

Community governance and Livelihood assessment report for Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy

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1. Demography of the community

1.1. Locations of residence: cities, regions, states, countries

Geographical location of the Abolhassani tribal confederacy's territory northeast of Central desert of Iran in province of Semnan. It is located in Khar Touran protected area and belongs to Biarjomand County. The protected area of Khar Touran in 2000 ha was selected by the Office of Natural Resources in 1963. The highest point of the Khar Touran of the summering ground is in the Hesar Mountain at 2000 m above sea level in west of the territory and the lowest altitude is in the centre of Salt Desert of area 1100 meters. The distance between the highest and lowest points is only 10 km, which is ideal for short migrations, therefore, it is suitable for these pastoralist people to settle in summering or wintering ground and only dislocated the herds. The Summering grounds of Abolhassani are located in the north east part of Touran biosphere reserve. A part of their wintering ground is located in Touran region and another part is on the margins of the Daruneh protected area. The above characteristics are at the root of the very high biodiversity within the Abolhassani tribal territory. The peri-desert region is influenced by various climatic zones including desert, mountain and the greater climatic regions such as Siberian, Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. This has always caused drought years which have intensified recently due to the vagarious of the global climate change.

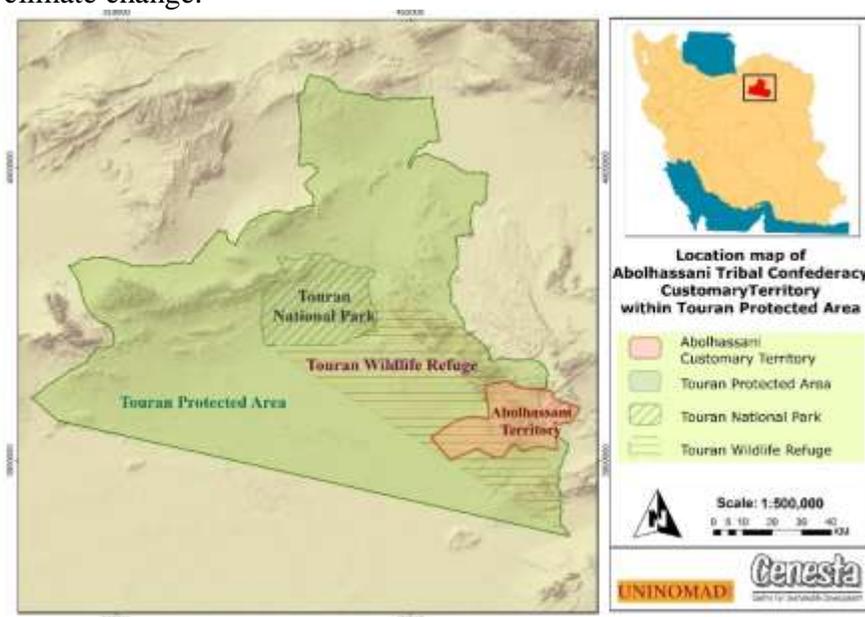


Figure 1 Location of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy's customary territory



Figure 2 Overview of one of Abolhassani villages, photo courtesy of CENESTA



Figure 3 Pistachio plantations, photo courtesy of CENESTA

Migratory routes

Tangeh Sorkh migratory routes begins from Chah Sang Sefid, Cheshmeh Zag and Tangeh Sorkh summering grounds and has to stop over on the way: Goor Torkaman and Chah Allahyar. This migratory route at the end leads to Chah Ney Bala, Chah Sonni and Aghol Shireh-i wintering grounds. The Tangeh Sorkh migratory routes is parallel to the Khar Touran road to Darooneh on the east side of the road.

The summering and wintering grounds as well as migratory routes, midway grounds and stop overs of the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy's territory are organized in the following table:

Summering and Wintering Grounds, Migratory Routes and Midway Grounds of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy

Summering Ground	Migratory Route	Midway Ground	Wintering Ground
Chah-e Ogleh Gaz Chah-e Anabestan Koohe Lor Guru Narestaneh Hesaru Bala Hesaru Paeen	Sorkh band migratory route	Aghol Deraaz stop over Sanjari stop over Sorkh band stop over Sohlak stop over	Sorkh Band Sanjari Nakhlak Posh Kashoo Cheshmeh Shotori Damghanoo Bala Damghanoo Paeen Boz Aghaloo Kamar Sango
Gelgeloo Amin Abad (Vahl)	Salamroud migratory route	Chah Korda stop over Jofar stop over Salamroud Paeen stop over	Salamroud Paeen Beshkan Far Pasheh Doon Aghol Sangi
Chah-e Sang Sefid Cheshmeh Zaag Tangeh Sorkh	Tangeh Sorkh migratory route	Chah Allahyar stop over Goor Torkaman stop over	Chah Ney Bala Chah Sonni Aghol Shireh-i

Table 1: Summering and Wintering Grounds, Migratory Routes and Midway Grounds of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy (Participatory Workshops)

Salamroud migratory routes begins from Gelgeloo and Amin Abad (Vahl) summering grounds and after crossing the Khar Touran Darooneh Road and passing by Garmaab Bala and Garmaab Paeen continues on the side of the road to reach to Salamroud Paeen, Beshkan Far, Pasheh Doon and Aghol Sangi wintering grounds.

