

# PARTICIPATORY PLANNING, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT IN WEST AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

To gain a firmer base for supporting development projects in the West African savanna, a study was made of existing experiences in participatory planning with pastoralists. Promising methods were then selected by a natural resource management project in the Sahel of Burkina Faso. Tools such as maps, matrices and Venn diagrams were applied with pastoralists using communal grazing areas. Rather than establishing fixed landuse plans, it was necessary to build up platforms representing various groups of grassland users who negotiate modes of management, monitor its effectiveness, and constantly re-adjust plans on the basis of their joint assessment.

## KEYWORDS

Burkina Faso, communal grazing lands, natural resource management, participation, pastoral development

## INTRODUCTION

Understanding of the biology of semiarid grasslands has advanced greatly in recent years. However, the social and institutional implications for grassland development are often poorly understood by governments, donors and project staff. Grasslands are used for many purposes, not only grazing but also for harvesting thatching material, food, medicines etc. Favourable patches within the grasslands may be seasonally cultivated. Multiple stakeholders are involved.

Few who work nowadays in grassland development would dispute the need for participation of the resource users in planning, monitoring and evaluating the activities. However, decision makers in development agencies and projects are uncertain how to realise this participation. The better-known experiences in landuse planning in the West African savanna, such as Gestion de Terroir Villageois, involve settled arable farmers and largely exclude mobile pastoralists, who depend predominantly or exclusively on natural pasture for their livelihood.

To identify how pastoralists can be better involved in landuse planning, a study of existing experiences was commissioned by the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ).

## METHODS

The study was focused on experiences on West Africa, but experiences made elsewhere were also taken into account. The literature was sought in official databases, *eg.* CABI (Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux International), and by making requests within informal, personal networks. Colleagues were asked about own activities and other contact persons with experience in participatory planning in pastoral settings. The documents reviewed included both official publications and unofficial "grey" literature. The report (Waters-Bayer and Bayer, 1994), published in both French and English, consists of:

- \* a critical appraisal of experiences with participatory planning in pastoral development
- \* a description of useful methods, mainly Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools, and where and how they have been used with livestock keepers
- \* an annotated bibliography.

Subsequently, an attempt was made to apply selected participatory methods within a natural resource management project in the Sahel of northern Burkina Faso. The project staff and their counterparts in government services are implementing these activities, with a small degree of support through external, process-oriented consultancy. Contrary to a conventional consultancy involving a timebound study on a particular subject and a comprehensive report on the findings, the consultant accompanies the intervention process intermittently, stimulating joint reflection by the project staff, the counterparts and the resource users about their activities. This involves guided self-evaluation in the form of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analyses, semistructured discussions and workshops both in pastoral areas and internal to the project.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Double-refereed journals and books yielded few references to participatory planning with pastoralists. In contrast, the informal channels revealed a wealth of experience from Africa, South America and Asia. Over 100 entries could be made in the annotated bibliography. Most referred to participatory situation analysis, a very early stage of planning. This can be explained by the fact that participatory approaches have only recently found their way into the mainstream of development concepts.

It became evident that participatory methods from the PRA "toolbox", such as mapping, diagramming, ranking, compiling calendars or drawing biomass flows were being successfully used for joint planning in pastoral settings, mainly by nongovernmental organisations and small-scale projects.

There are major differences on conceptual levels when these methods are applied in pastoral rather than crop farming systems. In the latter, the siting and timing of activities from one year to the next are fairly predictable, and the analysis can be focused on a fixed area which is generally occupied year-round. In contrast, management of natural grassland in pastoral settings is subject to unpredictable rainfall events and must therefore be very flexible. Wet-season and dry-season pastures may be at different sites separated by hundreds of kilometres. Therefore, pastoralists may use a particular area of grassland for only a few weeks or months of the year. Certain grassland areas may be used only in exceptionally dry or wet years. The methods had to be adapted to apply to larger areas, overlapping uses, different seasons and wider timespans.

In the cases where pastoralists took the lead in managing the grasslands, it was often not the grazing resources which received their initial attention. They were keen to manage the natural resources for other purposes important for their livelihood, such as protecting areas for collecting wild cereals or harvesting water for cultivating food crops rather than forage. This indicates that grassland management cannot be viewed as part of an isolated "livestock sector". Instead, the entire livelihood system of the grassland users needs to be addressed.

In the application of participatory methods with grassland users in the Sahel of Burkina Faso, the project tries to ensure that all user groups are included in institutions for land management. Project staff stimulated the formation of, as yet, fairly informal "stakeholder

platforms” representing the users of traditionally-defined grazing areas, both agropastoralists from nearby villages and transhumant pastoralists from further away. PRA tools such as maps, historical matrices and Venn diagrams proved useful for visualising how the condition of the natural resources is changing, how the vegetation and water are being managed, what improvements can be made and where, and who is involved in the decision-making. For example, after drawing a Venn diagram, platform members identified which additional user groups they would invite to join the platform.

The project staff involved found that it is not sufficient simply to use some new “participatory tools”. Rather, the entire approach to landuse planning promoted by the project needed to be shifted from drawing up fixed plans on paper to facilitating a process of building and sustaining local institutions for negotiating modes of landuse management, monitoring the effectiveness of this management, and re-adjusting the plans as the need arises. Efforts are now focused on the activities essential for this approach to landuse planning and management, namely participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) of:

- \* changes in vegetation according to indicators identified by the resource users
- \* the way the resources are being managed
- \* the interactions between resource users and project/government agents.

To support this process, further case examples of PM&E in natural resource management using locally-identified indicators are being sought. Exchange with other participants in the Grasslands Congress with experience in this line is welcome.

#### **REFERENCE**

**Waters-Bayer, A. and Bayer, W.** 1994. Planning with pastoralists: PRA and more - a review of methods focused on Africa. GTZ, Eschborn, Germany.