

An example of cooperation between governmental and non-governmental institutions in carrying out community forestry management activities

The case of NATURAMA's activities in Kaboré

Tambi National Park in Burkina Faso

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SUMMARY

During the last 50 years, strategies developed to preserve natural resources, especially forest resources, have been characterized mainly by the following approaches:

- a colonial strategy based on repression and dissuasion;
- a postcolonial strategy based on the continuation of the colonial strategy; and
- the restriction of usufruct rights without consultation of the local population.

These different approaches produced frustration and an anti-forestry backlash within the local population. It was against this backdrop of degradation of forest resources that NATURAMA decided to carry out its activities in the park.

The Kaboré Tambi National Park (85 440 ha), created in 1976, is situated in the south of Burkina Faso. It has a Sudanese-type climate, and includes three different social, cultural and ethnic communities.

NATURAMA adopted a participatory communication strategy with 23 neighbouring villages. Its objectives were to:

- reconcile the 400 000 local inhabitants with their park;
- create an atmosphere of trust and partnership between the local population and forestry services; and
- empower the local population.

This approach enabled NATURAMA to:

- undertake information and sensitization actions (such as village and intervillage seminars and publication and distribution of teaching aids);
- organize villages into official organizations;
- train local workers in leadership and management skills;
- carry out various activities relating to local development (microprojects);
- assist forestry services in the supervision of the park; and
- finalize the participatory and decentralized management plan of the park.

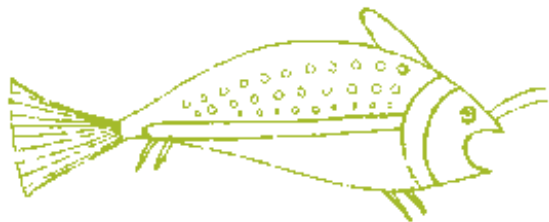
This spirit of cooperation between the State and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the sustainable management of a classified reserve served as a reference for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) biological diversity support programme, when it organized a pan-African workshop in 1995 on the theme “Analysing biodiversity in Africa”.

In 1997, this example won the second prize of the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) for community initiatives and natural resource management in the Sahel.

On account of NATURAMA’s wealth of experience, the government has entrusted the development of the park to the organization for a period of ten years, which is renewable.

Introduction

Burkina Faso is situated in the Sudano-Sahelian zone of West Africa, in the heart of the Niger Belt (between 10° and 15° north latitude, 2° east longitude and 5°30' west longitude). It has a surface area of 274 200 km², 75 per cent of which lies on an ancient crystalline shelf, which



accounts for its generally flat and monotonous relief. The country has a dry, tropical, continental climate; the southwesternmost part of the country is situated about 500 km from the Atlantic Ocean.

Burkina Faso is one of the least developed countries of the world. More than half of its population is concentrated on the central plateau, where population density is more than 50 inhabitants per km², with some areas exceeding 100 inhabitants per km². The capital, Ouagadougou, is situated at the centre of the country and has a population of 652 377, according to the 1991 census. In 1995, the population was estimated to be 825 472.

The sparse hydrographic network comprises a number of streams, most of which dry up in the dry season, thus undermining the cultivation of off-season irrigated crops.

Ecologically speaking, Burkina Faso falls within the Sudanese tropical climate zone, except for the northern part of the country, which, beyond the Djibo-Dori line, borders the Sahelian zone. Burkina Faso can be divided into five socio-ecological regions, according to physical features, population and natural resource use patterns.

The rapid degradation of the country's already limited resources has led to the development of initiatives to offset the ecological imbalance. Hence the national forestry policy that was formulated has already undergone several amendments.

As regards the classification of forests, the surface area covered by natural forest (excluding the steppes, because of their fragile nature) is 15 420 000 ha and is distributed as follows:

unclassified forests	11 604 000 ha	(75 percent); and
classified forests	3 816 000 ha	(25 percent).

The classified forests comprise:

national parks	390 500 ha	(10 percent);
wildlife reserves	2 545 500 ha	(67 percent); and
classified forests	880 000 ha	(23 percent).