Sohlak migratory routes crossed on the west side of the territory and begins from Chah Ogleh Gaz, Chah Anabestan, Koohe Lor, Goorou, Narestaneh and Hesaru Bala and Hesaru Paeen summering grounds in the north west of the Abolhassani village and after staying in Sorkh band, Sanjari, Aghol Deraz and Sohlak leads to the Sorkh Band, Sanjari, Nakhlak, Posh Kashoo, Cheshmeh Shotori, Damghanoo Bala, Damghanoo Paeen, Boz Aghaloo and Kamar Sango wintering grounds. (Participatory Workshops and Annex 3 report of Cenesta)

1.2. Population, gender ratio, literacy ratio and etc.

The Abolhassani tribal confederacy is consisted of 12 tribes and 39 subtribes and the population is about 800 people. There are 267 families (1199 people) in the Khar Touran region and gender ratio was 50.2% for women to 49.8% for men in 2008 national census which is slightly different from the population of nomads in province of Semnan (49.5% women to 50.5 men in 2011 national census) (Iran's National Census Centre).

Abolhassani Tribes and Subtribes			
Saleh	Rezaee	Sistan Nejat	Allah Moradi
	Bolouki		Cheragh'ali
	Kholari		Barati
	Habibollah		Hosseina
	Motalleb	Mollai	Haadi
Mirza Mousa	Fouladi		
Amoo Ali	Ali Taali		
Khodabakhsh	Khan Jan	Emam Gholi	Reza Gholi
	Morteza Gholi		Mohammad Taghi
	Haji Baba		Mohammad Eesaa
Momen	Shirdel	Nazar Shad	Norouz Ali
	Ali Baba		Khan Esmaeel

Karbalyi	Moradi		Ramezan Pasand
	Moshtaghi	Mohamad Yoosef	Karto Khani
	Khodadad		Taslim Abadi
Haj Sharif	Haj Agha		Hesar Kash
	Safaoddin	Shir Mohammad	Hassan Molla
	Bahaoddin		Ata Khaani
Mir jalali	Mir Mohammad		

Table 2: Abolhassani Tribes and subtribes

Population of Nomads in Khar Touran Region					
Summering Ground			Wintering Ground		
Families	Men	Women	Families	Men	Women
267	597	602	267	597	602

Table 3: Population of Nomads in Khar Touran Region

According to the national census in 2008 the literacy rate of the nomad men in Semnan province is 78.55% in summering ground and 79.81% in wintering ground and for women in both summering and wintering ground is 73.40%. Still there have been times when a drought has been so drastic as to cause major mass migration from the tribal territory. The great drought of the year 2000 inflicted such heavy loss in livestock—that almost the entire tribal confederacy was forced out of the tribal territory. An estimated 70% of livestock was lost or sold at a pittance to intermediaries; the current population that has returned is barely 40% of the pre-2000 level. It is anticipated that climate variability and change in the this area will have overwhelming impacts on agriculture and land use, ecosystem and biodiversity, human settlements, diseases and health, and hydrology and water resources (Iran’s National Census Centre).

Literacy rate of Nomads in Province of Semnan											
Summering Ground						Wintering Ground					
Men			Women			Men			Women		
Total	Literate	%	Total	Literate	%	Total	Literate	%	Total	Literate	%
5571	4376	79	4931	3608	73	6996	5582	80	6192	4579	74

Table 4: Literacy rate of Nomads in Province of Semnan

1.2 History of the community

2.1. Origin of the community

The origin of the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy, like the other tribes in the region is from 4 different tribes, Arab, Ajam, Sistani and Balouch. Mr. Shah-hosseiny in his book, Nomads of province of Semnan, states that most of the nomads of Khar Touran tribes are Arab who migrated to the region centuries ago (Shah-hosseiny and Ranjbar). The second portion of the population are Ajam and they claim that they have come from Fars. According to Mr. Salehi from Saleh sub-tribe and a member of the Council of Elders at the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy, the Salehi, Mo'men and Haji Ali subtribes came to this area from Fars over 300 years ago. The ancestor of Khodabakhsh sub-tribe came from Se Qal'e (3 castles) in Khorasan. Mirza Mousa from this sub-tribe was an important person in defending the nomads of Khar-Touran against rubbers and muggers.

