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dans le Sahel



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CLUB DU SAHEL

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

MANAGEMENT AND DECENTRALIZATION

IN THE SAHEL

*Praia (Cape Verde)*



## Summary Report

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional Conference on Land Tenure Problems and Decentralization in the Sahel was held June 20-24, 1994, in Praia, capital of the Republic of Cape Verde. The Conference was organized by the CILSS and the Club du Sahel.

The Conference was attended by 185 participants from the nine CILSS countries and Guinea, and from a large number of development agencies and OECD countries. They represented, more or less, the various players involved in rural development in the Sahel. Of the total, 34 were farmers, 40 civil servants, 19 elected officials, 14 from NGOs, 9 from the private sector, and 13 from the press. There were also 35 donor representatives, 15 resource people from both the Sahel and the West, and 3 professional facilitators. In all, 32 were women.

The Praia Regional Conference was an important step in a long process that began in Segou (Mali), where in May 1989 a regional meeting was held on local-level resource management, leading to the adoption of eight major orientations. From these, land tenure and decentralization were chosen as priority topics by the CILSS Council of Ministers in February 1990. At that point preparations began for the Praia Regional Conference. Greater detail is given in Section 2.

The general objective of the Regional Conference was to analyze what conditions guarantee the democratic, participative and decentralized management of natural resources and public services to ensure sustainable development in the Sahel. The organizers largely achieved their intention of making the Regional Conference a forum for the free expression of every opinion and suggestion concerning land tenure problems and decentralization. To some extent, this success actually reduced the chances of reaching immediately operational conclusions.

The political dimension of the two Conference topics was not discussed at length, in order to avoid unnecessary controversy. Despite these, and no doubt other, limitations the Praia Regional Conference did outline a regional support and monitoring program for the democratic and participative management of natural resources and public services in the Sahel.

The Regional Conference deliberations will be published in two forms :

"This **Summary Report** provides a brief view of the preparations, deliberations and prospects for the conference. What lessons can be learnt from five days' intensive discussion, not only in terms of content but also methodology ? To what extent will the results of the Praia Regional Conference be able to inspire the future activity of the CILSS and the Club du Sahel ?

At the same time this summary report may be used as a working tool for those who have a practical or scientific interest in current developments in the decentralized management of natural resources and public services. Section 1 describes the methodology; Section 2 evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of that methodology. The core of the report is Section 3, which contains an analysis, rather than minutes, of the debates on the two Conference topics. Section 4 deals with some of the ideas raised in the debates, leading to suggestions for «post-Praia» action in Section 5.

"The **Conference Proceedings** will contain the preparation papers, agenda, working session reports (topic groups, mini-plenary debates, consultations between categories), speeches, list of participants, and, of course, the Praia Declaration. The Conference Proceedings will thus give as faithful an account as possible of what happened during the Conference, but since this document will be fairly voluminous and of interest to only a small readership, it will not be widely circulated.



## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Presentation

There were three phases : the production of the Terms of Reference and the studies used as a basis for the summary documents on land tenure problems and decentralization (April 1990 - March 1993); the immediate preparations for the Conference, at national and regional levels (March 1993 - June 1994) ; and the running of the Conference itself. We shall deal here with the second and third phases.

#### *Practical preparations for the Conference*

In March 1993, a steering committee was set up to prepare and organize the Praia Regional Conference, laying down the main guidelines. Its first task was to obtain the views of Northern partners and CILSS countries on the provisional version of the two basic documents, by organizing consultative meetings in Paris and Ouagadougou. Then, apart from logistics, the committee faced three major challenges :

- how to minimize the undesired effects of a purely administrative approach ;
- how to ensure the effective participation of farmers and women ;
- how to decide the extent of donor involvement in the preparations.

To meet the first challenge, each CILSS member-country was asked to set up a national committee to formulate a national preparatory program based on extensive consultation with the various categories of participants. The program was to be monitored by a small committee representing those categories. Starting in July 1993, short missions were carried out in the various Sahel countries by the CILSS, the Club du Sahel and regional consultants. Three information bulletins were sent to the national preparatory committees to support the preparation process in each country.

