

Innovation and realization in participatory forestry in Chad

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SUMMARY

Chad is a continental country situated in the heart of Central Africa between 8° and 24° north latitude and 14° and 24° east longitude. It has a total surface area of 1 284 000 km². The participatory approach strategy was introduced in Chad in 1987 under the Development of Forestry Activities in Chad project (CHD/87/016). Its implementation was not successful, however, because of previous work under state control that caused the project partners to cease their activities soon after the project's initiation in 1990, resulting in a resumption of forest degradation. The project players clearly lacked motivation and awareness.

Project GCP/CHD/020 and O24 NET activities took note of the constraints that the previous project CHD/87/016 had encountered after start-up and took steps to avoid repeating the same mistakes. More specifically, its approach called for:

- heightened awareness raising in the intervention area imparted by technical staff;
- discussions with traditional chiefs to explain the rationale for the project;
- clarification meetings with social groups in the presence of the traditional chief;
- a programme of activities agreed by traditional chiefs and project operator groups;
- thematic on-the-job training.

These precautions and arrangements succeeded in producing appreciable project results, which included:

- management of the forest of Mogroum over an area of 7 500 ha;
- increased stocking of *Acacia senegal* over 5 000 ha;
- assisted protection of degraded forest land over 30 000 ha.

The project provisions raised awareness of partners to the need to consolidate outputs. The conditions required to achieve the anticipated results are:

- involvement of partners throughout the project process;
- careful attention to the views of local authorities for all decisions relating to land under their command;
- availability of support measures;
- mutual respect among all partners;
- acumen in the process of awareness raising.



Introduction

Chad is located in Central Africa between 8° and 24° north latitudes and 14° and 24° east longitudes. It covers an area of 1 284 000 km². It is the largest country in the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the fifth largest in Africa, after the Sudan, Algeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya. It is bordered by six countries: the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the north, the Sudan to the east, the Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon to the west and the Central African Republic to the south.

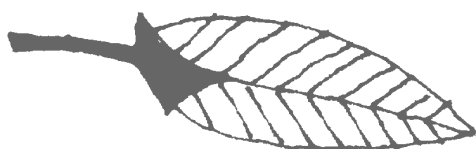
Chad is a continental country, and a country of transition between the Saharan and Sudanian zones.

Innovation

It is appropriate to specify that the participatory approach strategy entered effectively into action in Chad only towards 1995, with the Forest Development and Rural Forestry GCP/CHD/020 and 024 NET projects, which were financed by the Netherlands and executed by FAO. However, it is also necessary to present a brief retrospective account of the way forest work was conducted in Chad before the strategy of participatory approach was introduced, and particularly in the period before and after independence up to 1972.

Methodology of action before the participatory approach

During the period before and after independence and up to 1972, almost all forestry activities were implemented under the control of the state. In other words, the Forestry Department employed and paid people to do forest work. For example, for reforestation, the state controlled everything from the production of plants in nurseries to planting, and including follow-up work after the planting of the seedlings. Therefore, responsibility for all the tasks was 100 percent incumbent upon the Forestry Department. Thus, the volume of achievements was proportional to the means at the disposal of or used by the Forestry Department to carry out the activity.



Most often, as is the case with government budget, those means were very limited. Obviously, the results of the actions on the field were not remarkable. Sometimes, when the government budget was involved, the actions were limited to the planting of trees on certain lines through towns, or the planting of trees on fairly small areas of land. As for the intervention of projects financed by donors, reforestation, for example, was achieved over large areas of land with sometimes interesting results during a project. But after the project, when the state had to provide follow-up, problems arose after only a short time: bush fires here, improper cutting there. Often, this resulted in evident deterioration.

Following that deterioration, one might wonder what was the reason for all those acts of vandalism. The answer was that the social partners had remained ignorant and unconscious of the need to protect the forest or, more generally, of the need to protect their environment.

Some had no idea that they were also fully responsible for those actions. Moreover, many of them were beneficiaries of the natural resources, compared with the Forestry Department, which provided protection at the national level and in the nation's interest. The contribution of the social partners should have come in at a given moment to back up the Forestry Department in its work. Unfortunately, that was not so during the period mentioned.

For them, forest protection was a matter for officials of the Ministry of Water Resources and Forest, or rather the Forestry Department, and they felt no involvement in it.

In fact, from 1970 to 1971, when Chad began to experience drought, as in all other Sahelian countries, the authorities set out to try to find ways to meet the alarming situation, which was giving rise to excessive mortality of trees and many other problems. An unexpected movement of people was noted in the direction of areas where the situation seemed to be less severe, especially from the Saharan and Sahelian zones towards the Sudanian zones of the country. That phenomenon gave rise to many consequences in the zone where the concentration of people was higher: famine, diseases and, especially, the evident deterioration of the vegetation cover.

Thus, because the national authorities were concerned about deforestation and were faced with a serious, disquieting situation, the latter decided, after

an in-depth examination of the problem, to set aside, each year, a National Tree-planting Week (NTW) during which everybody would be required to plant trees in whichever administrative constituency they were in at the time. That decision was promulgated by Ordinance No. 29/PR/MEFT of 30 October 1972. Therefore, every year, everybody in Chad is required to plant trees during that week. Normally, this takes place in July or August, which are the rainiest months. The operation is organized every year, even in the Saharan zone. Of course, the planted area varies from region to region.