The natural resource situation (Kaboré Tambi National Park)

The Kaboré Tambi National Park, created in 1976, is situated in the south of Burkina Faso, within a Sudanese-type biogeographical forest. Currently with a surface area of 85 440 ha, it has 32 of the 62 species of wild animals found in West Africa, as well as various aquatic and bird species.

At the national level, the Kaboré Tambi National Park is the only park within the biogeographical district of the central plateau. Moreover, it is the closest park to Ouagadougou, which is 100 km away. Hence, once its wildlife, comprising mainly avifauna, starts to enjoy favourable living and reproduction conditions, the park will undoubtedly become the most visited reserve in Burkina Faso. This will significantly enhance sensitization of the country's officials and the public at large to preservation of biological diversity in general.

At the subregional level, it is an important reserve of the Afro-tropical forest situated in the heart of West Africa. During the European winter, the park is home to migratory birds, including protected species such as the stork, which arrive from the colder temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere.

Evolution of community forestry

The era of conservation in (and even against) the interests of the local population

During the colonial period, community forestry objectives were essentially directed towards forest protection. The idea was to create a vast classified forest in a given area and place it under special protection as an effective means of combating large-scale deforestation.

The aim of the forestry policy underlying this measure was to:

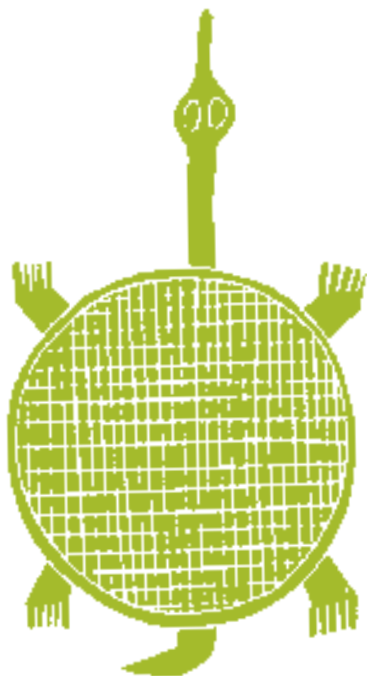
- provide agricultural development with a solid foundation, given that agriculture supplied the products that constituted the colonies' contribution to the French economy;
- produce charcoal for the Abidjan-Niger railway;
- produce timber and building poles for various works; and
- raise game for hunting and tourism.



Although the classification procedure defined by the colonial Decree of 4 July 1935 provided for the participation of local communities and the consideration of their opinion, virtually no forest classification process was conducted as required because of:

- failure to respect the procedure laid down by colonial officials responsible for forest classification;
- repressive intervention by colonial employees, which dissuaded the local population from expressing and promoting its interests; and
- failure to involve the local population in the management of classified forests.

The classification operations sparked vehement protests from the communities living near the forests under classification. The protests were soon translated into increasingly destructive acts perpetrated in the classified forests. To cope with this situation, the forestry policy under colonial rule took on an authoritarian and aggressive approach based on dissuasion rather than persuasion. This gave the local population the impression that the forests were being protected to its detriment.



Hence, until the 1970s, the forestry sector was neglected by successive supervisory ministries. Priority was always given to agriculture and livestock, and it was generally held that nature could reconstitute itself, supply all human needs and regenerate normally.

The era of conservation with community participation

From the 1970s, considerable efforts were made to stem the adverse effects of certain phenomena such as major droughts in the Sahel region, sustained desert encroachment and the exponential population growth that brought considerable pressure to bear on forest resources.

The duties of forestry services were revised, and institutions specialized in the management of specific activities, such as the creation of plantations from exotic species, were set up. Eucalyptus, gmelina, neem and teak were the main species planted during this period.

Forest conservation efforts in this era were undermined by the pyramidal structure in which community forestry projects were designed. Everything was concentrated at the top, where research institutions designed techniques to be disseminated. This was followed by the technical phase of the project, in which engineers and technicians got involved. Then, heads of sectors delegated to zonal heads, who, in turn, transmitted the skills to field supervisors. The latter then gave instructions to the local population without adequately explaining to it the advantages of the actions it was being urged to carry out. Ultimately, the intention of empowering self-reliant communities faded away, and the target communities were reduced to passive onlookers who did not feel involved in the community projects.

