

Implementation Status of the 2020 Strategy for Rural Development

Kingdom of Morocco

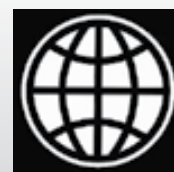
Summary Report



**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS**
Investment Centre Division



KINGDOM OF MOROCCO
Ministry of Agriculture,
Rural Development and
Maritime Fisheries



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Rome, June 2006

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Background

This document presents a summary of the study on the status of implementation of the 2020 Strategy for Rural Development. The study took place from January 2004 to April 2005.

The objectives of this study, commissioned by The Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Marine Fisheries (MADRPM) and financed by the World Bank under the FAO-World Bank Cooperation Programme, were to report on the status of implementation and to identify recommendations and issues to foster a process of dialogue among rural development stakeholders.

The study was carried out by a team of national consultants¹ with the support of the FAO Investment Centre². They worked closely with MADRPM's Land Development Directorate, which was responsible for supervising the study. Following its terms of reference, the team focused on a review of the institutional and legal context for implementation of the 2020 Strategy and on an analysis of practices of recent or ongoing programmes and projects. The team also focused on identifying recommendations and lines of thought for debate.

The full report details the findings and recommendations contained in this document and illustrates them with numerous examples taken from field interventions and international experience³.

Throughout the preparation process, the findings of the study prompted substantial exchanges of ideas and feedback, which began in July 2004, all of which culminated in a national workshop organised by MADRPM on 9 November 2005, in cooperation with UNDP, FAO and the World Bank, entitled « Progress Report on the 2020 Strategy for Rural Development, prospects and financing ».

Some of the ideas discussed have already borne fruit, initially in the process of reform recently instituted by the MADRPM, and subsequently concerning the National Initiative for Human Development. Actions to address some of the limitations identified in the study are now under review, and thus deserve to be updated (See Note to the reader).

1. The team included Messrs Larbi Zagdouni, agroeconomist, Coordinator; Mohamed Tozy, sociologist and political scientist; Mehdi Zirari, social-legal expert; and Kamal Belabbes, rural engineer.
2. Support provided by Ms Elen Lemaître, agroeconomist.
3. See « Etat des lieux de la mise en œuvre de la Stratégie 2020 de développement rural » - Main report on the study (Final version), MADRPM – FAO – WB, 15 April 2006.

Note to the reader

This study was completed in April 2005. Meanwhile, the institutional context has evolved. By the date of publication, certain recommendations will have already been implemented, and are thus no longer current.

The Secretariat of State for Rural Development is a key player in these recent changes. In January 2005, roughly one year after the study was launched, the Secretariat prepared a **Plan of action**⁴, proposing interventions in ten key areas consistent with the recommendations of the study: (i) strengthening inter-ministerial coordination; (ii) consolidation of the Rural Development Fund (FDR); (iii) decentralisation, (iv) collaboration with NGOs, (v) international cooperation; (vi) continued efforts to develop and equip agricultural and rural areas, (vii) revitalisation of proximity services, (viii) diversification of job-creating and income-generating economic activities, (ix) development of human capital, and (x), establishment of a network for studies and research on rural development.

Then in April 2005, the Secretariat of State for Rural Development submitted to the Prime Minister a **programme of action**, in which the ten key areas of this plan of action were reduced to four priority short- and medium-term axes: (i) strengthening inter-ministerial coordination, (ii) consolidating the FDR, (iii), diversifying rural economic activities, and, (iv) developing human capital.

As part of this process, the Secretariat coordinated the preparation of two further proposals: a **draft circular** establishing the modalities for the preparation, financing and execution of rural development projects and a proposed **draft framework legislation** defining a charter for rural development. This draft law dealt with the following aspects: (i) institutionalising planning for rural development at the regional and communal levels, (ii) setting up regional, provincial and communal extensions of the Permanent Inter-ministerial Committee for Rural Development (CIPDR), (iii) drawing up memorandum of understandings with communes, (iv) mobilising funding through the FDR, (v) defining levels of participation, (vi) strengthening incentives for private investment in the rural sector, including non-farm sectors.

Lastly, the **National Initiative for Human Development (INDH)**, launched by His Majesty the King on 18 May 2005, represents a major step forward for reducing poverty and vulnerability, especially in rural areas. One of its prime objectives is to help establish new relationships among communes, local governments, the administration and the technical services. Under the INDH and its implementation, the technical services and the administration will no longer decide alone how to address the needs of the people. The people, represented by the Local Human Development Committees (CLDH) headed by the commune presidents, will set the priorities for action funded to implement this initiative. This initiative institutionalises and generalises principles, approaches and modalities for implementing integrated, participatory development programmes that are wholly consistent with the 2020 Strategy for Rural Development and the recommendations generated by the present study⁵.

4. « Action Programme of the Secretary of State for Rural Development, January, 2005 ».

