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RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC
GROWTH IN THE SAHEL -
ENHANCED RESILIENCE (REGIS-ER)

LOCAL CONVENTIONS

RURAL MUNICIPALITIES
MANAGE THEIR NATURAL
RESOURCES SUSTAINABLY



THE LOCAL CONVENTION: COMMUNITY-DRIVEN LAND USE PLANNING

As part of the project's governance and natural resources management activities, REGIS-ER drafted 19 local conventions covering communes totalling over 27,500 km² – an area the size of the state of Massachusetts. Local conventions are community-developed natural resources management plans that promote equitable and sustainable management of resources, improve soil fertility and reduce conflicts between user groups in the communes that have adopted them. The natural resources that fall within the purview of the plans include farmland, pastures, water resources such as ponds, and woodland including non-timber products.

In 2019, REGIS-ER commissioned an assessment of the effectiveness of the local conventions to document the results and describe the impact in the communes of Manni and Bouroum in

eastern Burkina Faso, and Tondikandia, Droum and Guidan-Roumdji in Niger. This assessment provides lessons learned and serves as a guide to other communes and partners interested in developing their own local conventions.^{1,2}

REGIS-ER's work builds on the community-led practice of natural resources management around West Africa, including the Wula Nafaa activity in Senegal (2003-13), which contributed to the development of the Nature, Wealth and Power framework.³ The approach goes beyond an inventory and management plan for natural resources, and incorporates participatory governance and use plans that enable communities to derive sustainable livelihoods from their natural resources. A critical driver for planning is conflict arising from competition for scarce resources, and a desire among communities to define the rules of natural resource use.

Our approach is anchored in the often under-utilized legal frameworks that define forest management, land tenure and decentralized governance, while carving out a new space for community engagement. As a new approach to natural resources management, the outcomes have been surprising and the lessons rich. Our success has been essentially due to a participatory and inclusive process that leads to consensus among all user groups, and results in local ownership of the rules and procedures for natural resources management.

The Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience (REGIS-ER) is a seven-year activity (2013-21) of the RISE portfolio, supported by USAID. It aimed to increase the resilience of chronically vulnerable populations in marginal agro-pastoral areas in Burkina Faso and Niger by strengthening livelihoods, governance and the health and nutritional status of communities. From November 2013 to November 2018, REGIS-ER worked in six regions, 25 municipalities, reaching 570 villages across the RISE zone of intervention in Burkina Faso and Niger. From October 2019, the project entered cost-extension phase, concentrating on eight municipalities in three regions of Burkina Faso and Niger.

1 Brook Johnson, Ben Moussa Traoré and Ibrahim Amani. 2019. NCBA CLUSA's Local Conventions in Niger and Burkina Faso: A Case Study. USAID | REGIS-ER.

2 Brook Johnson and Douglas Steinberg. 2020. Local land-use plans, bylaws and conventions reduce resource-based conflicts. ETRN News 60. European Tropical Forestry Research Network. Tropenbos International, Wageningen, the Netherlands.

3 Jon Anderson, Michael Colby, Michael McGahuey, Shreya Mehta. 2013. Nature, Wealth & Power 2.0: Leveraging Natural and Social Capital for Resilient Development. USAID and IRG.

GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF A LOCAL CONVENTION

The overall goal of the local convention is to ensure the conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources of a rural community in order to satisfy growing demands, while maintaining productivity, and ecological and social wellbeing.

The local convention has five specific objectives:

- Regulate in a consensual manner access to and use of a commune's natural resources.
- Include citizens in the sustainable management of their own natural resources.
- Ensure that all citizens can access the natural resources they need to meet their needs without compromising the needs of others or the long term viability of the environment.
- Prevent conflict and reduce the degradation of natural resources.
- Promote good governance (transparency and accountability).

REGIS-ER contributed to enhanced resilience of chronically vulnerable populations in marginal agricultural and agro-pastoral areas in Burkina Faso and Niger. NCBA CLUSA successfully demonstrated, scaled-up and disseminated resilience activities centered on conservation farming, health and nutrition, water, sanitation, and hygiene, local governance, and shock responsiveness for the benefit of nearly 320,000 families in Burkina Faso and Niger.



Above: Harvesting fodder in Droum.