The Karbalaee sub-tribe is originally from Shahroud, the Haj Agha sub-tribe from Farino are originally from Khor-Biabanak in Yazd province. The Haadi sub-tribe are from Sabzevar, Sistaani from Sistaan and Baluchistan and Hassan Molla are from Kooch-e Khaab (Mr. Salehi's notes on the history and culture of the region).

2.2. Historical turning points

Through participatory workshop at the Abolhassani in 2015, the Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy explained the historical turning points as followed:

1941-1953: The years of major droughts, famine and outmigration to regions Tabas and Biarjomand. Also there were insecurity in the territory because of looters and muggers who were called Baseri, and were coming from as far as Fars province.

1956-1978: Rainy years which brought favourable conditions for grasslands

1963: Nationalisation of natural resources, land reform and beginning of grazing permission issues.

1971: Return of nomads to their territories

1981: Drought

1984: Severe drought, nomads' transhumance to Neyshabour, high losses of livestock reported

1997: Drought, transhumance to Sabzevar

2000: Severe drought, transhumance to Shahroud, Biarjomand and Firouzkooh. Short term out migration. Livestock losses was reported less than 1984

2011: Drought, transhumance to Biarjomand and Abbas Abad (between Shahroud and Sabzevar)

2014: The worst drought after the famine of 1941. Transhumance to Dmavand and Firouzkooh and short term out migration

2.3. Political challenges

Because the territory of the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy is located in remote areas of the province and on the edge of central desert of Iran, they have little interaction and challenges with the government. The greatest challenge for them began in 1963 and the time of nationalization of forests and grazelands, which limited their access to grasslands and forced them to follow inorganic rules about permits. This event heavily affected the economic life of pastoralist people as well as having great impact on the environment. Since the Abolhassani migrate horizontally, they need a larger area to find the patches of grass to feed the animals, and they have been doing it by grazing in more distant pastures and collaboration with other nomadic tribes to share their grasslands. Currently they have no right to use this centuries long customary law and they are forced to use other strategies like temporarily selling the livestock to the person that has the permission to a certain grassland, in order to feed their animals in natural way (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy through participatory workshop).

3. Social structure

3.1. Cultural identity

The nomadic tribes of Abolhassani are Persian speakers, with Kaviri and Sabzevari accent. Many of these pastoralists are settling down in villages which are not very far from the

grasslands and their lifestyle is still like other nomads of Semnan province (Shah-hosseiny and Ranjbar).

3.2. Value and belief system

The major religion in Abolhassani tribes is Islam branch of Shiite Asna Ashari (followers of Imam Jafar Sadeq). While few villages such as Farinou have mosques, there are many other villages which are waiting for government funds to build their own mosques. Meanwhile they follow the schedule of prayer by using application of Azan on their mobile phones. The nearest place with religious significance is the tomb attributed to St. George in Peyghambar (prophet) mountain (Mr. Salehi's notes on the history and culture of the region).

Women's role within the community
In Abolhassani women work alongside men in fields and farms. They also take care of the housework, keep poultry such as hen and sometimes turkey, and are in charge of cooking and preparing the meals. Women in Abolhassani bake bread and make all dairy products both for the family use and for selling in the market (participant observation at the territory of Abolhassani).

3.3. Tribe structure

Since the Abolhassani pastoralists have small territory, the tribe structure is a little different from large tribal confederacy in Iran. The elderly are considered as the wise people and head of the family. They make decisions which are best for the family or their subtribe, yet give room to their children to work and share responsibility. Sheep herding traditionally was hereditary in nomad families of Khar Touran and each son would have received a number of animals to start his own work. For example in subtribe of Saleh, the father has divided his herd and land between his sons, so each son had a primary capital to invest on, and by farming and proliferation of the animals, was able to sustain their livelihood. This method continued in some families, but has stopped in some other families who left their animals to their relatives and went to live in the cities. Also many of the young children of these nomads are living and studying in cities, and there is a possibility that they choose the city life over the traditional pastoralism (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy through participatory workshop).

4. Livelihood

4.1. Sources of livelihood

4.1.1. Main

Pastoralism

The predominant activity conducted by the Abolhassani people is pastoralism. Sheep, goat and camel are the main types of livestock they raise, while they also keep poultry such as chickens, ducks and turkey for the family use. The number and type of the animals is closely related to the rainfall. In good and rainy years the nomads depend on the herds especially choosing sheep over goats for they are more profitable in short run. In drought the ratio changes in favour of herds that are more resistant to the heat and dry climate, therefore there are more goats in each block than sheep (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy through participatory workshop).