How is the operation organized? The Forestry Department is in charge of the production of the seedlings, either through the government budget or sometimes with assistance from international organizations such as the World Food Programme (WFP), which assisted the operation in Chad through food for work until 1990. Thus, plant production has been done with assistance from WFP, whereas planting and, at times, preparation of the land have been done by the people under the direction of the Forestry Department.

The NTW operation has helped to clear the way for the participatory approach strategy, but some hesitation has persisted in certain areas of the country. The work of caring for the seedlings planted in the framework of that operation is incumbent only on the Forestry Department. Sometimes, in places where the department has lacked the means for plant care work, the rate of success has fallen short of the expected result. Despite this, the degree of motivation or awareness among the social partners has begun to become evident in certain places. The strategy of participatory approach in Chad began timidly towards the years 1987 and 1988. From that time, the Forestry Department has once again placed particular emphasis on information and awareness raising so as to intensify the application of the participatory approach strategy to all forestry work. Obviously, at the start, this was possible in certain places, especially in those regions where the intervention of WFP with food-for-work activities had not started.

In places where WFP intervened with food-for-work activities, application of the strategy was not easy, despite the doubling of efforts in the field of awareness raising by the Forestry Department. This situation persisted for quite some time, and it was only after the departure of WFP in 1990 that the participatory approach strategy to forest work was made operational almost everywhere throughout the country, with clearly acceptable results.

Realization of participatory forestry

Case of the Mogroum pilot series, first intervention, 1987–1990 with project CHD/87/016

To the first question, why the Mogroum pilot series? the answer is simply because it is from the development of this forest that the strategy for developing all the forest massifs is going to be extended. Although the NTW has made some progress, the contribution of the partners in the framework of the NTW has remained limited. This time, on the contrary, there is insistence on 100 percent success. Mogroum Forest is 120 km from N'Djamena, the capital, towards the south of the country, and covers an area of 30 000 ha; it has 600 to 800 subjects per hectare, including large trees, especially *Khaya senegalensis*, with a diameter of 2–2.50 m. This seems to be very important for a Sahelian or Sudano-Sahelian zone.

Therefore, this forest deserves to be protected and, indeed, gazetted. However, the gazetting has not taken place for traditional reasons, specifically because the Sultan of Mogroum, which is the capital of the district, has not agreed to it. It was said that part of the Mogroum Forest was sacred, and that it would be protected spontaneously. But with the movement of people during years of drought, such spontaneous protection was not possible. Bush fires, improper cutting, overgrazing, disorganized clearing, etc. have been evident in the forest. In view of the magnitude of this deterioration, the Government of Chad, through the intermediary of the Directory of Forest Protection and Control of Desertification, intervened in 1987 with the support of project CHD/87/016, and WFP introduced a moderate form of food for work instead of monthly payment of food to partners. Because of the drought, food assistance to the partners was still carried out, but only during the campaign when all planned development work was done in order to safeguard part of the forest. That development work included the strengthening of certain deteriorated plots by direct sowing, supplementary planting and other appropriate silvicultural treatments, such as pruning and phytosanitary cutting, bush fire control and permanent guarding.

This development enabled the Mogroum Forest partially to recover its initial condition. Unfortunately, at the end of WFP-supported project CHD/87/016 in 1999, deterioration of the forest began after only six months. Once again, there set in improper cutting,

multiplication of bush fires and, especially, disorganized clearing as a result of the continuous movement of people from north to south, in addition to overgrazing and poaching. This was forest that had been rich in variety and a dense and vital elephant biotope before the drought, where some rare herds of elephants were recently found, in addition to other species, particularly duikers, warthogs and many species of monkeys and birds.

The Government of Chad, in this case the Ministry of Environment and Water Resources, found itself obliged to increase contacts with donors in order to solicit a second intervention. It was thus able to obtain funding from the Netherlands, from 1991 to 1997, for the Rural Forestry and Forest Development GCP/CHD/020 and 024 NET project, in which the strategy of participatory approach was effectively applied.

The project was financed by the Netherlands and executed by FAO. Thus, to avoid repeating the experience of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-financed first project CHD/87/016, this project took all precautions to meet expectations. As a result, the social partners were involved right from the planning of the project to its full implementation.

Steps taken before the start of the project GCP/CHD/020 and 024 NET

Despite disappointment with the first project, the Forestry Department was not at all discouraged from playing its role as nature protector. It is in that light that the team in charge of forest development in the Directorate of Forest Protection and Desertification Control went to the people who dwelled in the vicinity of Mogroum Forest and held more meetings with all the social categories of people (men, women, youth and elders) to find an appropriate solution to the problem of safeguarding the forest, the history of which was known to all the people of Chad.

