Capitalization of Experiences
«Water, Land and People»

Lessons learnt

Mali, 2007

Lessons Learned

Topic 1 – Multipurpose Management of Inland Valleys

General Objective
The objective of this working group was to capitalize on multipurpose lowland management experiences, in the Sikasso region in general and in the villages of Zéguesso and Dioumatènè in particular. Special attention was given to social, economic, political and environmental aspects.
Specifically, the group aimed at:
- analyzing inland valley management approaches in the region of Sikasso;
- identifying the (social and economical) stakes for lowland regulation;
- designing a multipurpose approach for inland valley regulation, after analyzing existing approaches and their stakes;
- assessing social, economic and environmental impacts for the beneficiaries.

Key Research Elements:
- analysis of the evolution of policies and strategies in lowland regulation for water management in Mali;
- identification and analysis of the socio-economic development impacts on the populations that get access to the regulated inland valleys;
- identification of the approaches and tools employed in the regulation of lowlands.

Lessons Learned:
1. Inland valleys constitute multifunctional spaces–resources, whose regulation produced new socio-economic dynamics in benefited areas.

2. The lowland regulation approach needs to take into account different factors, with a similar level of importance.

3. After conceiving and implementing a regulation, it is properly brought to «life»: exploitation, maintenance and management. Main actors are, here, the villagers. Tools like a model can help them to fully play their role in the exploitation, management and infrastructure maintenance processes.

4. To promote the valorization of developments, it is important to follow several principles:
    - the creation of a connection between objectives and stakes, defined since the assessment stage (pre-diagnostic study, complementary socio-economic study, technical evaluations, etc.);
    - the logic of contracting authorities that put owners and exploiters in charge of the regulation;
    - the clarification of the performance specifications for the various actors involved;
    - the definition of the conditions for a prudent exploitation of developments;
    - the sustainability of investments and of the organizational model;
    - the design of tools (a toolbox) for the value process;
    - the iterative character of the value process;
    - the role of communities as contracting authorities.

Topic 2 – Gender Access to Lowland Resources in Mali

General Objective
The general objective is the capitalization of experiences in terms of gender access to lowland resources, in the Sikasso region in general and in the villages of Basso and Sabénébougou in particular.
Specifically, the working group focused on:

- itemizing and analyzing all existing experiences on the subject in the region;
- identifying genders and their ways to access lowland resources;
- highlighting the resource 'water' and treat it taking into account the difficulties of gender access to lowland resources.

Key Research Elements:
In order to successfully carry out this capitalization, the group has examined following key elements:

- inland valley resource management and usage regulations;
- cultural forms of water resource management;
- conflict management in relation to water infrastructures;
- interactions between Inland valleys and increases in women's income.

Lessons Learned:

1. Traditional and resource usage rules are still valid, in the respect of differences and the application of pre-emption rights. In regulated lowlands, management and usage rules are administered by a management committee and through written specifications. The problems emerging in developed inland valleys are a fiercer competition for access, conflicts, and the exclusion of some categories of users.

2. The access for all gender categories to lowland resources is usually recognized, albeit differentiated. In the case of non regulated lowlands, the approach is traditional and customary. It facilitates – but does not secure – access to resources to women. As for regulated inland valleys, rules are not always abided by: there is a tendency to exclude women if the economic weight of their activity is significant. Women need to develop a series of strategies to gain access to lowland resources.

3. Regulation enables a balanced gender development only if accompanied by support measures on user organization, conflict management, access to water and land resources, and valorization of traditional and customary structures.
   For communities, water is an opportunity factor for development. As an illustration, the Basso community has been able to negotiate the building of a road stretch that connects their village to a national route in exchange of exploitation rights of the water resource of their creek.

4. The availability of the water resource is a factor that promotes the development of women's organizations and their activities, and allows the creation of substantial incomes that help women to satisfy needs within their families and their communities.

5. Profound change will happen not through planning and regulation but through knowledge and the willingness to adequately value and properly manage the resources. In this area, women tend to be more innovative.

Water
Land
People

Topic 3: Participative Local Planning for the Development and Organization of Water Management

General Objective
The general objective was to assess the involvement level of decentralized actors in municipal planning as well as what was at stake in the implementation of the Social, Economic and Cultural Development Plans (SECDP). We thus aimed at understanding problems and organization mechanisms of all the stakeholders involved in the management of water works.

Key Research Elements:
The group has examined following key elements:
- local planning in a decentralization context;
- participation's challenges;
- water resource local planning.

Lessons Learned:
1. Water is an element to be considered holistically: being it a multipurpose resource (drinking water potable, agricultural water, pasture water) its management involves several actors (institutional, socio-professional, users) in territories with variable community sizes (municipalities, circles, regions); its management needs to lie within a wider framework of development planning or even land use regulation.

2. Territorial collectivities are autonomous entities without any hierarchical relationship. As a corollary to Lesson 1, the need of a cooperation, strategy coordination, and synergy creation among the various levels of community (Regional Assembly, Circle Councils and Municipalities) has been made visible.

3. Territorial communities suffer from sluggishness in know-how transfer about natural resources in general and water resources in particular. Even tough numerous developments are currently realized based on their initiatives, know-how transfer acquiring legal status (decrees on know-how transfer and concomitant resource allocation) will contribute to the strengthening of contracting authorities for the water sector (drinking water, agricultural and pasture water) by territorial communities.

4. Municipal institutions are still young: this is their second governance exercise. Hence elected municipal officers have yet to acquire the needed capacities in terms of dissemination, planning, resource mobilization (budgetary weakness) and implementation of development plans. The aid of the support partners has played an important role in the growth of the actors' capacities, specifically territorial and local communities, and in the strengthening of their cooperation relationship. This support effort needs to be pursued.