5. See « National Initiative for Human Development – Platform for a Plan of Action » August 2005.

A. PURPOSE AND APPROACH OF THE STUDY

The 2020 Strategy for Rural Development (2020 Strategy) constitutes a forward-looking vision of organisation and action for rural development. Its principles mirror those underlying the concept of good governance. They are based on the premise that “*rural development cannot be the sole responsibility of the State, but must rather be based on the initiatives and projects of local stakeholders*”, and that “*the role of the State in rural development is primarily to create an enabling environment for development and to provide guidelines and support their implementation through institutional mechanisms, incentives and appropriate resources.*”⁶

To establish this enabling environment, the 2020 Strategy sets forth four approaches and methods of action: (i) integration and a holistic approach, (ii) territorialisation and decentralisation, (iii) responsabilisation and participation and (iv) partnership and negotiated approaches to development action. It further proposes **tools for implementation and resources** “whose introduction, strengthening or mobilisation will facilitate the actual transition from political and methodological statement (the Strategy) to programmes of action”⁷, meaning the institutional, financing, planning and monitoring instruments for its implementation.

In the absence of the translation of 2020 Strategy into a plan of action against which to measure its implementation⁸, the study analysed the evolving situation in the institutional and legal environment for rural development and in the financial instruments and mechanisms, and the extent to which the recent or ongoing programmes and projects are consistent with the Strategy.

A *sample of 15 projects* was reviewed in the field. These were selected as representative of a wide range of agro-ecological conditions, extent of activity integration, size, duration, donors, task managers and management methods (see annexed list)⁹. In the field, the team also looked at programmes for drought control, provision of drinking water and rural electrification and at experiences led by NGOs and local development associations.

Lastly, the team reviewed a number of project documents for reference.

What follows is a review of the status of the implementation of the 2020 Strategy, with its successes and limitations, followed by recommendations for decision-makers and donors.

B. IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF 2020 STRATEGY:

I. Significant progress in line with the strategy

The major developments since the Strategy was devised (apart from the ongoing process of decentralisation and deconcentration initiated long before it began) are in line with the basic principles and recommended approaches of 2020 Strategy. The progress is visible as much in the institutional, legal and financial planning aspects as in the practices employed under rural development programmes and projects.

I.1. Financing, legal and institutional aspects

Among the major advances made since the development of 2020 Strategy for Rural Development are the following:

- The importance of rural development was brought to bear when the Ministry of Agriculture was explicitly given the responsibility for rural development (1998).
- New institutions were established to revitalise rural development, including the Permanent Inter-ministerial Rural Development Council and Committee (1999); the High Commission for Waters, Forests and Desertification Control (2003); and the State Secretariat for Rural Development (2004).
- The legislation on associations was amended and new provisions adopted to strengthen the role of associations in the process of development (2002 and 2003).
- New financing mechanisms and instruments were introduced: the establishment of the Social Development Agency (1998); the organisation of the micro credit sector (1999); and the adoption of new budgetary procedures (2001).
- New programmes based on the same principles and recommending the same approaches as the 2020

6. « Stratégie 2020 de développement rural ». Summary document. Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development, and Marine Fisheries. 1999.

7. Idem.

8. The first occurred in January 2005 with the preparation of the Plan of Action of the Secretariat of State for Rural Development, at which time this paper was already well along.

9. These projects (except for the most recent) had been prepared, undertaken and even completed prior to the 1999 development of the 2020 Strategy for Rural Development. Analysis of these projects cannot thus be construed as an evaluation of the implementation of the Strategy. The idea here is to compare their modalities of implementation with those recommended by the Strategy.

Strategy were developed and adopted. Prominent among these were the National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (adopted in 2001), the National Scheme and National Charter for Territorial Development (adopted in 2004), based explicitly on the Strategy. In particular the National Initiative for Human Development, launched by His Majesty the King on the 18 May 2005 follows the same principles and approaches and extends them.

- A new generation of rural development projects is now implementing many of the principles of 2020 Strategy. This is particularly true of the Al Haouz Mountainous Areas Rural Development Project, the Irrigation-based Commune Development Project (DRI-PMH) and the Rainfed Agriculture Development Project (DRI-MVB).
- A number of reforms have been instituted to moderate and give a new impetus to the agricultural sector, including incentives for private investment, apprentice training for young rural school drop-outs, and so forth.
- Lastly, numerous discussions were conducted and proposals were formulated concerning the key issues raised by 2020 Strategy. These included the integration of sectoral policies and programmes, financing for the Rural Development Fund, territorial extension of the Permanent Inter-ministerial Council and Committee, the reorganisation of the Ministry of Agriculture, and reforms concerning the farm sector (land ownership, the legal framework, quality issues, and the like).

I.2. Project and programme practices

A review of the available documentation and analysis of programme and project practices also highlighted significant progress, including the following prominent examples:

- *Virtually all programmes and projects analysed have adopted a participatory approach*, which strengthens the capacity of development actors. Government services and consulting firms are now better equipped to intervene in the rural sector. Associative ties are now stronger with the emergence of local organisations and better-structured intermediation associations with more opportunities for young graduates. Lastly, there are many more small local firms, especially in the remote areas, facilitating cooperation with the local population, providing local employment, and injecting project financing into the local economy.