Effective preparation of the farmer delegates raised a number of problems. They were likely to be in an inferior position compared with most other Conference participants, because of lack of experience in such fora, insufficient knowledge of the working languages (English, French, and Portuguese), and not knowing each other beforehand. These problems were addressed by

- translating into selected national languages (Bamanan, Wolof, Arabic, Pulaar, Hausa, Djerma) summaries of the regional report on land tenure, and recording them on audio cassettes ;
- taking the farmers from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal on a tour of the three countries for them to do their own «comparative studies». The results of this subregional tour were then reported back to the other farmer delegations.
- holding a farmers' pre-conference three days before the official one, so that the farmers could jointly prepare for the conference topics, get to know the structure and organization of the conference, and form an effective pressure group.
- providing the farmers with professional facilitators during the Conference.

The Steering Committee decided to do all in its power to see that women played a part in the preparation and proceedings of the Regional Conference.

## ***How the Regional Conference was run***

It was in itself a major challenge to bring together for five days so many participants from different backgrounds, with different languages, of widely differing education, defending different, even contrary, interests, and possibly hidden agendas.

How could fruitful discussion be encouraged between such varied people on topics as sensitive as the decentralized management of natural resources and public services in the Sahel, avoiding pointless theorizing on the one hand and unprofitable argument on the other ?

In March 1993 the Steering Committee began to study this question, and finally adopted a *funnel* structure: starting from a wide range of opinions on eight subtopics of land tenure and decentralization, discussion would gradually converge on suggestions which could be used as the basis for future action programs in the Sahel.

After a general introduction to the two main topics, the participants broke up into eight working groups to discuss specific subtopics, using concrete examples and a set format: diagnosis, in-depth discussion, options, and answers. The most original feature of this approach was the use not only of standard discussion formats, but also role-play, debating, and documentaries.

Once they had discussed specific questions in depth in their working groups, the participants came together in what we called mini-plenaries, where they could raise the debate to a more general level on issues that appeared to be fundamental. Apart from the two mini-plenaries on the agenda (Democratic and participative management of natural resources, and Management of public services), the participants were invited to suggest a third on a topic of their choice. Halfway through, the mini-plenaries operated as bridges between discussion of case-studies and more general issues.

Another innovation was to organize consultations between the various categories represented at the Regional Conference : farmers, private sector, press, elected officials, NGOs, administrators and donors. These meetings were intended to let the participants raise specific matters of interest not covered elsewhere. Finally, the rapporteurs, supported by a small team of organizers, attempted throughout the Conference to assess the participants' major concerns on the local management of natural resources and public services.

### **2.2. Analysis and evaluation of the methodology**

What lessons can be learnt from the way the Regional Conference was prepared and run ? To what extent did it encourage or inhibit a fair representation of the players involved ? Did it lead to a proper understanding of the topics discussed ? Did it bring about the atmosphere of tolerance needed to produce general guidelines and suggestions for operational action ?

The «Sahelian» approach to the preparation, especially the land tenure studies, certainly raised awareness of land tenure issues in all countries. This approach was limited mainly by the fact that most of the material and data on the two conference topics is concentrated in Europe and the United States. An institutional network of databases needs to be set up and effective communications circuits and procedures established between training and documentation centers, the CILSS, donors (for evaluation reports) and others, such as NGOs.

The approach adopted in the second phase made it possible for national organizers to establish a suitable local preparation program and ensured that every national delegation comprised representatives of the various social groups concerned by the conference topics. However, it was not possible in every case to completely escape bureaucratic pressures and achieve a free choice of delegates.

The farmers' preparation program gave them the chance to act as full-fledged negotiators, participate actively in the debates and define their post-Praia expectations.

During the conference itself, the idea of examining practical examples of specific topics turned out to be fully justified.

The most positive contribution came from the mini-plenaries, even though many of the participants took a long time to understand their purpose. For each of the two mini-plenaries on the agenda (natural resources and public services), the organizers had prepared four main questions resulting from the discussions of the working groups. In this way the discussion was kept to the point. At the same time, participants had a chance to hear the main ideas from the topic discussions of the other working groups, to put the specific case-studies in a more general context and come to some agreement on major guidelines.

The opportunity to have a mini-plenary on a topic the participants thought important was welcomed and led to a mini-plenary on post-Praia action. Here again, discussion was kept to a few key questions, so that speakers could focus on practical proposals for a post-Praia program.

The language problem was enormous. In the farmers' group alone there were eighteen different languages. This problem was not completely solved. French remained the dominant language and, despite the heroic efforts of the interpreters, minority languages were at times neglected. It must be pointed out, however, that throughout the Conference, Sahelian participants would improvise as interpreters, so that those with little or no knowledge of the working language could not only understand but take an active part in discussion. In the words of *Les Echos de Praia*, the Conference daily, «The «Decentralization and Education» group managed to understand each other using seven languages! They shifted rapidly from French to Bambara, Portuguese to Ffulfulde, Creole to English.»