Below: Restored pasture next to degraded one in Tondikandia.



BIO-RECLAMATION OF DEGRADED LANDS: KOUDOUMA WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION (COMMUNE OF DROUM, ZINDER REGION, NIGER)

With support from REGIS-ER, fifty women from Koudouma created a group to establish a garden on a degraded site selected for bio-reclamation. The land was previously abandoned after losing soil fertility from over-use after being stripped of its natural vegetative cover. Using water retention and soil restoration techniques, the land was brought back into cultivation.

The group was formed by a local facilitator used by the project to train women in horticulture techniques. The group received land title from the local land commission, guaranteeing tenure for a specified period. Member of the group grow lettuce, cabbage and moringa during the dry season, and okra during the rainy season. In 2019, the groups gross income was \$13,560. With a 50% reinvestment, each woman earns approximately \$135 per year—a significant contribution to the household economy in one of the poorest countries in the world. These incomes provide more stable revenue than cutting hay and are more sustainable than the collection of firewood in the rapidly dwindling woodlands.

ELEVEN STEPS FOR DEVELOPING LOCAL CONVENTIONS

The process of developing a local convention includes eleven steps. It is essential to include all perspectives in the process – both men and women, and farmers and herders—all of whom may see and use different resources in the same space. We work at the commune level, which has the authority to manage common resources that are more widespread than the village boundaries. Consequently, the process operates at both commune and village levels and the processes is painstaking to ensure broad participation.

STEP 1: Information sessions with commune leaders: The project presents the idea of local

LOCAL CONVENTIONS EMPOWER MUNICIPALITIES AND VULNERABLE GROUPS

With local conventions, municipalities can understand, map and organize the use of common spaces to avoid over-exploitation of resources and reduce conflicts among users. They enable municipalities to generate revenue (taxes and fees for use of its resources, and fines).

In Burkina Faso, REGIS-ER established eight commune land-use local conventions, through a participatory process, which cover 7270 km². During the first quarter of 2019, Bouroum (Centre-Nord Region) collected nearly \$7,000 in revenues this way, a huge sum for a rural commune.

Local conventions also address the needs of vulnerable groups. Barsalogo, Bouroum and Seytenga Communes have developed 533 hectares for pasture and secured 69 hectares for women with limited access to land. Sebba Commune set aside 14,000 ha for pastureland in the Moussougou-Moussoua area.

conventions to commune leadership to assess their interest. Once a decision has been made to move ahead then the project trains its commune technical staff in how to design a local convention.

STEP 2: Set up and train a technical steering committee: The project works with the commune to organize and train a steering committee to lead the design process. The steering committee then identifies the resource-rich zones in the commune and develops a workplan.

STEP 3: Train zone committees to carry out environmental analysis: The project and the steering committee form the zone committees, representing all sections of society, who are trained in simple land-use analysis and mapping skills. Afterwards the zone committees go to the field to gather the necessary baseline information.

STEP 4: Draft a land use map: Using biophysical and socio-economic data gathered by the zone committees, the project cartographer drafts a map outlining land-use zones (see figure).

STEP 5: Elaborate management plans and validate the map: Working with zone committees, the project and the steering group validate the project map at the commune level, and then work with zone committees to develop simple management plans for their respective sub-zones.

STEP 6: Propose commune bylaws: The project facilitates discussions between the steering committee, zone groups, municipal council, *chef de canton*, village chiefs and other stakeholders to propose bylaws to regulate access to and use of natural resources in the commune.

STEP 7: Participatory validation of local convention bylaws: The proposed bylaws are shared the general population in a series of community meetings to obtain approval. Then the draft is shared with the government technical services ensure that they conform with national laws. If there are inconsistencies then edits will take place at that level, and a second draft is shared with representatives of the commune to confirm that the edits are acceptable.

STEP 8: Approval of the local convention: The local convention, incorporating both land use plan and bylaws, is formally presented to the communal mayor's office, with representatives from administrative district (department or province) in attendance. Once it is approved, it is signed and enacted as local law.

STEP 9: Dissemination of the local convention: The project translates the local convention into local languages and shares copies with all community or village development committees in the commune. The translated local convention is also disseminated through community radio programs.