- The implementation of specific programmes and projects (PERG, PAGER, PNRR¹⁰ and more recently DRI-PMH and DRI-MVB) has been devolved and decentralised.
- A new generation of projects introduced improved practices for promoting coordination, integration and local partnerships. These included the Oued Lakhdar Watershed Management Project, the Al Haouz Mountainous Areas Rural Development Project, DRI-PMH, and DRI-MVB¹¹.
- Localised research and development activities designed to improve project targeting and the quality of support and advisory services to beneficiaries were the focus of greater attention, particularly under the Oued Lakhdar, Sidi Driss, MEDA Chaouen, DRI-PMH and DRI-MVB projects.
- Innovative experiences proved that effective support for the implementation of a marketing strategy fostered the development of productive activities for the benefit for local people such as farmers and rural women, even in difficult contexts.

II. Gaps and limitations

Progress, however, has been tempered by significant legal, institutional and financing mechanism limitations, but especially by limitations in rural and agricultural development programme and project practices.

II.1. Institutional, legal and financing mechanisms

With reference to decentralisation, *communes* are playing a secondary role in most of the projects analysed. This is partly due to their lack of financial and human resources, but largely due to the institutional framework of the projects which, starting from their initiators (whether the Government, donors or NGO's), fail to take full account of the key role conferred upon *communes* by law.

As for *deconcentration*, the lack of a clearly defined policy has created a situation where genuine transfer of power from the central government to the external services is lacking. In terms of the budget and the exercise of administrative oversight, most provincial technical services have only limited administrative authority, though there is nothing in either the institutions or the law to prevent the delegation of power from upstream to downstream.

Concerning *financing*, the implementation of mechanisms adapted to the recommended approaches of 2020

10. The Rural Electrification Programme (PERG), the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (PAGER) and the Rural Roads Programme (PNRR).

11 See abbreviations and acronyms in annex

Strategy is still hampered by many difficulties.

- The operational modalities for consistent, sustained financing for the Rural Development Fund are not yet in place.
- Micro credit operations in the rural sector are still severely limited.
- The new budgetary procedures need further fine-tuning: (i) new arrangements exclude the operating budget, (ii) streamlining and flexibility measures do not address the need to integrate activities, (iii) the proposed approach to designing and measuring performance indicators fails to address the real situation of the preparation and negotiation of investment budgets, much less the needs of participatory planning.

As for legislation, Law 33-94 covering the Rainfed Agriculture Development Project (PMVB) is not designed to ensure genuine integrated rural development action. Its cumbersome administrative procedures and the inapplicability of its provisions concerning farmer participation make it very hard to implement.

II.2. Insufficiencies of programme and project practices

With respect to *coordinating and integrating* project interventions, the problems are diverse and multi-faceted.

- One of the more striking observations concerns the variety of designs and approaches, even for projects sharing the same objectives and activities and implemented in similar agro-ecological areas. Some are even working in the same provinces on the same subject matter. That is the result of different starting points, which vary according to the roles assigned to the sectors and the partners.
- The lack of coordination and consistency, characterized by *two types of interventions*. One the one hand, integrated development projects based increasingly on the participatory approach to local planning, and on the other hand, the so-called “sub-sectoral” operations, mainly governed by technical criteria. Both types of operations tend to be carried out in tandem with approaches that are sometimes contradictory and or not always clearly spelled out. The concern of covering a larger share of the territory while minimizing the intervention costs, calls for a harmonization of the two approaches.
- Many services tend to take an exclusive, top-down approach, and do not cooperate with parallel services, including those working under the same authority.

- Lastly, there are cases where even the stakeholders directly involved in project execution fail to cooperate and coordinate their actions.

These difficulties hinder the effectiveness of project operations.

- Project teams sometimes tend to take charge of work that should be done by other services, exacerbating conflicts of competence, jeopardising the quality and sustainability of project actions, and cutting into the time project teams have for the work for which they are actually responsible. The result is different and even contradictory approaches in the same territory. An adjustment of the Ministry’s organizational chart may be necessary to allow for greater efficiency.
- Lack of coordination leads to the duplication of certain efforts, such as the preparation of technical source-books.
- Lastly, the plethora of approaches, even sometimes by the same actors, is unquestionably a source of confusion for beneficiaries and partners alike¹².

Finally, the current procedures in force for budgetary planning cannot guarantee effective integration at the provincial level. Such integration would require that the devolved services (*services déconcentrés*) are entitled to produce joint programmes of action at the provincial level, have the authority to make decisions regarding resource allocation and capacity to implement them. This is still not the case today.

Support by the central government services to the provincial services is key in a number of areas such as methodological, technical, financial support, as well as the management of human and physical resources. There would be greater appreciation of this support if: the institutional arrangements stipulated in project documents were easy to establish on time. This would allow for the central project steering committees and coordination bodies to meet at regular intervals as required, and to provide supporting missions for services working in the field.

Project support for the development of productive activities needs further improvement:

- The participatory planning approach, as currently practised, usually tends to favour social services and infrastructure investments that are easily identified and get consensus from local communities. Productive

12. While there is no need to call for total standardisation of the modalities of project implementation, their approaches need to mesh, at least where project objectives are analogous and the territories where they operate similar. This is true of the MEDA-Chouen, Oued Lakhdar and Sidi Driss projects, for example, which both involve agro-pastoral mountain areas (the first the Rif and the other two the High Atlas).