### **3. CONFERENCE CONTENT**

#### **3.1. General considerations**

Throughout the preparations for the Praia Regional Conference, a high priority was accorded to identifying and developing the topics for discussion. A special committee, comprising specialists from the Sahel, Europe and America, submitted its suggestions to the critical appreciation of wider meetings (Segou orientations steering committee, Praia Regional Conference preparation steering committee, donors, senior Sahelian officials, etc.).

Finally, eight topics were adopted, five on land tenure and natural resource management, and three on decentralization :

- Land tenure and pastoralism ;
- Land tenure and the private sector ;
- Land tenure and common resources ;
- Women and land tenure ;
- Land tenure and farming ;
- Institutions and legislation ;
- Decentralization and basic education ;
- Decentralization and public health care.

### **3.2. The debates, varied opinions and options**

Discussion was often instructive, sometimes impassioned, but generally remained within the bounds required for constructive proposals. The risk of breakdown, particularly when speaking of conflicts with an ethnic dimension, was fortunately avoided.

Fifty or so crucial questions were raised, spread among the eight topics. Clearly, it was difficult to deal with all these matters during the Conference plenaries. A selection had to be made, taking account of the most important priorities and the concerns of the majority of participants.

The provisional conclusions of the working groups and the debates of the mini-plenaries on priority issues helped the technical committee to focus the selection, with input from participants.

The organizers were aware of the difficulty of addressing separately land tenure problems and the decentralization of natural resource management. Throughout the preparation period they examined and discussed various ways of bringing them together. It was agreed to deal with them as they interacted whenever possible. In fact some topics inevitably involved both : Institutions and legislation, Land tenure and farming. The latter topic was extensively discussed in the «soil fertility» working group until its title was changed at the farmers' insistence.

The presence of 185 participants of different backgrounds from nine Sahel countries and a variety of development organizations provided a wide experience and considerable authority for options proposed on all the topics.

On some basic issues, totally opposing views were expressed, however few their supporters. Below we cite those views which seem to us to correspond best to the tenor of the regional Conference.

#### ***Urgency and the need for gradual change***

Some participants, concerned by the severity of particular problems, insisted that urgent measures were needed, while others stressed the need to achieve viable, sustainable changes.

Most participants agreed that both were needed. Immediate action should be taken to make coexistence possible between players with opposing interests (rather than looking now for the ideal solution), and time should be allowed to have its healing effect as a basis for sustainable solutions.

#### ***The State***

Three decades of *dirigisme* and the resulting failures led some partners to put heavy pressure on the Sahelian governments. Indeed this pressure may inhibit the freedom of the countries and peoples of the Sahel to choose their own ways forward. And yet the pressure sometimes comes from sincere friends of the Sahel, who wish to see it progress effectively in the improvement of its citizens' living conditions.

On the other side can be found Sahelians sensitive about their independence and irritated by hostile conditionalities, who deny the need for change, even when it is required by internal factors. And yet some of them are often guided by the need to «acclimatize» and adapt others' experience to local reality.

Between these extremes, a variety of other positions were taken, but a few points were agreed upon by most participants.

First, the determining role of internal processes as a basis for progress in Sahelian societies. Second, the need to examine positive experiences elsewhere and the varied aid available from the Sahel's friends and partners, as conditions favoring that progress.



Most participants stressed the recognition of freedom and independent choice of Sahelian states regarding their policies for managing natural resources and public services, while underscoring the need to base action on the roots of Sahelian culture. They also suggested a critical approach to the situation of the Sahel, based on the identification of weak points in the current functioning of Sahelian states.

### **Local Institutions**

Some participants were reluctant to recognize local rules, practices and institutions, while others denied the need for a central State guaranteeing national unity and providing some services.

Most participants, however, drew from their own experience to recognize the *de facto* coexistence of national legislation and institutions with local rules, practices and institutions. Even in those countries where decentralization goes back ten or twenty years, it turns out that rules, practices and institutions not recognized by the State are the main forms of recourse of local communities for natural resource management and the arbitration of disputes.

For all these reasons, most participants stressed the need for innovation and a redistribution of roles, powers and competence between the State, all levels of institutions and citizens. The urgent need to recognize the legitimacy of local rules, practices and institutions was stressed by virtually all participants.