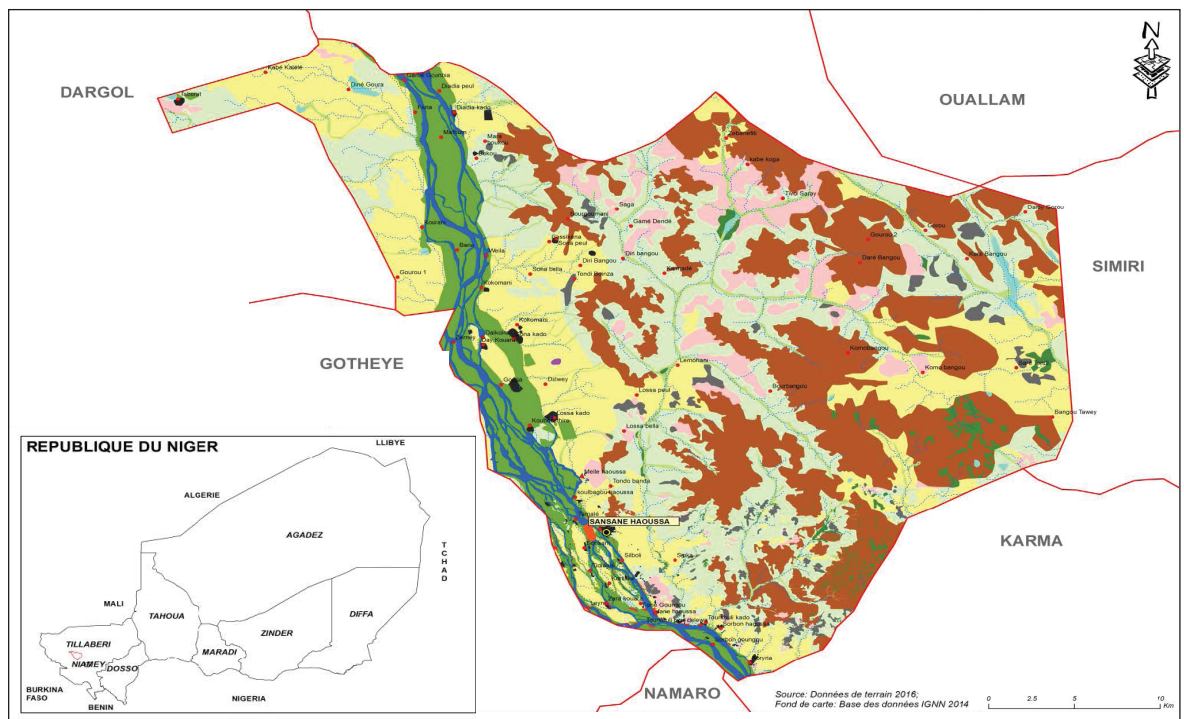
STEP 10: Training in monitoring and evaluation: The relevant land offices (*Commission Foncière Communale and the Commission Développement Rural in Niger, and the Service Foncier Rural in Burkina Faso*) are trained in monitoring and evaluation to ensure that the convention is a living document, learning from both successes and weaknesses, and meeting everyone's needs.

STEP 11: Integrate the local convention into the commune development plans: In this final step, the project works with the municipal council to integrate the land-use management plan into the commune development plan so that the investments and management activities can become eligible for government funding.

KOURTHEYE (NIGER) RURAL COMMUNE

LAND USE MAP

- VILLAGE/HAMLET
- COMMUNE SEAT
- DRY STREAMBED
- COMMUNE BOUNDARY
- LAND USE
- REGULATED FISHING AREA
- IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE
- ROCKY OUTCROP
- TREE FARMING
- QUARRY
- RAINFED AGRICULTURAL AREAS
- NIGER RIVER
- HUMAN HABITATION
- FLOOD PLAIN
- WATER SPOTS
- PLATEAU
- SHRUB PLAIN
- DEGRADED SOILS
- DENSE BUSH PLAIN



IMPACTS OF LOCAL CONVENTIONS

117,450 people using climate information or implementing risk-reduction to improve resilience

134 community-level plans with NRM or conflict management components

19 local conventions drafted, of which 13 signed and four integrated into commune development plans

4,819 community residents participating in NRM meetings

1,875,000 hectares directly under natural resource management plans

675 conflict prevention assessments or response mechanisms

1,404 institutions, local structures set up or strengthened

4.6% increase in farmer managed natural regeneration

74% reduction in conflict over natural resources measured in four communes

TESTIMONIES TO CHANGE

The commune of Droum (Zinder Region, Niger) validated its local convention by the commune council and then it was signed by authorities in November 2017. This marked the pinnacle of a collective effort to map and regulate the commune's natural resources. The signature was followed by communication of rules and sanctions to the general population.