- activities and activities related to sustainable natural resource management tend to receive less attention.
- Support for productive activities is often scheduled to intervene only late in the project cycle and ends once the infrastructure is in place. The delays necessary for the identification and implementation monitoring of the productive activities should be better taken into account - from the conception of the project and in particular in marginal areas.
 - More generally, and especially as a result of the “project approach”, there is not usually much monitoring of project interventions. This is detrimental to project effectiveness and impact.

The sustainability and cost-effectiveness of productive activities are not always established:

- The identification of productive activities is not generally based on careful prior knowledge of the target area and a clear perception of the area’s potential.
- There is no reliable analysis of the market demand and potential problems with marketing prior to the selection of productive activities. There is not much use of the supply chain management approach, which would take into account marketing issues.
- The promotion of local economic initiatives only rarely entails support for the design and implementation of a marketing strategy, even when the technical services would be in a position to support vertical integration of the supply chain, through linking small farmers with private operators and helping them to form associations.

The proximity services (i.e. *centres de travaux*) lack the necessary tools and capacities to carry out a reliable ex-ante financial analysis. They also lack the tools to enable the preparation, analysis and monitoring of small-scale investment projects; such tools exist and could be further developed.

The Study laid no claim to evaluate in depth the technical quality of the water management schemes and infrastructures implemented by the projects analysed. Nonetheless, observations in the field identified some key problems constraining the quality and sustainability of the infrastructures:

- Many schemes suffer from design problems, particularly in the case of soil and water conservation works that are highly sensitive to climatic hazards. There is a need to monitor and keep documentation on the installations already in place, and to adapt the standards used to conditions on the ground.

- Works, installations and their maintenance are often insufficiently monitored, mostly because of the lack of resources mobilised for this purpose, coupled with the lack of incentive mechanisms to bring in the available expertise. Some projects contract out these tasks, but this is not systematic, though the current recommendations are going towards a direction of a more systematic outsourcing.
- Beneficiaries often fail to take over these development schemes because they are not sufficiently involved in their selection, and implementation monitoring or supervision -- a frequent and severe constraint to project sustainability. A more explicit devolution of responsibilities, in line with an institutional strengthening of the operators, could contribute to improving this aspect.

As for the management of existing human resources, the analysis revealed weaknesses that resulted in the full potential of human resources not realized, hindering project effectiveness:

- The skills developed through implementing participatory projects are not fully used.
- The services in charge of the projects lack staff and managers with the necessary technical and social skills, adaptability, innovative capacity and communications skills to promote a partnership approach to development.
- In addition to specialised technical skills, the staff of these services need training in a number of cross-cutting domains such as economic and social sciences, documentation and data processing management, financial and administrative management, and the like.
- Human resources allocation among the Ministry’s various entities fails to consider the volume and nature of their activities.
- Recurrent restrictions on the operating resources allocated to the devolved services constrain their effectiveness.

The implementation of an effective participatory approach is often limited by *the lack of training for the elected council members and representatives of local interest groups*, especially upstream of the planning phase. Except for the new generation projects such as Al Haouz, DRI-PMH and DRI-MVB, which are duly addressing this important aspect, the few capacity-building initiatives observed are somewhat unprofessional and lacking in overall strategy.

Project reviews and interviews with services involved in their implementation highlighted *financing problems* which are fairly common, i.e. *failure to adapt procedures for bottom-up/participatory approaches* and *failure to budget for operating expenses*.

There is a real need to make progress on monitoring, evaluation and capitalisation of project interventions. Their effectiveness and durability depend on this. Monitoring systems are, in fact, only rarely used as tools for project management, and evaluations are often disparate, one-time affairs. There is a failure to capitalise on existing experiences. And, lastly, information needs to circulate better.

D. CONCLUSION

The gaps and limitations brought out by the study confirm the need to adhere to the principles and recommendations of the 2020 Strategy.

The study also shows that some projects perform better than others (even under the same constraints and limitations), thanks to three basic factors that reinforce each other:

- *The project team*, whose professional skills, ability to communicate, management skills and credibility are crucial to project success;
- *The human setting*, in which the existence of indigenous forms of organisation and mobilisation coupled with credible leadership offer an enabling environment for the success of participatory projects when they are able to mobilise these vital social and human strengths;
- *The adoption of an integrated approach*, which is a powerful lever for mobilising and enlisting the participation of local stakeholders and for their responsabilisation.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

The review of the implementation of the 2020 Strategy for Rural Development led to a number of recommendations along with (and, in some cases, going beyond) the spirit of this strategy and tracing the contours of a possible future programme for rural development. The implementation of these recommendations is *not the sole responsibility of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development*, which confirms the key role of the Permanent Inter-ministerial Council and Committee for Rural Development.