### **Public services**

Although most participants considered that the distribution and efficiency of public services was unsatisfactory, some still believed that the initiative in these areas should remain with technical experts. As the participants discussed basic education and health care, they soon realized the size of the demand for public services, the enormous resources of all sorts that they require, and the inability of the State alone to continue to provide them.

Neither in town nor in rural areas should everything be expected from the «Welfare State»: collection and treatment of household waste, transport, health care, education, etc. Citizens should commit themselves to meeting some of their needs in these areas.

Obviously, since skills are not acquired overnight, some relationship of supply and demand for services needs urgently to be established between partners, based on the principle of gradually transferring responsibility and expense from the center to the grassroots. This is the essential reason for the stress laid on programs of information, training and communication, especially in local languages.

What precise objectives should be set in each field ? What resources should be used and in what way? How are these resources to be allocated ? How are they to be acquired ? What type of relationships of collaboration and exchange are needed with other partners (NGOs, external private and public aid, subsidies, etc.) ?

Among the answers to all these questions, taxation took up much of the discussion in the working groups dealing with basic health care and education.

The danger was identified that some partners might drop all support and refuse to provide the accompanying measures needed while local communities learn to take on some responsibilities, as a way of proving in advance that decentralization could not possibly work.

## ***Subsidiarity***

Subsidiarity is a word not often used by the general public. However, in the practice of local Sahelian institutions, it has been a relevant principle for centuries.

Subsidiarity means this : where institutions coexist at different levels in a hierarchy, a higher institution should not deal with problems concerning a local community as long as the local institutions can solve them and settle any disputes arising.

Despite the reserves of those who see republican principles as meaning the maintenance of central control and the denial of local democratic rules and institutions, the great majority of participants solemnly asserted the urgent need to recognize and apply the principle of subsidiarity in the workings of Sahelian institutions.

## ***Legal recourse and disputes procedures***

The development of many institutions at all levels will inevitably give rise to disputes over authority, requiring legal recourse for those citizens who feel ill used by rulings.

Disputes between different sections of a town, between villages sharing common resources, between transhumant herders and sedentary farmers, were examples given by some participants who saw central control as the only panacea for legal recourse or disputes procedures.

The majority of participants, however, approved the idea of a large number of decentralized disputes procedures that are simple, affordable and accessible to local people. The same approach was recommended in the design and implementation of local public services : the communities involved should define the services they need, and run them, using primarily their own resources, and, if necessary, asking for aid or support from their partners.

In this way the specialists in various fields would no longer be imposed as an indispensable «assistance» and would become rather a necessary support, accompanying the process of decentralization, adapting to its requirements and, perhaps, fading away as skills, knowledge and power were gradually transferred.

## ***Conflicts***

From the outset, the emphasis placed on conflicts as crucial elements of the context of the conference was opposed by some participants, who barely touched on the issue. They feared that the Conference would turn into a prosecution of particular countries. Others only concentrated on the Sahel's many difficulties, ignoring the positive experiences and ways forward.

Facing up to current realities, a large number of participants convinced the others of the need for courage and clearheadedness in defining the major problems — an essential and decisive step in problem-solving.

Most of the participants understood that specific examples were cited not to aggravate conflicts but rather to overcome them, since they could not be avoided. It was quite obvious that there are two broad ways of handling Sahelian conflict : the Rwandan and the South African. The first symbolizes the excesses of intolerance, the stupidity of exclusion and the tragedy of ignoble and indescribable violence. The second reveals the wisdom of people who are proud of their wealth of differences, and determined to find peaceful solutions to their disputes, via compromise and allowing themselves the time and opportunity to outline more precise, sustainable solutions.

This concern was expressed thus in the Praia Declaration : «It is urgent to seek peaceful solutions, taking into full account the complexity of problems, and drawing inspiration from the diversity of experiences, and exercising a maximum of clarity and realism. Mutual recognition, acceptance of differences, commitment to a fair division of resources, services, skills and power have been identified as the main principles that should guide problem-solving. When citizens are convinced that they have recourse to peaceful means of settling disputes, they are more inclined to tolerance, negotiation and the acceptance of others.» (page 1).

### ***The future of pastoralism***

As the environment has degraded, and human and animal populations have increased, pure nomadism has undergone profound change. Other competing activities, such as sedentary farming, increasingly marginalize herders and push them into areas where they must become sedentary or disappear altogether. Indeed a small number of participants at the Regional Conference defended this view of the future of pastoralism in the Sahel. Reacting against this position, others argued that herding had comparative advantages, since the mobility of herds was suited to the fragile nature of the Sahelian ecosystems, forgetting that traditional solutions are insufficient for current problems.