This period was followed by a revolution in the conservation strategies of community natural resources, especially forest resources. From the 1980s, there emerged the concept of conservation with community participation, and attempts to implement that concept.

The era of conservation by the local population

This is the period when the participatory approach was introduced and applied (see Table1).

TABLE 1 • Types of participation and their characteristics

TYPES	CHARACTERISTICS
Passive participation	The local population participates by being informed of what is happening or what has already happened. Generally, communication flow is a one-way route, given that the reactions of individuals are not taken into consideration.
Participation by providing information	The local population participates by answering questions prepared by researchers and project officials. The population has no opportunity to influence the progress of work, given that the results are neither communicated to the people nor presented to them for verification.
Participation in the form of consultation	The local population participates when consulted by external workers or agents who take note of public opinion. The external agents then define both the problems and solutions, and modify the solutions in the light of the answers provided by the people. They do not take part in the decision-making process because their viewpoints are not always considered.
Participation in exchange for material incentives	The population participates by providing resources such as labour, in exchange for incentives such as food or money. It does not take part in the experiments and is not motivated to carry on with activities once the incentives stop coming.
Functional participation	The population participates in the training of small groups to meet the set objectives of the project. Generally, such participation takes place at the more advanced stages of the project, when important decisions have been taken. The above-mentioned groups may become self-reliant, but initially they depend on external group leaders.
Interactive participation	The population participates in the joint analysis, which gives rise to action plans and the training of a new local group or to the consolidation of existing groups. The groups take decisions at the local level and the community is motivated to maintain the structures and the practices.
Self-mobilization	The local population participates by taking initiatives without resorting to external institutions to engineer a change of systems. It may, however, protest against existing inequitable distribution of property and power.

Natural resource use

Natural resource use in a community is closely related to the value that the community attaches to natural resources, especially forest resources (see Table 2).

TABLE 2 • Summary of values and use of forest resources

TYPE OF VALUE	USE	EXAMPLES
Subsistence values	Food Clothing Shelter Medicine Monetary income	Shea butter, néné Hide, dye Roofing straw Leaves, roots, bark Shea nuts, néné seeds, Proceeds from wildlife, etc.
Values relating to ecosystem services	Ecological cycles Life support system	Water, carbon, nitrogen cycle, etc. Biological control of parasites and pathogens, degradation of waste and pollutants
Spiritual and emotional values	Religious, cultural Aesthetic and recreational Scientific, educational and historical	Totems, taboos, cultural beliefs and practices Dress items, recreation Research, sensitization
Intrinsic/existential values	Value per se of biological resources and their value in terms of possible uses	Various practices for the protection of individuals and the community

The impact of NATURAMA's activities in the Kaboré Tambi National Park

TABLE 3 • Analysis of capacity-building activities

	TRAINING	INFORMATION AND SENSITIZATION
Facts	Inadequate training of the local population in natural resource preservation techniques; lack of material and human resources in forestry services to give in-the-field training to the local population.	Atmosphere of suspicion between the local population and forestry services, and absence of an independent body to play the role of an informed intermediary between both parties.
Recommendations	Provide the local population with a chance to develop its skills.	Create an atmosphere of trust with the local population.
Specific objectives	To train the communities near the park in various techniques, such as control of poaching and bush fires.	To strengthen the communities' capacity to analyse and understand the concept of community forestry and to seek their involvement in the activity-planning process.
Activities	Short-term training sessions followed by periodic retraining sessions; organization of study trips to the Nazinga game ranch, situated near the park.	Organization of village and intervillage meetings; publishing of sensitization documents; initiating communication campaigns based on the cultural and religious traditions of the local community (popular story-telling evenings).
Results obtained	The capacity of 23 villages near the park has been enhanced; each village has a structured club in charge of managing environmental issues at the village level.	The local population's openness and desire to be involved in the planning process; the population contributes to disseminating information relating to destructive acts within the park.