The main thrust of these recommendations embodies three major challenges:

- **The necessary institutional changes upon which successful rural development hinges.** The study brought out the limitations of implementing rural development in the absence of a prevailing institutional climate of deconcentration and decentralisation. On the ground, rural development and local development must go hand in hand. The key role of *communes* and civil society in implementing rural development must be acknowledged as part of a clearer vision of the respective responsibilities of the various stakeholders. This implies refocusing the role of the State. The potential of rural *communes*, despite the capacity limitations noted, is strong enough to carry forward rural development policies¹³. This vision mirrors the direction that the Government is taking, that is working to bring decentralisation forward and readjust sharing of responsibilities and authority among the State, *communes* and civil society. In a decentralised system, the potential role of the *regions* will have to be carefully delineated. Commune skills and capacities would necessarily need to be bolstered, including the capacity for developing self-financing. As for deconcentration, the study clearly reveals the limitations of participatory planning unless underpinned by the opportunity for devolved services and sectoral programmes to adjust their programme of work in response to needs expressed through participatory planning exercises.
- **Modernisation of the mission and organisation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.** The necessary trend towards decentralisation and deconcentration is clearly and primarily applicable to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The issue for the ministry is to reposition the services it offers in the light of its new partners: *communes* and civil society. Another issue is the allocation of responsibility to the various levels—local, provincial, regional and central – involved in the devolution process. Finally, the prerogatives of the Ministry's devolved services need to be reinforced and their role redefined to take into account the challenges of rural development and the emergence of new actors on the scene. The Ministry needs to be the lead agency for the development of a Charter for Rural Development following the lead of the Charter for Territorial Management, which would go hand in hand with the revision or abrogation of Law 33-94 and the revision of the Agricultural Investments Code.

13. Rural communes could comprise a suitable context for the mobilization of tax earnings or public savings. Resources should be available in the short-term, in that most of the communes are expected to have completed their programmes for the provision of basic facilities by the year 2007.

- **Support for productive activities.** Public infrastructure, such as roads, drinking water supply, electrification and telecommunications, is essential for a better quality of life in rural areas and to underpin economic development. But infrastructure alone cannot generate economic activities and boost job opportunities. Unquestionably, a broad-ranging strategy for support to productive activities in the agricultural sector will be needed, but it should also cover off-farm activities such as processing farm products, service enterprises and tourism. Such a strategy would include quality support for project proponents in the technical, management and marketing realms, better and more accessible information for economic operators, the development of new financing instruments and systems, and most of all, the implementation of broad support for the integration of supply chains that addresses and enhances the specificities of the regions.

Recommendations concerning the response to these three major challenges are outlined in detail below:

I. Placing decentralisation at the heart of rural development

Clear, incremental and balanced *devolution of responsibilities and of human and financial resources* to *communes* would make them the foci of important political and economic challenges, and would create a powerful incentive to participate in local political and economic affairs.

I.1. Redefining and refocusing the role of the State

Identify and allocate responsibility to the appropriate level of intervention. Decentralisation hinges upon refocusing the activity of the State, as a result of the flexible application of *the principle of subsidiarity*. What seems most applicable is a bottom-up approach to the identification of the most efficient and equitable levels for the transfer of competence and financing (this is not systematically the least centralised level). Some competences already assigned to rural *communes* may have to be transferred back again to the regional or central level. Discussions on these aspects are already taking place in the integrated rural development projects (DRI-PMH and DRI-MVB), but they deserve to be systemised and expanded to other programmes and projects and to the activities of other relevant ministries and public agencies.

Experience to date has led to the identification of the following levels of responsibility:

- The *douar* seems the most appropriate level for direct exchange with beneficiaries and the basis for consolidated planning at the commune level.
- The *rural commune* seems the most promising level in the long term for the development or consolidation of participatory planning, which might be contracted out.
- The *inter-communal structures*, such as associations of communes, are well suited to take responsibility for schemes too encompassing for a single commune and which need to be at the level of a specific geographical entity, such as a watershed or a forest. This implies revitalising and reorienting these structures.
- The *regions* should play a prominent role at the study phase (analysis of development alternatives) and to coordinate local demands with national policies and finance structural projects.
- At the national and provincial levels, the coordination among ministries should be emphasized in order to cover all the aspects needed for a more harmonious development and to ensure the needed synergies.

The State should not play an authoritative role in this adjustment process. Rather, it should *facilitate the devolution of responsibility to the lower levels as and when justified by the territorial stakes and desired by the local populations*. Intermediate levels might be set up through the establishment of policies to motivate regrouping and cooperation among *communes*, such as through inter-communal associations.

Rethinking the role of the State. Decentralisation implies the transfer of a number of State prerogatives to the *communes*. This transfer should be seen as a modification of the role of the State (but not its withdrawal from the activities concerned). It means a new focus of its main missions of promoting balanced development of the territory and taking responsibility for national cohesion. It means ensuring equal access to public services for all citizens, equitable resource access for communes and supporting development through the use of State fiscal and legislative powers to enhance national economic competitiveness.

I.2. Affirming the role of the regions in decentralisation and local development

Recent discussions on land management have highlighted the importance of the regions and led to a clearer view of their proper role in a decentralised system:

- The region should act as the *organising authority* in the key areas of land management and economic development.

- The regions should take the lead in *land use planning* and *the implementation of major public policies*. The regions should develop their “regional development schemes” (*i.e. schemas d’aménagement du territoire*) in association with the *communes*, and approved by the State, especially for key regions.
- The regions should take the lead in *planning actions in structural domains*, including rural and agricultural development, with the aim to ensure the territorialisation of agricultural policies.
- The region should be given *clear responsibility in matters of development* to back its economic development role. Expertise, survey, and support resources for the creation of economic poles can be provided by devolved State services or through the establishment of regional development agencies. Allocating responsibility for the productive sectors to the region will free the State to refocus its role to cover specific geographic or territorial priorities such as poles of excellence or endangered watersheds, or certain themes such as international investment projects.