Most participants felt that innovation was needed, inspired by successful experience elsewhere in the world. They pointed out that the Sahelian herders' strategy of risk management includes farming, trading, transport, etc., which offer promising opportunities.

The future of Sahelian pastoralists was seen as a question of culture and way of life, the right of human beings to choose the way they want to live. States, specialists and other partners should restrict themselves to analyzing the likely future of production systems and suggesting changes. If the pastoralists' free consent is sought, projects and programs could be useful supports for progress desired or accepted by the producers themselves, and for which they would assume the responsibility. Most participants agreed with this approach.

### ***Women and land tenure***

This is certainly the most delicate topic to discuss in the Sahel. Even when useful ideas are adopted, there is a gulf between words and deeds. The debate was tinged with a certain resentment: rather than analyzing local land tenure practices and the marginalization of women, some participants felt that the whole debate was a form of pressure from external partners.

In the Conference corridors, some people were quick to seize on the second-class status of European and American women in some fields as a justification for the status of Sahelian women. This reasoning was contradicted by the fact that as the various strands of humanity pursue their greater welfare, they progress mainly by profiting from others' strengths and learning from their weaknesses not to repeat their errors.

After arguments both ways, since Sahelian women are such a high proportion of the population and produce so much of the wealth, the majority of participants agreed to stress the urgent need to reform the status of Sahelian women in natural resource management, particularly in their access to land ownership. The members of the «Women and land tenure» group were particularly insistent on the need for practical measures to ensure that women are represented at all decision-making levels that concern them, and to promote their training so as to raise their technical and management skills.

### ***The losers in natural resources and public services***

As the market economy advances, as community forms of management are disturbed, and as economic and social crises worsen, so there is greater discrimination among Sahelians and unequal treatment of social categories. Shantytown-dwellers, rural migrants, ethnic minorities and refugees are among the least favored: they all find it enormously difficult to gain access to resources, property and public services.

In fact, although the Conference participants raised these issues, they did not have time to go into them in depth. They did, however, make a couple of recommendations which reflect the concerns they expressed :

- «each country must frame overall legislation outlining a form of land tenure management based on fairness and social justice. It would then be up to local communities, through their institutions, to find methods of application that respect their social and cultural realities ;»

- «clear and sustainable contractual frameworks must be defined to improve access to natural resources for disadvantaged minorities, lay down relations between land owners and users, and ensure the security needed to release users' energies.»

### **Population, environment and natural resource management**

This crucial topic was widely discussed, especially in the natural resource management mini-plenary. No one took up an explicitly Malthusian position, nor were the participants indifferent to the need for a balance between humans, animals and natural resources.

The working groups focused their discussions on the following specific questions :

- How can population movement be controlled and birth and fertility rates reduced ?
- How can natural resources be managed, protected and exploited both for immediate needs and those of future generations ?
- How can common resources be managed that extend across borders, and how can the various disputes arising be settled ?
- How can trade-offs be achieved between the interests of urban and rural populations, especially in peri-urban areas ?

Some participants thought that the environment and living conditions could not be treated separately, particularly for urban areas, where the health, hygiene and welfare of Sahelian people are particularly threatened by poor sanitation.

Although all Sahelian countries make a place for the environment in their programs and are aware of the advantages this gives them in their dealings with donors, they are slow to follow through consistently. Some participants felt that the imbalance between humans, animals and resources was so serious that every project and program should be subject to the conditionality of preserving the environment and living conditions.

### **What laws for the Sahel ?**

Although a few participants claimed that legislation was the responsibility of specialists alone, another group, no larger than the first, felt that legislation was completely unnecessary. The former thought it unnecessary to translate regulations into Sahelian languages, and the latter defended the absolute freedom of local communities to define their own rules, thereby ignoring the conflicting interests that exist between various players, structures and institutions.

Most participants avoided these one-sided positions and agreed that laws and institutions were unsuited to local reality ; current legislation and regulations contain hundreds of clauses and are complicated and inaccessible, because they are written in languages few citizens understand.



There was general agreement that laws should be framed as guidelines laying down general principles for the management of natural resources and public services, and that rules, practices and institutions should be formalized at the local level within the national guidelines. All these regulations would benefit from being simple and accessible to speakers of local languages.

