,
- Demographic pressure leads to unsustainable land-use activities and in- and out-migration,
- Traditional communal property rights’ systems are in flux,
- Lack of traditional institutions for mediating conflicts over natural resources within and across ethnic groups, and between traditional institutions and the administration, and
- Legislation is ill adapted to local condition (exceptions include: *Code Pastoral* and new legislation pertaining to oases).

OBJECTIVES

Overall objectives

- Ecologically and economically sustainable natural resource management, and
- Reduction in the level of conflict among the target population.

Value added for beneficiaries

- Clarification of existing property- and use-rights,
- Graphical presentation of property- and use-rights – for all, including beneficiaries, administration, and outsiders,

- Empowerment to safeguard and enforce property- and use-rights, and
- Contribute to obtaining tangible investment support from participating donor projects due to clarification of rights, specifically common property rights.

Value added for the Government

- Potentially higher income from livestock taxes,
- Higher and more sustainable return on marginal lands, and optimal utilization of the various agro-ecological zones,
- Reduction of conflicts, and
- Protection of natural resources, the environment (incl. biodiversity protection), and nomadic culture.

Value added for the World Bank and GTZ

- Increased knowledge of the importance of pastoralism in the rural economy,
- Added understanding of the role of traditional knowledge in traditional natural resource management, and
- Additional clarity regarding the relevance of embedding traditional values in the content of regulations and laws, and of respecting tradition in form and concept when writing regulations and laws in order to assure adherence.

CONTENT

- Area assessment to: (1) evaluate various ecological, ethnic and livelihood/subsistence practice zones and their relationships to each other, and (2) identify suitable localities to implement the project,
- Identification of suitable partners (preferably local) to work with the local population,
- Identification of local land use patterns based on traditional property- and use-rights, through interviews with the local population,
- Securing administrative support (from the *hakim* and *wali*) to enable local communities to practice these traditional land use patterns,
- Codification of these traditional property- and use-rights in local languages, explaining the respective notions in these languages (including a dictionary of terms),
- Translation of the data into Arabic and French,
- Establishment of a rural registry based on the identified land-use pattern,
- Support existing relevant traditional institutions, and establish new co-management institutions among representatives of right holders and the public sector, based on the regulations, and
- Make the regulations available on a GIS map and the Internet.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to assess the performance of the TFT, criteria or indicators need to be established and monitored on a regular basis. These indicators will measure formal and substantive issues. The formal indicators will pertain to methodology (tools), while the substantive indicators will pertain to the results achieved in changing and reinforcing behavior. A preliminary set of indicators would include the following:

- Reproduction of land use patterns on maps,
- Consensus among the local population regarding the land use patterns described,
- Recording of rights in the local languages,
- Establishment of a classification of rights, from 'strong' (akin to ownership) to 'weak',
- Establishment of a lexicon providing equivalent terms of the various indigenous rights in all relevant languages,
- Monitoring environmental change by means of remote sensing,

- Observing the degree to which the established rules are being followed by the local population,
- Extent to which the administration honors the agreement to uphold the local rules,
- Number of conflicts being adjudicated following the traditional rules,
- Extent to which the local population defends these rules against intruders (that is, local people not included in the initial assessment of land use patterns),
- Compilation of assessed land rights into a rural registry, and
- Extent to which the local population emulates and implements the approach in other localities.

OUTPUT

The output will be a body of traditional knowledge pertaining to local management of natural resources, in the form of maps and texts. This body of knowledge will be available in print form and on the Internet, and in Arabic, French, and local languages.

The TFT web site, at www.cbnrm.net/web/tft/, carries updated and detailed information about the process of implementing the Initiative.

RELEVANCE

The TFT Initiative aims to prove that traditional land use-rights serve to regulate access to scarce resources, are adhered to, and contribute to avoiding conflicts. It will give an overview of access to resources by gender. Furthermore, it will gather data to measure whether such traditional land regulations are well adapted to the environment and yield an optimal result in terms of productivity and sustainable management. TFT will hopefully contribute to reforming lawmaking in Mauritania in the environment sector, by: (1) drawing the population into the process, (2) encouraging the development of differential legislation for different ecosystems, and (3) modernizing the drafting language in order that it becomes comprehensible for all beneficiaries.

If the TFT proves successful, its underlying assumptions, approach and methodology should be adopted by all donors involved in the rural sector in Mauritania, with the participating World Bank and GTZ projects acting as sponsors and catalysts. The TFT would strengthen the community-driven development approach that the World Bank now mainstreams. These projects will, in turn, become more effective through increased participation, generating higher economic return, thereby reducing poverty among the rural population.

THE FUTURE

In the course of implementation, the Initiative will consider the possibility and feasibility of replicating and scaling up the approach. More specifically, if proven successful, it would be appropriate to extend the approach to cover other ecosystems and beneficiary communities in Mauritania.

The situation in Mauritania, which prompts the relevance and usefulness of the TFT approach, is found also in other Sahelian countries. Accordingly, the TFT will emphasize dissemination of its results, as well as communication with relevant stakeholders in these countries.

TASK TEAM

The Task Team Leader (TTL) is located in the World Bank's Head Office in Washington D.C. The task team in Aioun is made up of three persons (in addition local consultants and fieldworkers/enumerators are hired as and when needed). The Task Team members are:

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