These recommendations imply reorganising the partnerships between the State and the regions through contracting out some public services. Contracting out¹⁴ is an increasingly attractive tool for good governance and subsidiarity, offering the widely recognised advantages of flexibility, mobilisation and the responsabilisation of stakeholders. Contracts are a particularly efficient tool *for territorial development and supporting decentralisation*. They fit well into a forward-looking approach provided the State has clearly set out its long-term priorities, as in the case with the adoption of the National Scheme and the National Charter for Territorial Development. These priorities should be used as a framework for regional development schemes, perhaps under contractual agreements between the State and the region.

This procedure should lead to: (i) a *convergence of national policy interests* and emerging regional priorities, giving concrete form to the notion of the region through the region taking the lead with regard to planning, (ii) reinforce people’s participation in the decision-making process and *improve local governance*, and, (iii) *streamline public spending* through stricter and, importantly, transparent, public management. Using contracting-out to implement public rural development policies would represent a major opportunity for MADRPM’s services and for the technical services as a whole.

I.3. Promoting partnership between communes and civil society

Genuine interaction between communes and civil society is dependant on: (i) the participation of civil society in *programme design and decision-making*, through regular and formalised mechanisms, times and places, (ii) the participation of civil society in the *management of project activities*, (iii) the introduction of the *social audit*. The premises for such interaction are:

- a) *The establishment of a legal or regulatory framework* to ensure people’s participation at the various stages of decision-making and local management, as set forth in the draft reform of the Communal Charter.
- b) *The extension of communal council* to representatives of local communities through a more organised mobilisation of locally available expertise. This could involve communes establishing or reactivating effective local development committees. The institutional framework set up by specific projects and the one adopted under the National Human Development Initiative represent real progress in this sense.
- c) *Including beneficiaries* in development projects initiated by the communes as participants in the monitoring and reception of project activities, favouring the establishment of users’ committees to monitor the performance of enterprises delegated to manage public services. Experiences going in this direction deserve more widespread application as a matter of public policy choice.
- d) See that communes adopt *agreement and registration procedures* of local associations, and ensure the services of a focal point to interface between the communes and the local, regional or national associations.
- e) Include people’s participation among the *performance indicators of the communes*.
- f) Favour the *devolution of human and financial resources* to local associations. Institutional support to associations could be based on the concept of learning-by-doing implemented through clearly identified projects.
- g) *Set up arbitration bodies*. Autonomous and credible arbitration bodies should underpin partnerships between NGOs and communes, or NGOs and the State. The *Independent Human Development Observation Body* (*i.e. Observatoire national de Développement Humain*) set up by INDH goes in the direction of this recommendation.

14. Gestion des politiques publiques par des contrats associant de manière formelle les parties concernées.

I.4. Capacity-building of communes

Participatory programming and planning. The current weakness of planning capacity at the commune level has more to do with the *lack of a methodology* concerning procedures to be followed, rather than the lack of clarity regarding the functions of the communes and regions, well defined in existing laws. The communes would master more the planning process if the *internal organisation* of the services accountable to decentralised entities is improved and if a reliable *information system*, allowing communal council members quicker access to the current status of programmes operated by these services is established. (This does not imply that council members be directly involved in programme operations).

Monitoring execution. The State should turn to the communes for *monitoring* implementation. A legal text or, in any case a circular stipulating the organisational framework and modalities for devolving the evaluation function to communes is highly recommended. The functions of monitoring and evaluation should be institutionalised through the establishment of a *specific unit* within the organisational chart of communes, and the corresponding necessary funds allocated¹⁵. Regular meetings should be scheduled to review and discuss the monitoring and evaluation reports submitted by the services of the communes, their partners or external services.

Production and management support for the proximity services. In order to *promote investments*, the communes require a strengthening of their capacity in the area of *information mobilisation*, and adjusting their administrative structure to ensure that *services are both swift and transparent*. This would be in addition to the conventional tools that communes use, that is providing infrastructure and fiscal incentives. The complex and diverse nature of commune interventions implies substantial mastery of the technical and institutional aspects. The development of a number of technical sourcebook and standard or template contractual agreements that communes could use would be helpful. The General Directorate for Communes (DGCL¹⁶) has been rather successful in making such tools available to communes and is working towards making this, part of its main role. To this effect, technical ministries such as the ones

in charge of infrastructure, agriculture and rural development could provide useful support to the DGCL.

Information, training and technical assistance. An information, training and technical assistance unit within communes would certainly reinforce communes' ability to negotiate, build partnerships and contract. Such a body would include an arrangement to make information accessible to communes. It would suggest standard specifications and contracts, etc., and include a mobile team of trainers, primarily to help communes in negotiations. This unit could receive thematic support from the technical ministries. It would foster partnership between communes and devolved services.