#### **4. PERSPECTIVES**

It was clearly apparent in the opinion of participants in the Regional Conference, and in the results of the evaluation questionnaires, that the summary of conclusions contained in the Praia Declaration opens up new perspectives for the CILSS and the Club du Sahel in all programs concerning the management of natural resources and public services.

##### **4.1. Current position**

The Praia Regional Conference is the first regional meeting organized by the CILSS and the Club du Sahel since CILSS "restructuring. From a technocratic approach, to a sectoral strategy, to a global strategy, the policies of these two organizations have now gained a new dimension : the participation of local communities and their assumption of responsibility for their own fate.

This process naturally is not an easy one, given the force of habit and the challenges faced.

##### ***Opening up to all players and partners involved***

For many years, dialogue was restricted to States and their partners, despite the opening up to NGOs and local communities initiated by the Segou Encounter. This step was only a modest one, however. Any farmers involved had to adapt to the existing framework. The opportunities for farmers speaking neither French nor English to participate were slight or non-existent.

In Praia not only was a pre-conference held for farmers, but they also had access to the background in their own languages, could speak in the language of their choice and express their point of view whenever they thought it necessary.

Furthermore, the farmers at the Praia Regional Conference produced a platform for the farmers of CILSS member-countries and suggested the setting up of consultation structures so that they could contribute constructively to decisions affecting their future.

The Steering Committee's insistence that every delegation should include women, with financing obtained for that purpose, turned out to be useful. Otherwise it would have been difficult to achieve such a high representation of women at the Regional Conference, at least in comparison with other meetings.

The presence of this number of talented women produced debates of high quality and conclusions which, when applied, will open new perspectives for improved management of natural resources and public services.

The presence of private businesspeople, elected officials, journalists, NGOs, and donors was a similar expression of this opening up to all players concerned by the management of natural resources and public services in the Sahel.

##### ***Open debate and conclusions respecting differing views***

Despite the short time available, the working groups, mini-plenaries and plenaries provided an opportunity for every point of view to be expressed. One of the successes of the Regional Conference is that diverse approaches were used to produce conclusions agreed to by the majority, while respecting differing views and minority opinions.

These results were only achieved by making some hard choices, in the light of past experience. Usually at such meetings controversial issues are not discussed in depth, but are merely mentioned or dealt with in those aspects which arouse least disagreement. From the outset of the Regional Conference, the organizers decided to face basic topical issues head on, and to deal with them constructively, i.e. within limits which made it possible to produce carefully thought out proposals for solutions.

When agreement could honestly not be achieved, the minority point of view was not rejected, but presented as a «possible option». This concern was shown in the minutes of the main debates of the Regional Conference, as summarized above.

#### **4.2. What new approaches ?**

The 20th century draws to a close with signs of profound future change for the Sahel. Increasing scarcity of natural resources and innovative management practices required for the sustainability of these resources raise new issues of decentralization. Decentralization can now only be envisaged as part of the new democratization of all types of relations in the Sahel.

The creation of political parties, new electoral laws, and the organization of elections at various levels have produced great advances, while also revealing their limitations. Trade unions, political parties and elections mainly involve town-dwellers. The people in rural areas do not ordinarily use these structures and forms of expression, far from it.

In rural areas it is the patriarchal family, clan, tribe, religious brotherhood, or ethnic group, which are the main forms of expression and organization. Matters of survival, food, water, health, education, clothing, and housing are far more important than any desire for even the most basic civil liberties. This is reflected in the low turnout for elections in rural areas.

The primary concerns of Sahelian farmers appear to be the freedom to organize and cope with survival issues, and the recognition of local institutions that people see as their own. The democratic processes now at work could find in these issues the resources needed to make them permanent. Grassroots development based on local initiative could then enjoy the conditions for real effectiveness.

These conditions will require

- removing the social inhibitions caused by local practices towards women, young people and some marginal groups ;
- challenging the privileges attached to administrative and technical posts ;
- implementing legislative and institutional reforms that encourage local initiative ;
- promoting programs of information, education and communication to improve technical and management skills in local communities.

The programs that the CILSS and the Club du Sahel will be producing to implement the recommendations of the Praia Regional Conference will certainly help to achieve these objectives.

#### **5. POST-PRAIA ACTION**

The strategic objective of the CILSS is to lay the foundations for rational natural resource management and to ensure food security within a context of regional integration and sustainable development.

For this objective to be achieved, local communities must assume responsibility for their own development at local level.