Goat		Sheep	
Population	%	Population	%
30240	72	11711	28

Table 5: Sheep and goat ratio in all nomadic tribes of Khar Touran region in 2000 (Iran's National Census Centre)

Main breeds of goat and sheep in Abolhassani territory		
Species	Breed	Description
Goat	Local	The main breed of goat that the Abolhassani keep is called Local goat, a breed that has lived from many years in this area and adapted to the climate and vegetation of the Khar Touran. The main specifications of these animals are medium size with medium size legs and dense hair. They are very resistant to heat, cold and drought, need little food and therefore are reasonable, have immunity to many local sickness and can walk long distances. In average they give half a kilo of milk every day. The average weight of local goats is 40 to 45 kilograms.
Goat	Pakistani	The non-local race of goat in Abolhassani is called Pakistani, which is larger, has very long ears and has taller legs. They have less hair and are very sensitive to cold, so if the temperature drops, they can die very easily. They need more forage, and give more milk, their kids are larger than local goats, and the possibility of twinning is higher in this type. The hybrid of these types of goats are usually large with more wool and can give more milk. But they are still sensitive to cold and need more forage. The average weight of these hybrid or locally called Dobar goats is about 60 to 70 Kilograms.
Sheep	Balouchi	The common sheep in Abolhassani is a Balouchi breed and is called local sheep, this breed that has brought from province of Khorasan and during many generations, adapted to the climate and vegetation of the Khar Touran area. It has a middle size, dense wool, more adaptive to cold and hot, but still not as resistant as local goats. They give about half kilo milk each day, usually have one offspring, but there have been incidents of twinning as well. They usually age between 7 to 8 years and if the grassland is good, they can walk long. The average weight of these breed is about 45 to 50 kilograms.
Sheep	Afshari	The non-local type of sheep is called Afshari, which is very profitable in short time, but very delicate and weak against heat and drought. Therefore, the Abolhassani tribe cannot keep them in their arid land.

Table 6: Main breeds of goat and sheep in the territory of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy (members of the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy through participatory workshop).

The management of rangelands is undertaken communally, and the council of the elders of the community still plays a crucial role in deciding on when, where and which kind of animals are led to each pasture land. The same applies to water resources such as qanats, springs and wells (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy through participatory workshop).

The migration style of the Khar Touran nomads is mostly horizontal and short. The maximum distance between summering and wintering ground is about 30 to 50 km and the migration usually takes between 1 to 3 days (Shahhosseini and Ranjbar). Most of the summering grounds are located to the north west and north east of the territory and although

they are not very far from the villages, the temperature difference is considerable. The nomads travel by motor vehicles and herd is walked and grazed traditionally, although if the grassland is not rich, the herd is moved by pickup trucks to further lands. Because of the dry climate and arid land the vegetation is more scarce and the rangeland is larger. Also, goat is more resistant to this type of weather and is a more popular herd than sheep. Depending on the rainfall and density of vegetation, the herd is moved alternately in the field and in mid-May they get settled near the water wells or qanats for about 60 to 70 days there (participatory workshop).

Abolhassani Nomads' pastoralist calendar		
Period	A: Natural grazing cycle base on seasonal migration	B: coping with the drought cycle
Spring grazing areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 March- 22 May, Grazing livestock on rangelands in way stations; • 23 May, separation of Lambs and kids from their mothers and their weaning 	
Summering grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 May- 22 September, Grazing livestock in summering grounds; • 23 May- 22 September, milking livestock in summering grounds and preparation of dairy products; • 1 August, separation of rams from the herd and grazing them separately; • 1 September: releasing the rams into the herd ewes for copulation; • 6 September, releasing the male goats into the herd of female goats; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 June-22 August, separation of livestock for fattening from the herd and grazing them separately in Fodder barley Stubble
Autumn Grazing lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 September- 6 Nov. Grazing livestock on Rangelands around the settlements • Late October: sale of goat kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 August- 6 November: Grazing of lambs and kids in pistachio orchard weed and brush
Wintering grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 October- 6 March, Grazing livestock on rangelands in desert; • late January, sale of lambs • 1 February- 10 February, Birth of lambs and kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 Nov.- 6 Dec., grazing livestock in Cotton field stubble; • 6 Dec. - 6 Mar., grazing livestock in Fodder barley Stubble by underweight livestock.

Table 7: Traditional Annual Cycle of Migratory Livestock (participatory workshop)

The male animals are usually kept for fattening and are sold by end of fall and the female is kept in the family property for milk and new-borns. Mating season for the animals is September and it is accompanied by celebration and rituals. After the female goat or sheep gives birth, the milk is mainly given to the new-born, and some excessive milk is used in the family. This continues until May, when the new-borns are separated from the mother to be taken to the field (participatory workshop).