Because, in Chad, messages from traditional chiefs are more highly considered by rural people than those from administrators, the Forestry Department began to increase its contacts with the Sultan of Mogroum, on whose land the forest is located. The Sultan

welcomed the foresters, showing interest in what could be done to restore the forest to its former appearance. Often, on similar occasions, the Sultan talked about the fame his forest enjoyed ten years ago.

After those first contacts, FAO carried out a feasibility study. Then a sensitization campaign was resumed in favour of the development of the project. Sensitization of all the social partners around Mogroum Forest was carried out by the Forestry Department. Seven villages around the forest were visited. As the Sultan of Mogroum was committed to reconstitution of the forest, he fully supported the Forestry Department. Moreover, during the meetings, the Forestry Department often let him speak first, and he spoke about the importance of the forest and about the wealth it contained in terms of medicines, wildlife and wood for building and timber. He always concluded by telling the people that the Mogroum Forest had made their district famous for a long time; for example, he would say: "Since the foresters have come to us with good news of a project for the development of this forest, I ask you to do everything possible to make sure that there is no disappointment like there was with the recent one". Speaking after the Sultan, foresters completed his comments, providing all the details, always speaking of the benefits that the partners would get and saying that they should henceforth believe and consider the project to be theirs, and trust that the Forestry Department would be their technical advisor in all their activities. Therefore, the division of responsibilities should have been clear, especially as the intervention of the donor was to be limited to material means only.

The Sultan also spoke about that aspect, and most of the participants were of the opinion that, as the Sultan had agreed, the implementation of the project would not be a problem. Almost all the heads of the villages around the forest hailed the initiative of their district chief, who according to them was truly involved in what was planned. There had been no similar involvement since the Forestry Department began working in their milieu, and during that period it was believed that the department wanted to take over the forest. On the contrary, what was happening would be in the interest of the people if it became practice in the future. The phase of awareness raising, with these messages, lasted several months until the project was developed.

Next, a team consisting of FAO experts and Chad foresters went into the field to collect data that was used to develop the Rural Forestry and Forest Development GCP/CHD/020 and 024 NET project, financed by the Netherlands.



Implementation of the project

Taking into account all that it learned from the first intervention, the Forestry Department took adequate precautions regarding grassroots partners during the launch of this project. As a result, the project's leading team, consisting of nationals and expatriates, set up 15 groups in the seven villages around the forest. The project trained the groups in different types of specialization, such as producing plants, measuring trees, etc. Furthermore, the project did not lose sight of on-the-job training of the groups. This is why all the activities during the life of the project were carried out under good conditions and enabled the results discussed below to be achieved.

Results obtained

After six years, project GCP/CHD/020 and 024 NET achieved the following results:

- On 7 500 ha of developed forest in the Mogroum Forest massif, stocking has increased from 600 to 800 plants per hectare to nearly 1 000 plants/ha in some places.
- 5 000 ha of *Acacia senegal* have had their stocking raised from the initial 450 to 500 plants/ha to about 650 or 700 plants/ha.
- 30 000 ha of deteriorated *Acacia seyal* have been put under protection and reinforced with additional planting.

These plant stockings have now almost recovered their initial appearance. In short, 42 500 ha of woodland have been developed thanks to the participatory approach strategy, despite some negligible constraints such as, for example, the absence of some group members during implementation. These absences were mainly the result of the coincidence of farm and forestry activities that were taking place at the same time. To address this, the project has bought three power-driven pumps for the groups to enable them to undertake off-season cultivation instead of losing in-season opportunity. This solution has encouraged everybody to put more effort into forestry work. Therefore, to succeed with this strategy, certain conditions have to be observed.

Conditions that contribute to the increased success of the strategy of participatory approach

The following steps contribute to the success of the strategy of participatory approach:

- The partners should be involved in all phases of the process, from the survey of the envisaged area to the final implementation of the project.

- First, a courtesy call should be made to traditional chiefs (district or village chiefs) without providing, on the first day, the details of the object of the visit.
- The chiefs should be told that the forestry team will see them in the near future (so that they will realize that the subject is important and that the team is serious about it).
- During the second visit, the team should explain to the chiefs what it intends to do on their land with their support. On this occasion, the project activities should be explained to them. All of their opinions should be considered. Nothing should be done to counter their decisions, because they are more authoritative than anybody else in the village or district.
- Meetings should be organized with all the partners to introduce the objectives by skimming through what the team is aiming at or by orienting discussion towards what the team intends to do in the field of forestry. All this, or at least the first meeting, should be done in the presence of the chief; otherwise, if partners are asked about their needs, they will mention water, schools and hospitals.
- The short-, medium- and long-term benefits of the project should be discussed further, and other meetings should be organized.
- Support measures should be adopted to offset certain situations (off-season cultivation or other encouragement activities).
- The team should be sufficiently clear in explaining the objective of the project so that the people will know that project interventions are going to be in their interest and not in the interest of the Forestry Department. This has to be an integral part of everything the team intends to do on their land.
- The farmers should be treated with respect.
- The team should be integrated into the groups and be an integral part of them. This is an ideal way to gain the farmers' confidence.
- Emphasis should be placed on information, sensitization and specific, on-the-job training, a condition that is considered appropriate for the success of projects practising the strategy of participatory approach.

