Capitalization of Experiences «Water, Land and People»

A story on the process

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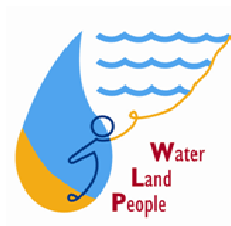
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I have been working at the Intercooperation Jèkasy Program for the development of the Sahel region since 1999. As a member of the Mali CAPEX group, I have participated in the capitalization of experiences on integrated management of water resources using the Story Telling tool.

During the training, this tool first appeared to me as a game (or a joke) as Mali traditions are embedded in legends and problem solving is done through story telling. I sensed that the other members of the group had a similar reaction when told to tell a story. At first, some tried to invent a story but quickly realized that the purpose of the exercise was not to make up a story but to use a real one, that had taken place in a real time, in a real place, with real actors and that had spawn changes that produced positive impacts on the living conditions of those actors.

I have been reassured during the meetings at the villages. Village dwellers (peasants) felt at ease and were proud to be listened to by the community. Issues difficult to be addressed in public (considered as *yèrèdjira (*bragging, narcissism, egocentrism)) were exposed without shame using a non-offensive vocabulary and were generally accepted.

In addition, story telling allows inventive peasants to share their original knowledge with the community at large. This tool has significantly helped the project «Adaptation and Participative Dissemination of Rice Cultivation Technologies in West Africa» to find and record local innovations, facilitating their adaptation and diffusion to other rice growers.

Nevertheless despite all the positive aspects mentioned above, story telling remains a lengthy process that creates time conflicts to peasants.

Summing up, I can assert that story telling is a simple yet revealing tool that puts both the narrator and the public at ease. It enables to bring stories back to life that were being forgotten and it promotes the peaceful resolution of conflicts.