For selling the animals there are certain costumes which are not all in favour of the nomad. Usually the male lamb is for fattening and selling in the market and the female is kept for reproduction. The animal that I kept is called Daashti. A pair (joft) is actually a term used for a group of two ewes and two lambs. The buyer who is usually the middle-man or the butcher, gives a low price for the live animal. In this price the purtenance and the wool is not included and these are towards butcher's profit (participatory workshop).

4.1.1.1.Agriculture

Abolhassani nomads have added farming to herding for a more sustainable livelihood. The main products are barley, pistachio, seed watermelons, and sometimes cotton. The agricultural products are mainly for the household use and rarely sold in the market, and the agricultural waste like the pistachio leafs and skin and the watermelon skin is used as a supplement for the herd. The barley and its hay is also used as a very important supplement for the herd, and helps the herder to feed the animal without putting too much pressure on the weak grassland. These pastoralist people also have some agricultural activities in the surroundings of the villages. The agriculture in this area is mostly rain-fed, also there are some irrigated agriculture (participatory workshop).

4.1.1.1.1. Farming

Main crops of the Abolhassani are fodder and regular barley, wheat, alfalfa, black millet, sesame seeds, sunflower, cotton, water melon, melon, garlic, tomato, carrot, butternut squash, squash, onion, eggplant, turnip, cucumber, beet, green pepper, basil, mint, parsley, cress, dill and cumin. Most of these products are for the family use and some of them like fodder barley, wheat and alfalfa are directly the fodder for the animals. The residue of other crops is also used to feed the animals (participatory workshop).

4.1.1.1.2. Gardening

The gardens in Abolhassani territory mainly consist of small lands with different trees and are not unified. Therefore the families who tend orchards usually have different fruits, and can also use the leaves and branches of the trees as extra food for their animals. The main source of income is coming from cultivating pistachio, which are resistant to short droughts and the hot climate. Other fruit trees in the Abolhassani territory are grape, pomegranate, apple, fig, pear, medlar, quince, almond, jujube, apricot, purple plum, yellow plum and walnut (participatory workshop).

4.1.2. Complementary

4.1.2.1.Handicrafts

The nomads of Abolhassani tribal confederacy are skilful in weaving carpet and rug, but the material is coming from a contractor who also decides about the design of the work based on the market demands (women of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy during participatory workshops).

4.1.2.2.Natural products

Most of the food in the Abolhassani families is produced by the family, and main source of food for these pastoral nomads is dairy products. The milking season starts in May, when young lamb

and goat are separated from the mother and are taken to the field separately. At this time the excessive milk is collected and used to produce dairy products, all made naturally and mostly kept for the use of the family (participatory workshop).

Milking calendar of Khar Touran Nomads			
Sheep		Goat	
Beginning	End	Beginning	End
May 20 th	August 6 th	May 1 st	August 11 th

Table 8: Milking Calendar of Khar Touran Nomads (participatory workshop)

Dairy products of Abolhassani Nomads
1. Milk
2. Cream: by turning the milk in a hand wheel machine that separates the fatty cream from the skimmed milk
3. Sarshir or Qeymaq: the fat that accumulates on top after boiling the milk
4. Cheese
5. Maast: Yougurt
6. Maast-e Poosti: is yogurt that is made and kept in a goat skin bag and is dense
7. Meske or Butter: by putting the yogurt in sheep skin and beat with special stick called Tolom to separate the butter and doogh
8. Doogh: The other product from beating the yogurt in sheep skin, which is drinkable and has a sour taste.
9. Kashk-e adooghi: Mixture of doogh and milk is boiled and liquid and solid separate
10. Kashk-e Maasti: Mixture of yogurt and milk is boiled till the liquid and solid sepeate
11. Kameh: product from boiling the Kashk-e maasti while adding doogh in the process
12. Ghoroot: The liquid left from producing Kashk is boiled to produce ghoroot. Ghoroot from Kashk-e Maasti has a sweet taste and ghoroot from kashk-e dooghi has a sour taste.
13. Jak Milk: the first milk of the animal after having a new born, is a a yellow colour and very fatty kind of milk that is used in special dairy products.
14. Felleh: mixture of jak milk with regular milk then it is boiled and makes a product that has a texture like yogurt.
15. Jekkeh: A mixture of jak and eggs
16. Arisheh: a mixture of milk, flour, cheese and oil
17. Roghan Zard or Yellow oil: a type of oil that is extracted from heating butter
18. Lach: Boiled Doogh
19. Chekoo: from boiling the excessive liquid left from making cheese

Table 9: Dairy products of Abolhassani nomadic tribes (Participatory workshop)

Meat products of Abolhassani Nomads
1- Red meat
2- Del (Heart)
3- Gholbe (Kidney)
4- Jegar (Liver)
5- Kalleh (Head)
6- Pacheh (Feet)
7- Roudeh (intestines)
8- Donbeh (Fatty tail)
9- Poost (skin)

Table 10: Meat products of Abolhassani nomadic tribes (participatory workshop)

4.1.2.3. Collecting

wild

plants

The Abolhassani nomads know and use the wild plants in their territory for source of food

for themselves as well as their animals, and also know the medicinal use of some of these plants. A comprehensive list of these wild plants is conducted during the participatory workshops which is available in the Ecological Assessment of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy.