TABLE 4 • Summary of environmental, development and partnership activities

	ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT	PARTNERSHIP
Facts	Degradation of resources because of subsistence values.	Atmosphere of suspicion between the local population and administrative services.
Recommendations	Establish the relationship between preservation and improvement of the living conditions of the local population.	Develop partnership relations with local administrative services and seek mechanisms for reconciling the local population with the said services.
Specific objectives	To increase the vegetation cover of village lands and buffer zones; to initiate activities to improve the living conditions of the local population.	To institute viable cooperation based on fruitful partnership.
Activities	Reforestation activities; hygiene and health activities.	Joint planning of activities; organization of sensitization and supervision activities, drafting instruments governing the park.
Results obtained	Reduced human pressure on resources; contribution to improving living conditions (hygiene, health, conservation of water resources, soils, nurseries, etc.).	Administrative services that are quite open towards NATURAMA; an atmosphere of trust and partnership that reigns between them.



Lessons drawn from NATURAMA's experience in Burkina Faso

Cooperation in community forest management

Community forestry may develop and consolidate the influence of an empowered community by: (i) developing a sense of responsibility within the local population; (ii) enhancing the spirit of solidarity among the various local communities; and (iii) instituting an atmosphere of trust between the local population and forestry services.

Community forestry may serve as an example to the central administration. It can sensitize government officials to the emergence of a civil society on which the State can rely. It can favour the decision to grant a concession to NATURAMA and to involve this organization in the drafting of the terms of reference of the transfer contract. In the field, forestry services provide NATURAMA with assistance in its sensitization and training activities, and also ensure the control and organization of village hunts.

Community forestry can be an asset and a challenge to NGOs.

NATURAMA's activities in the park have fostered the creation of an atmosphere of trust with the State and the rest of the civil society (NATURAMA's activities include representing environmental NGOs in the Upper House, providing guidance to university students on practicum, and providing opinions on environmental issues at the national level).

Shortcomings of cooperation in community forest management

NATURAMA's action now constitutes a major challenge. It is difficult, in the current context, for an NGO to secure the long-term commitment of partners. At the same time, the communities place their hopes in NGOs.

State-managed community forestry projects, including integrated projects, have become increasingly bureaucratic. This has made the local population indifferent to forest management activities.

There are technical difficulties relating not only to inadequate human resources in forestry services, but also, and quite often, to their inability to design viable forestry development plans (some forests are managed by employees of the Water Resources and Forestry Service).

There is poor communication between field workers and decision-makers at the central level. Most often, such decision-makers take decisions before informing the field workers.

For some local forest communities, the paramilitary nature of the Water Resources and Forestry Service is reminiscent of past repression.

There is an inability of some officials in the central administration to provide support to the civil society within the framework of its community forestry activities.

Recommendations and prospects for the promotion of community forestry in Africa

A landed identity for local communities should be cultivated through mechanisms for the piecemeal involvement of such communities in the collective ownership and management of natural resources. This will avoid giving them the impression that they are marginalized in the management of their resources.

Through advocacy of a viable and operational decentralization, due consideration must be given to the capacity of local communities to efficiently carry out the new duties and responsibilities to be entrusted to them in community forest management. This will give rise to effective control of natural resources by the local communities to ensure their own development.



Through attendant training of local legislators and sessions for the dissemination of appropriate policies and legislation, it should be ensured that the local population fully understands the contents of relevant documents.

Institutional capacity building should go far beyond purely administrative considerations to include community life, community management, project management, further training in administrative and financial secretaryship, further training in management, and enhancement of technical skills.

There is a need for consideration and even enhancement of women's participation in the design and implementation of community forestry projects, policies and strategies.

Conclusions

The current context of liberalization has encouraged people to fully express their views and has also raised their awareness of the stakes and challenges of natural resource management. In this context, communities experiencing capacity-building problems encounter difficulties in taking over the management of these resources.

With the decline in associations and the growing assertiveness of civil society with respect to important environmental and developmental issues, NGOs were able to gain prominence and take advantage of the preparedness of grassroots communities. However, NGOs could only operate through balanced cooperation with government officials and the grassroots population.

Despite initial successes, such cooperation is currently experiencing certain difficulties because of the inexperience of states in effecting a phased withdrawal from development sectors, and because of the fact that NGOs are looking for ways of consolidating and perpetuating their image as the voice of the people, especially in the development of community forestry activities.

The grassroots communities are constantly aware of the need for conservation; they only lack the opportunity to assert themselves.

The most operational and sustainable solution to these challenges remains mechanisms for regular consultation between community forestry project managers, within a viable organizational framework.

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