

Statement Of the Workshop on CBNRM

We, the participants of the Workshop on CBNRM (local community representatives, government experts and managers as well as international organizations), invited by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) and by the Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA), 17-21 January in Kabul, covered the various issues related to CBNRM. At the outset a panel discussion was held among international organisations' representatives who described their projects for the other participants. We reached the following conclusions using the methodology described below.

Until before the events and disturbances of the last three decades, the situation of natural resources in Afghanistan—when their management and governance were in the hands of local communities and their customary institutions—was very good. But these events and the disruption of social and security situation, the displacement of a large population of Afghans, wars and the invasion and occupation of the country led to social disorder and incursion into large tracts of land of many communities by some segments of the population. In the meantime, intervention by the government including nationalisation of community lands as well as incursion and occupation of these lands by strongmen, expansion of cities and establishment of new settlement areas and other changes in land use has caused the loss of the country's natural resources and conflict in natural resource rights. As an example, today the kuchis of Afghanistan are occupying 1/9th of their ancestral lands.

In the meantime the Workshop and its initial round table— dedicated to the work of the international agencies in CBNRM—has demonstrated that in many cases the implementing agencies have taken interesting and useful action, but as a result of the lack of guidelines and of

a coherent policy on CBNRM, these actors have sometimes come in with piece-meal, sectoral or diffuse approaches or have brought in external models not necessarily apt for this country. For this reason the lessons learned that were described by the actors often showed many problems especially among local communities as intended beneficiaries.

While CBNRM is one of the three pillars of the section on natural resource management in the Strategy for Agricultural Development of Afghanistan, yet there is as yet no clear policy, understanding or approach in this area in whose light all the right-holders and stake-holders could play their important part.

The current predicament of natural resources

1. Land use change and decrease of biodiversity;
2. Natural disasters;
3. Inadequate laws and policies for natural resources appropriate for Afghanistan;
4. Disorder in the systems of governance among the various right-holders and stake-holders;
5. Conversion of common property natural resources to state and private property;
6. Outdated scientific and technical capacities in natural resource (e.g., range) ecology and practice;
7. Complexity of the budget system and its allocation at the wrong time of the year;
8. Ignoring customary management systems and traditional knowledge and approaches;
9. Overexploitation of natural resources due to disorganisation of indigenous management systems, poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods;
10. Lack of peace and security.

Timeline of natural resources

1. At the outset of the reign of Zaher Khan in 1933 government intervention in natural resource management started and the first forest permits were issued. This trend continued up to the mid-1970s and led to the passage of a number of laws for natural resource conservation.
2. This trend, however, came to a halt with the outbreak of war in 1978 and the implementation of land reform. The distribution of land from landlords to peasants caused many land tenure conflicts .
3. At the time of the Mujahedin civil conflict started. In the Emirate of the Taliban despite the establishment of the Forest Law and re-approval of the Rangelands Law, the trend towards the destruction of natural resources, especially of forests, intensified.

4. As of early 2000s, the relevant ministries have been pursuing the passage of laws for protecting natural resources, and succeeded to get the Law of environmental protection in 2006.
5. Recently the Agricultural Development Strategy of Afghanistan was approved, where CBNRM is one of three pillars of the section on natural resources.

A long-term vision of Natural Resources from the point of view of the right-holders and stakeholders

Inspired by the perception of the current predicament and challenges being faced by Afghanistan's natural resources, a common vision of a desirable future for NR was forged:

1. National laws & policies of natural resources have been revised based on the restoration and strengthening of customary laws and traditional knowledge;
2. Natural resource conservation and sustainable use programmes and projects have been made compatible with up to date techniques and science, with the collaboration of all right-holders and stakeholders;
3. The economic and livelihoods status of local communities have been improved significantly;
4. Peace and security have been established in the country;

Road map for crossing from the current undesirable predicament to the vision of a desirable future

The management, restoration and conservation of each type of natural resource (e.g., forest, range, protected area and water/irrigation) need not only to be carried out in each type of resource; they need also to take cognizance of the impact of these resource type on each other. The common elements of this road map include:

1. Identifying and strengthening customary laws and indigenous approaches through establishing good relations among local communities, government agencies and other stakeholders;
2. Formation of local councils taking full account of customary institutions in order to resolve collective and individual legal problems and to resolve conflicts;
3. Identification of the boundaries of natural resources and strengthening the capacity of local communities and government agencies in the application of participatory geographic information systems (P-GIS);

4. Serious application of existing laws regarding the registration of property, and as well as collective and individual access rights—with the participation of local communities and government agencies;
5. Provision of technical equipment and means of work for both social councils and government agents, for use in the implementation of their activities;

Short term (5-year) joint action programme for CBNRM

1. Carrying out participatory surveys of natural resource arenas;
2. Identification and strengthening of customary and traditional laws of local communities and their use in participatory planning and implementation of programmes and projects;
3. Mutual awareness and capacity building for the right-holders and stake-holders regarding the importance of natural resources;
4. Formation and formal registration of local coordination councils making full use of customary institutions of natural resource management;
5. Full participation of local communities in the design and revision of laws and policies for natural resource use and their approval by competent authorities in full consideration of Afghanistan's obligations to international conventions of which it is a member (e.g., CBD);
6. Participatory elaboration of policies for CBNRM for Afghanistan.