I.5. Building the self-financing capacities of communes

Better tax collection. Current local tax collection procedures are both highly complex and inefficient. Local taxation needs to be optimised and simplified to increase the ability of the communes to collect resources of their own. This involves: (i) revision of the tax base, (ii) adapting rates to local specifics – perhaps merely simplifying the tax rolls and tax base – and, (iii) cost control through the decentralisation of fiscal management. In a context in which public services are gradually taking a back seat, it is legitimate to ask whether the cost of public services ought not to be gradually taken over by the user.

New financing methods (structural funds). Optimised local taxation procedures cannot in themselves ensure equity among the inhabitants of regions where resources are highly skewed. The redistribution of the share of VAT for which communes are responsible could help reduce inequalities among communes, giving them greater responsibility and improving budgetary management through better tax planning and greater fiscal autonomy. These mechanisms alone cannot ensure efficient adjustment¹⁷. One solution would be to set up new financing modes such as the structural funds found in the European Union. Morocco already possesses the institutional framework for the implementation of these mechanisms. This is especially true of the *Fund for Rural Development* and the *Regional Development Agencies*¹⁸.

15. This does not mean that the regions or communes should bear sole responsibility for project monitoring and evaluation, but they should participate in the process, and be competent to monitor and evaluate their own activities.

16. DGCL=Direction Générale des Collectivités Locales

17. The fact that decentralized entities are allowed to allocate the VAT to operating budgets completely neutralizes efforts to redistribute the tax burden and reduce inequality. This is why new mechanisms are needed to ensure the reallocated funds will add to but not replace local budgets.

18. Morocco has three such agencies today : in the North, in the South, and, most recently, in the East

Stipulating conditions for access to fiscal transfers.

Tax transfers should be used as performance incentives in the utilisation of resources. The idea is to link transfers to better planning and management of local investments. The adoption of such an approach implies setting up *performance standards* – procedures and criteria for the evaluation of performance. These procedures require *steering and management control mechanisms* for commune activities. This approach could take the form of a contractual policy with communes *based on objectives rather than resources*.

Facilitate access to financing contracts and loans. The management of sectoral funds should be devolved and opened to financing of local development. The implication here is that the *procedure for allocating sectoral funds would be revised so as to establish a very strong link between the granting of funds and their use*. Fund globalisation should also be introduced so that communes would know the volume of resources one year in advance, and give regions the opportunity to arbitrate among the requests of the various devolved levels.

1.6. Adapting financing procedures to the participatory approach

The adoption of the participatory approach in rural development projects is often complicated (or indeed even blocked) by *budgetary and expenditure regulations*. There is some room for manoeuvre, but often not much use is made of this possibility. Adapting financing procedures to the participatory approach relies as much on using the latitude provided by existing laws, as on modifying directives inspired as much by practice as by law.

Better budgetary procedures. Going from participatory planning to budgetary items is managed very differently from one project to the next, and performance levels also vary greatly. Two highly complex problems arise at this most delicate stage in participatory projects. These are: (i) establishing mechanisms to avoid long delays from the planning stage to actual execution (having to do with the availability of funds), and, (ii) tailoring the outputs of participatory planning to project targets.

The first problem can be at least partially allayed by *forward planning*. This simple mechanism allows planners to move away from a situation where budgets consist of simple increments of plans to an anticipation of needs.

Teams in most of the projects visited know enough about their target areas to anticipate the expectations of the target population, at least roughly and incrementally. They are thus in a position to list budgetary items on the basis of anticipations of future planning and ongoing interventions. The inherent risk of the anticipation of needs is to try to square actual planning with provisions already established. Making the final allocation of funds with the devolved services at the commitment stage can lessen this risk.

Streamlining current rules of expenditure. Project interventions are presently almost all implemented through contracts. This has its advantages, but a systematic recourse to this procedure has more to do with expediency than with any real consideration of requirements at the local level. In certain cases, recruiting beneficiaries for doing the work¹⁹ would probably be better.

Streamlining the flow of funds. There have been substantial modifications of the rules governing access to public funding in recent years. The Social Development Agency (ADS) and modifications in financing procedures for partnerships with the associations represent the major advances in this domain. However, access to funding is still difficult for some categories of potential beneficiaries because the procedures are simply too complex. The best way to unblock the problem of second funding tranches by ADS, a major constraint for the associations, would be to *simplify control procedures*, or else increase support to the beneficiaries. Expenditure procedures also need to be simplified to limit the management of the process of bids by local partners. Streamlined procedures like those introduced by INDH are promising and might well be extended to all development projects.

I. Modernisation of the missions and organisation of the ministry of agriculture and rural development

The prospect of accelerating decentralisation provides the Ministry of Agriculture with an opportunity to **reposition its “supply” so as to serve rural people through communes**. Experiments now underway in the DRI-PMH and DRI-MVB projects are illustrative of potential Ministry of Agriculture support for development planning. The Ministry’s technical skills and strong grounding in the rural sector, thanks to its extension centres in the rainfed agriculture areas, and the agricultural development centres in the irrigated areas put it in prime

19. i.e., travaux en régie, in French

position to offer support to communes on a systematic and broad-ranging basis.