4.2. Types of dwellings

4.2.1. Permanent residence

Most of the Abolhassani nomads today live in villages built either with bricks and cement or in traditional way by using mud bricks and clays. The winter stall or the place for protecting the weak animals are made out of mud bricks, tree branches and clay (observations).

4.2.2. Temporary residence

During the stay in the summering ground, the nomads use temporary settlements near water resources called khil. These structures are called Kekkeh (Shah Hosseiny and Ranjbar), which are simple structures made out of rocks and clay and the roof is made out of tree branches and bushes. They also build similar structures with less detail for milking the animals (Doomeh-Doosh) and dairy production (Meyhoun) (Abolhassani Elders). The following table is explaining about the vocabulary used for dwellings in Khar Touran region:

Types of settlements for herd and the shepherds.	
Place	Use
Pival Gaah	Place of rest for the herd at night
Gool	Place to keep new born lamb and goat for the first 3
Goola	Place to Keep new born lamb and goat older than 3 days
Si vo	Summering shelter for the animals
Som	Kohol, a temporary shelter in the rocky mountains that can shelter 150 to 200 animals
Damgaah	Shelter for milking the animals
Mard-khaneh	Shelter for shepherds in the desert
Chigh	Bahar-Band, where the animal feeds the lamb or new born goats.
Cheft	Wintering shelter for the animals made out of branches and bushes, covered with dung

Table 11: Settlements in Khar Touran region (Shah Hosseiny and Ranjbar)

4.3. Traditional customs

The national and traditional celebrations that are regarded are Norouz (1st day of spring or March 21st), Charshanbeh Soori (making fire in last Tuesday of the old year to leave all sicknesses behind and welcome the new year with good health), Sadeh Souzan (making large fire in mid-winter, to make the way for spring to come). Religious rituals and traditions are also practiced with enthusiasm. The first 10 days of Moharram in Islamic calendar, as well as the 19th to 21st of Ramadan are for mourning ceremonies.

When a member of the community passes away, the first, third, seventh and fortieth nights are important for mourning and feeding the poor. It is a costume that the family and close relatives do not cut their hair or beard as a sign of grief. On the seventh day, a barber is hired to cut the hair and shave the face of the men, which this event is literally called freeing people (Mr. Salehi's notes on the history and culture of the region).

Important days in pastoralist calendar are as followed:

Traditions related to pastoralism			
Date	Name	Reason	Side events

April 30 th to May 10 th	Pashm Giri	Cutting the wool of the sheep by specialists called Bargar	Celebration and singing traditional songs along with playing local pipe
August 20 th	Ghooch Gozari	Releasing the rams into the herd ewes for copulation.	Celebration with singers and traditional music.
August 30 th	Nar Boz Gozari	Releasing the male goat into the does.	Celebration with traditional singing and music. The owner chooses large and red pomegranates to put on the ram's horn and they believe that the larger the pomegranates, the healthier the new born would be.
Summer	Roghan Baaz Koni	The day they make yellow oil from butter	This is an important day for the nomads in which they bake oily bread and make a special food called Changaal for all peoples of the village.
Winter nights	Shab Chareh	Gathering of the families and relatives	Eating together and then the elderly would tell stories and legends.

Table 12: Important ritualistic events in Abolhassani calendar

4.4. Changes in sources of livelihood

The Abolhassani nomads have experienced a harsh environment and have learnt their way out of it, by combining different strategies to adapt to the difficulties. Just like their strategy in the ratio of goat and sheep, they also create balance between pastoralism and agriculture. But the major challenge is the drought which forces nomads to move further or sell the herd off-season and with lower price (Participatory workshops).

4.5. Livelihood challenges

Iran is facing a rough time in terms of water resources, and province of Semnan and specially the Khar Touran region are hugely impacted by drought. While there are some successful stories of "Coping with the Drought Cycle" in the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy, yet there is a large number of the nomads who cannot continue their pastoralist life style and leave for the cities in hope of finding a job. This situation affects the life of the whole community, since as nomads, they depend on each other. With more people leaving, there is less opportunity to share and collaborate work and the situations get rougher on the nomads, who need this collaboration. They have always divided the duties, some would work in the garden or farm and the others would take charge of the herd. Now they have to do both duties with less work force. At the same time, work in the cities is usually in service sector, and the production sector get weaker. This will result in more dependency on external products whose quality cannot be compared to the local produce (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy).