Hope for the future depends on opening up the debate to all levels of Sahelian society and the political will of States to achieve true decentralization and sustainable management of natural resources.

To that end «an overall approach», «local-level resource management» and «community participation» are the cornerstones of CILSS policy.

### **5.1. Outlines of major CILSS programs**

The CILSS has produced a three-year plan, based on six major programs, four technical (information, training, research, population and development) and two political (food security, natural resource management). The technical programs' main function is to produce data and discussion topics for the political programs, which then produce policies and submit them to the central core of the CILSS and the member-states.

The major programs operate on a push-pull basis : the political side gives ideas to the technical side, which provides evidence and bases for decision-making in the pursuit of sustainable development.

The consistency of the major programs depends on effective cooperation, consultation and shared experience.

Together with the essential features of the International Convention to Combat Desertification (ICCD), the implementation of the conclusions of the Praia Regional Conference is part of the CILSS restructuring process, particularly the natural resource management policy program.

### **5.2. Natural Resource Management Policy program**

At the regional level, the program will

- forestall environmental crises and natural disasters ;
- help States improve the management of shared resources, such as water and pastureland
- strengthen regional cooperation in NRM with States, intergovernmental organizations, etc.

At the national level, the program will support the implementation of strategy in two main fields :

- helping States to implement their NRM policy, with an emphasis on promoting consultation nationally ;
- helping institutional development in decentralization, land tenure management, land security, legislation, institutions, etc.

At the local level, the program will contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources by supporting the attempts of local communities to take responsibility for their own development. To that end it will concentrate on making best use of existing skills and practices, promoting partnership between all the players in local development, and increasing experience-sharing between villages.

### **5.3. Connections between the Praia Declaration, the NRM Policy program and the ICCD**

Praia was a valuable opportunity for the players involved in the management of natural resources and public services to take the time to look critically at past action and outline future action.

The spirit of the Conference was to listen to differing opinions while sticking to the basic guidelines for action.

The ideas for programs that emerged will support the NRM policy program and attempts to shift State policy in rural areas in the direction of the perspectives defined by the Conference. Ideas for action can be seen to focus on the following main topics :

#### ***Legislation and institutions***

- Support for State legislative reform to ensure that the principles adopted are properly understood, to assess the relevance of various options for specific problems and local needs, and to examine closely problems of application ;
- Contribution to promoting a flexible approach in defining framework principles, to allow some freedom to the various players in land tenure ;
- Support for research into local practices in rural areas, and the chances of using their example in producing new legislation ;
- Support for research in the INSAH major research program, in cooperation with universities in the Sahel and abroad ;
- Support for the production, implementation and evaluation of national programs.

#### ***Land tenure monitoring observatories***

According to the specific conditions in Sahelian environmental zones, a program of monitoring land tenure should be initiated to

- carry out surveys and research into land tenure disputes, based on the major topics identified at the Praia Regional Conference ;
- provide support and advice to the various players in avoiding conflicts and, if necessary, help to implement relevant solutions involving decentralized NRM ;
- carry out information campaigns to meet local needs ;
- present the results obtained in systematic form, so as to inform Sahelian policy in legislation, institutions and decentralized NRM.

#### ***Decentralization***

Decentralization should not be seen as a denial of the State's role, but rather as a more rational redistribution of rights and duties within society. Just as the rights of local communities should be promoted, so the regulating role of the State should be strengthened. Discussion of the territorial divisions of decentralization should be guided by considerations of democracy and economic efficiency.



But it must be stressed that decentralization is a process which needs to be advanced with patience and persistence. For that reason, it cannot only concern technical experts. It should be widely debated within the country and negotiated between the State and other players in society.

Selected action to be taken :

- Monitor and support the action of national decentralization committees, providing them with lessons drawn from successful local experiments in decentralized NRM and public services ;
- Share experiences among social groups and different levels of decentralization.
- Support the training of local elected officials, associations and institutions representing civil society, administrative agents and managers of local services.

This extensive support might take the form of, say, publishing and distributing public education handbooks in Sahelian languages on problems of decentralization.

### ***Sharing and capitalizing on experience***

#### **- Experience-sharing**

A number of topics were discussed and shared in depth among Conference participants: «Land tenure and pastoralism», «Land tenure and the private sector», «Women and land tenure», «Land tenure and farming», etc. Meetings could be held periodically to look more closely at the achievements and difficulties in applying the recommendations of the Praia Regional Conference, to study new problems and find solutions.