To effectively promote the local convention, commune leaders held forums and organized a radio awareness campaign. Mr. Saïdou Sani Agi, Mayor of Doum, declared: *"After the debate on the radio, people called from everywhere to ask questions to better understand or express their support to the convention. Even the governor of Zinder admitted that he had not missed a single broadcast. According to the Mayor, 'The local convention has started to bear fruit. Two years after its signing, changes in the behaviors of our communities' management of natural resources are visible. People cut fewer trees than in the past, because we established monitoring committees for that purpose."*

Saïdou Habou, the farmers' representative in Droum, noted the effect of these changes: *"The population of young trees is increasing significantly. On a plot of less than one hectare, you can count more than 20 trees. Besides, there is far less grazing in our farms. The increased vegetation makes our farms more productive and more fertile because people do not cut trees. The increased production allows us to fight famine and improve the living conditions of our families."*

Maoudé Dan Soufoua, the Permanent Secretary of the Commune's Land Commission also declared that, *"conflicts related to the use of water points like ponds have decreased. From the harvest period (Oct-Nov 2016) to April 2017, no such conflict was reported in the commune. We are also proud because people respect grazing area limits. Farms no longer intermingle with pasture areas and livestock corridors. Droum commune residents insistently request the marking of livestock corridors because they understand that it is effective in preventing conflict between farmers and herders and significantly improves the situation of livestock. We truly thank God for all this progress."*



The collective success due to the integration of the Droum local convention and the commitment of its inhabitants may well be spreading in the Zinder region. *"Some mayors are asking for guidance so that they can develop their local conventions as well,"* declared Mr. Saïdou Sani Agi, before adding *"The communes of Hamdara and Dakoussa requested our support, but also asked administrative and technical authorities as well as projects active in their areas for assistance to engage in the process of developing their own local conventions. We have become a reference, and this encourages us to do even better."*

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

■ ENSURE GOOD COMMUNICATION:

Effective dissemination of bylaws fosters voluntary compliance, such as farmer-managed protection of natural regenerating tree species. Bylaws built on consensus also result in a reduction of conflict. It is essential to translate local conventions into local languages, and to use community radios to widely broadcast them.

■ ALIGN REVENUE WITH LOCAL CONVENTION

GOALS: Fines for breaking the rules can generate resources to cover ongoing costs. But matching the revenue to the management objectives and motivating the different stakeholders of the local convention is a key factor of sustainability. Experience has shown that volunteering is not sustainable in the long term. The use of land commissions to assume the management role at village level has a certain advantage because the land commissions receive income from their work on land titles, which could be enough to compensate for the role of monitoring conflicts of resources.

■ REVISE BYLAWS WHEN NECESSARY:

Local conventions must be renewed every five years. Although there is a cost associated with this, and perhaps some need for external support, it also provides an opportunity to revise and revitalize local conventions to make them more relevant and effective.

■ APPLY A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO LOCAL CONVENTIONS:

Building resilience requires a systems approach and there is a need to establish a network of public, private and civil society stakeholders who can work together to provide resilience services. Local conventions can clearly benefit from integration into this larger system.

■ IMPORTANCE OF LEADERSHIP:

Political leadership is essential to the success of a local convention. When administrative and customary

authorities champion local conventions as an effective management tool, they demonstrate a commitment and the momentum to continue after the project. Leadership skills are essential in bringing stakeholders together, negotiating complicated and nuanced deals, and advocating on behalf of the interests of the commune, for example for funding from the national government. Commitment from local authorities to integrate local conventions into commune development plans will ensure the document lives, is sustained and funded.





1775 Eye Street, NW | 8th Floor | Washington, DC 20006
202.638.6222 | ncbaclusa.coop