5. Introduction of the relevant ICCA

5.1. Goal of the ICCA

Protection and conservation of biological diversity in nomadic rangelands, livelihood of pastoral nomadic peoples to continue migration for economic and financial, social and cultural sustainability (Statute of the Council, Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy).

5.2. Committee of founders

Mr. Reza Salehi, Mr. Abdolreza Salehi, Mr. Reza Karami, Mr. Ali Akbar Shekari, Mr. Allahdad Salehi, Mr. Azizollah Ebrahimi, Mr. Ali Sistani

5.3. Governance system of ICCA

5.3.1. Natural resource management mechanisms in ICCA

5.3.1.1. Rangeland management

The most important factor in rangeland management and sustainable use of them is maintaining the traditional calendar for seasonal migration. Usually the elderly of the tribe gather in mid-winter to discuss the rangeland and decide about when and where to graze the animals. They decide about the number of blocks (a certain population of sheep or goat) to be grazed based on the variety and density of the vegetation in each grassland. In Khar-Touran each block of sheep or goat consists of 200 to 350 animals (this number is different in other tribes of Semnan province). They also consider the ratio of goat to sheep to decide about the grassland, usually goats are more tolerable and can walk in rocky areas, but sheep is more profitable and less tolerate, so they need plain grasslands. There are 18 wintering grounds and 12 summering grounds in the territory of Abolhassani. The elders decide if the pastures should stay longer in one section or leave more rapidly in order to conserve the vegetation diversity and abundance of vegetation in other parts. Yet with all these strategies, in drought years these grasslands are not enough to feed the animals and the nomads usually use stall feeding. The fodder is mainly grown in their own territory and consist of fodder barley, wheat, watermelon skin, pistachio leaves and residue from cotton plantation and other agricultural products. Another important strategy is conserving the area that its vegetation is in threat. For example in grassland called Pashehdoon, the area consisting of certain vegetation which are important in controlling the desert line is conserved by the locals community and no animal is allowed to graze in that area (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy).

There is a customary tradition challed Alam Char, which takes place from April 1st to mid-May, and lets all nomads to graze their animals in any part of the pastureland. There are several benefits to Alam-Char such as competition between herders to find the best grassland, usage of remote and forgotten graze lands in the territory, less conflicts between nomads since the biggest issue usually is violating the border of the grasslands, so when there are no borders for this 45 days period, conflicts are less likely to occur (Shah-hosseiny and Ranjbar).



Figure 4 Watermelon skin and tree branches and leaves that are used as fodder. photos by Maedeh Salimi, CENESTA

5.3.1.2. Water management

The rainfall patterns are affected by the Elburz annual precipitation. Main sources of water are springs and qanats to reach the underground water and few seasonal streams that have water in rainy years. Many of the qanats are dug from a spring to carry the water to needed area. In village of Garmaab Bala, there is also a thermal water spring which is used in a specific public bath for bathing and also for medicinal purpose. This village also enjoys a potable water spring which has no disruption in the whole year and the water is guided to an open pool for storage.

The water wells used for the animals is called Kaland, which are shallower but with wider opening that helps the animal to drink easily. Also wild animals are able to use the water in Kalands and the Abolhassani believe that they should share their resources with the wild animals too.

Most of the agriculture in Abolhassani territory is rain fed, especially wheat and barley are sown in the farm by November. If the year had good rain, then irrigated products are seeded in Late September till end of October. In general, they cultivate products which do not need much water, for example they say that pistachio is very resistant and can survive a short drought. Also Saffron only needs watering during winter.

People of Abolhassani tribe have developed adaptation methods to cope with irregular water cycle. These methods include digging qanats to guide the spring water to lower lands, digging new wells and restoring old wells, storing rain water in cisterns and seasonal rivers in pools, and use of mobile tankers to provide water to remote areas. They also follow the customary water distribution of qanats, in which the water of each qanat is divided between water right holders in a cycle of 12 days. The nomads of Abolhassani also have a pastoralist tradition called Henar, which is like water fasting for the animal, instead of watering the animal every day, the animals are watered every other day. The Henar is usually implied during end of fall to late winter in the drought years. By using the Henar, nomads help with adaptation of animal to shortage of water.

The Council of Livelihood Fund of the Abolhassani also conducted a project called “Drops for Life” to restore qanats and water storages. They were able to secure a budget of IRR 700,000,000 from a government rural development agency for this project, which a large portion of it was used in the areas near Shahroud and outside the Abolhassani territory.