According to local interest and the topics discussed, these meetings could involve small groups of countries. In this way, successful experiences, obstacles encountered and lessons learnt could be widely publicized.

#### **- Capitalizing on local-level resource management knowledge**

- Support for local-level resource management policies so that the local areas become monitoring sites for the experiences of local communities and the many varied obstacles to extending these policies can be overcome ;
- Support for strengthening the institutional and legal framework of experiences in local-level resource management ;
- Technical, financial and institutional support for the committee and network of Sahelian farmers to be set up.

### ***Information, education, communication***

This program will involve activities at several levels :

#### **- Publication of Conference results**

- Create and distribute a periodical with news of the application of the recommendations of the Praia Regional Conference aimed at monitoring and sharing experiences among all the players involved ;
- Produce and distribute widely the Summary Report and Proceedings of the Praia Regional Conference.

- Distribute a translation of the Praia Declaration in a number of Sahelian languages;
- Publish abstracts of the Summary Report in a number of Sahelian languages ;
- Distribute cassette recordings in Sahelian languages of the Praia Declaration and the abstract of the Summary Report ;
- Ensure the publication of articles on the results of the Praia Regional Conference for the scientific community and the general public ;
- Organize radio and television debates on the results and topics of the Praia Regional Conference ;
- Organize visits and debates for the farmers who helped to prepare the Conference.
- **Publication of laws and regulations**
  - Facilitate citizens' knowledge and understanding of laws and institutions ;
  - Simplify the style of legal texts, translate them into Sahelian languages and distribute them widely.
- **Support for the documentation center**
  - Make the RESADOC effective, provide better equipment, and, most importantly, update its documentation on the Sahel.

RESADOC could rely on its own resources and also intensify exchanges with the Land Tenure Center (Madison, WI, USA), the Africa Studies Center (Leiden, the Netherlands), Michigan State University (USA), ORSTOM, Laval University, etc.

A program must be designed as a matter of urgency to connect INSAH with reference networks in Europe, the United States and Japan, particularly in the social sciences.

To decentralize the management of the available documentation and make it more accessible, it would be beneficial to support local attempts that are emerging, such as the Legal Science Teaching and Research Unit (UER) at the University of Saint-Louis (Sénégal), and the NGO Liaison Center (CILONG) in N'Djamena.

- **Promotion of training and research in land tenure and decentralization at Sahelian universities**
  - Introduce training courses in land tenure and decentralization in Sahelian training centers and universities.

Often development workers are unaware of the complexity of land tenure implications on their projects. Their training in land tenure needs to be extended multidisciplinary (law, sociology, economics, demographics, etc.).

The point is not to train land tenure specialists but to raise the awareness of development workers, so that they realize the land tenure dimension of their action, and to give them some grounding for coping with disputes.

- **Praia Prize**

Every three years, at the CILSS Heads of State Conference, a prize will be awarded to the best example of decentralized natural resource management in the subregion, based on criteria laid down in advance by a jury of specialists, practitioners of varied backgrounds, and politicians.

**«Sahel Perspective Study»**

- Analytical studies of useful topics such as «The future of pastoralism in the Sahel», «Privatization of land and its impact», and «Population growth and farm productivity».
- Specific national and regional studies to reveal potentialities, obstacles and trends.
- General studies of trends in the Sahel for 2050. Studies including the WALTPS discussions and the new political and socio-economic situation of the subregion. (This study will be carried out under the supervision of the CILSS central core, which will commission it.)

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This account of problems raised at the Regional Conference and the types of solution envisaged are challenges for all actors involved in natural resource management.

Following multilateral negotiations that occurred while the Conference was being prepared, the objectives set by the International Convention to Combat Desertification are centered on NRM and decentralization. As such they necessarily overlap with the conclusions and recommendations of the Praia Regional Conference.

The suggestions made in this report are the outlines of post-Praia programs. These outlines need to be examined in depth, refined, enriched, and related to general CILSS policy, its major programs and those of its member-countries.

Constructive criticism from Sahelians and the friends of the Sahel will certainly help to improve these suggestions and make them operational.

The Praia Regional Conference and the ICCD have occurred at a crucial time for the Sahel and its peoples. These peoples are at a crossroads; using the positive values of their culture and their own efforts, they need now to learn the lessons of their experience and profit from that of their partners. Implementing the conclusions of the Praia Regional Conference can help to open up new perspectives for the peoples of the Sahel.

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