Figure 5 New Water storage being constructed in village of Garmaab Bala. . Courtesy of CENESTA

5.3.1.3. Monitoring

mechanisms

The ICCA is protected and managed by the indigenous local community of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy. While there are some government regulations, such as permission for grazing, most of the management and monitoring of the area is taken by the Abolhassani nomads themselves (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy).

5.3.2. Conflict resolution mechanisms

Since the Abolhassani live in remote rural areas, they have little problem with conflicts. At the same time, all negotiations and possible conflicts are referred to customary law and the elderly of the tribes, who are also members of the Council of Sustainable Livelihood Fund of Abolhassani (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy).

5.3.3. Relation with external actors including government, NGOs, CBOs and private sector

So far the Abolhassani had no issues with private sector since the region is remote and undiscovered by the investors. On the other hand they have been in close contact with Center for Sustainable Development and Environment (CENESTA) and the head of GEF small grants programme in Iran. They also communicate with local government offices such as local government of Shahroud. For example their own advocacy helped by civil society, has resulted in additional support for the efforts to find solutions for coping with drought cycles, as well as “Drops for Life” project through which the community managed

to secure additional funding for ground water conservation, storage and sustainable use. At the national level Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy's participation in various inter-tribal gatherings and strategic meetings and workshops with government agencies including FRWO (Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organisation), ONPI (Organisation for Nomadic Peoples of Iran), DOE (Department of Environment) and others have resulted in change of attitudes and policies. The Abolhassani tribal confederacy is also member of Union of Indigenous Nomadic Tribes of Iran (UNINOMAD). They have helped and encouraged other nomadic tribes in the region to become members of UNINOMAD. At the international level, the Abolhassani and some other leading tribes have participated in sessions of dialogue and exchange of experiences in such policy forums as the CBD, IUCN, The Slow Food Movement, WAMIP and Equator Initiative events. The Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy is also a member of ICCA-Consortium based in Switzerland (Cenesta's report).

6. Threats and opportunities in ICCA

6.1. Threats:

The main threat to the Abolhassani territory is drought. In some years when rainfall decreases and stream flow and flood pattern change, the risk of loss of biological diversity, both in plants and animals increases. These losses occur both in domestic and wild species, because of low water level as well as salty water. By losing the vegetation, there is also a huge threat of desertification of grasslands which highly impacts the life of the nomads and their herds (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy).

The environmental threats also have an impact on the socio-economic condition of the nomads. The first impact is of course the economic hardship, which leads to situation that nomads cannot afford keeping their animals and are forced to sell them for lower prices, both for lower weight of the animal, and greediness of the middleman. Out-migration is another factor that is threatening the tribes. Out-migration could be because of economic hardship and loss of the assets, or because of changes in the nomadic lifestyle, compared to city lifestyle. Many of the young members of the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy, continue their education in the cities of Shahroud or Semnan, and are not interested in going back and continuing the pastoralism (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy).

6.2. Opportunities:

The nomads of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy believe that they were able to cope with the drought, mainly for not being mono-occupational. By combining pastoralism and agriculture, they are able to maintain a sustainable life even in very difficult conditions. They have shown responsibility and wisdom in their past projects, and have used and the rate of return in the small loans they have taken was very high. Therefore, they are most probably able to improve their condition with little help from external sources (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy). As a new effort and initiative, the Abolhassani nomads created a plan for circulating the money at the Sustainable Livelihood Fund of the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy, in order to generate some profit and increase the collaboration and benefit sharing among the sub tribes. The plan was called "Goat kid Plan", the savings at the Sustainable Livelihood Fund was used to purchase goat kids from all subtribes of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy by end of May 2015. A certain amount of money was spent to purchase barley and other stall, and the goat kids were fattening to be

sold by September and October 2015. The estimate weight gain for the goats was calculated and the profit was to divide equally between the Sustainable Livelihood Fund and the family which was taking care of the goat kids. This plan generated a very small profit, however, the Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy achieved another way of collaboration (The Goat Kid Plan and report at CENESTA).

The Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy's territory also has capacity for eco-tourism. Most of the territory is located in the Touran Biosphere Reserve and the Touran Wildlife Refuge. There are possibilities of tours such as bird watching, wild life photography and traditional desert travels by use of camels are a few which can be suggested. Also there are natural features such as thermal and medicinal water in the village of Garmaab Bala which is equipped with pools and can be a tourism attraction. For cultural elements the old castle of Asb Keshan can be considered which the nomads relate it to the mythical character of ancient Iran, Rostam. It was restored in 1950s by Mirza Mousa and his son, Mirza Mohammad Karimi, and at that time turned into residential unit for 15 families (Council of Elders of Abolhassani Tribal Confederacy and Mr. Salehi's notes on the history and culture of the region).

Preparation of the assessment by Fereshteh Sabetian, Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment (CENESTA). Fall 2015.

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