II.1. Strengthening the prerogatives of the devolved services

Only *effective deconcentration*, i.e. devolving the responsibilities of the central administration to the external state services for *investment and action planning* as well as execution, can truly support the process of decentralisation. The preparation of local investment programmes, essential to strengthening the role of communes, implies a greater role for the decentralized services in the definition and arbitration of sectoral programmes. Of equal importance here is greater latitude for devolved services in charge of projects to choose their interlocutors and partners.

II.2. Organising responsibility at the different levels of devolution

Improving the capacities of the devolved services needs to go hand in hand with better coordination with communes and also a *clearer definition of the duties* of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Consideration of said duties should focus on the extent of the Ministry's responsibilities and how they are shared among the various levels of the devolved ministerial services (local, provincial and regional)²⁰.

Local level. The local level must assume a range of duties. Primarily, these involve *initiating and sustaining* a process to promote awareness among and motivate farmers concerning: (i) the importance of farmers' organisations and local development associations; (ii) productivity enhancement and the potential for value added for their products, and, (iii) effective farmer participation in the rural and agricultural development process. It also involves *strengthening the role of women and young people* in development. The local level will, therefore, need to produce and disseminate information on agriculture and the rural sector to all stakeholders, and offer a focal point where stakeholders can meet and discuss their options.

Provincial level. The provincial level will assume responsibility for *public services* such as animal health, food security, and fraud suppression and plant protection. It will also be responsible for *agricultural development aspects*, especially providing agricultural development guidelines, undertaking studies on development projects, consolidating information on agricultural development, and monitoring and evaluating the work of the devolved

services at the local level. Provincial services will also need to review the technical sourcebooks concerning farmland management, plant and animal production and environmental protection, in collaboration with the research institutes. As for rural development, the Ministry's provincial services will contribute to programme preparation and execution in coordination with the provincial services of other ministries.

Regional level. The establishment of regional deconcentration will provide better support for the decentralisation process and recognition of the role of the region as an essential link providing a focus for leadership and coordination, and proposing a coherent vision of agricultural development at the territorial level. A regional MADRPM structure could also act as a bridge to the central administration, ensure approval of budgets and programmes prepared at provincial or even local levels, and steer arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of rural interventions. A regional structure could also develop high-level expertise that could be mobilised for the benefit of all the devolved services. Such expertise might be applied to the preparation and implementation of the performance contract or memorandum of understanding between the Government and the region. Its advisory role for regional bodies would be important: it would be responsible for sustaining a process of awareness building about agricultural and rural sector priorities.

Central level. The central level will have to divest itself of its operational duties in favour of the other territorial services, refocusing its mission on the functions of *policy and strategy definition, regulation and standardisation*, and the *monitoring and evaluation* of the work of the devolved services. MADRPM and especially its State Secretariat for Rural Development have a key role to play in ensuring the *coherence of interventions*, mainly through simplification and harmonisation of the intervention procedures of rural development projects and programmes concerning:

- **Standard institutional set-ups** with clearly defined hierarchies.
- **Organised sequences with key stages, with reference documents** in standard format which would not change according to the donor.
- **Key levels of integration, linked to the various levels of local governments**, as described above.
- **Clearly defined levels of technical coherence, in line with the nature of interventions.** The level of

20. The role of the Ministry in rural development needs to be more clearly defined, especially with respect to the Permanent Interministerial Council and Committee for Rural Development, and the planned role of bodies representing their regional extensions.

technical coherence must correspond to the nature of interventions, e.g., the forest for forest management, the watershed for water management, and so forth. The level of integration, however, should remain the territory of the commune or that of the inter-communal association.

- **Contracting modes and supports adapted to the area of intervention.** Contracting procedures, modes and supports should be standardised by: (i) suppressing any support not of a formal, technical nature, (ii) integrating the various obligations under communal development plans, and, (iii) setting up validation bodies including both local communities' representatives and technical resource persons. The preparation of template contractual arrangements could draw from the most effective tools already in use.
- **Standardised monitoring and evaluation systems.** *Only standardised monitoring and evaluation systems* can provide consolidated, national-level, monitoring and evaluation of interventions both inside and outside projects, offering a real opportunity to learn from the on-going experiences. The adoption of highly effective monitoring and evaluation systems is crucial for interventions where responsibility is largely in the hands of local institutions and their partners. Needed here, rather than a rigid framework, are tools common to the range of interventions. Tools that can introduce M&E systems very early in the life of the project, and incorporate data collected at the national level. Room should be made for self-evaluation, and the principle of the mid-term and project completion audit should be incorporated. The MADRPM might well support the design and implementation of a national system based on enhanced sharing of the most effective tools. It might also ensure capacity-building and training for its services and partners.

II.3. Supporting the professionalisation of rural development actors

MADRPM, and especially its State Secretariat for Rural Development, has a key role to play in ensuring a stronger role for the people working in rural development. This would involve:

- **Making more of existing human resources**, especially by facilitating *partnerships among government services*. This would involve: (i) identification of professional expertise at the provincial and even national levels, (ii) greater acknowledgement of services rendered by officials for an administration other than his/her own, and of experience gained in the implementation of participatory projects, (iii) clearer allocation of responsibility to

technical stakeholders, who need to know their role in the participatory context (as practised at present, there is often a certain dilution of responsibilities), and, (iv) better relations between project management units and the other services involved in project implementation.

- **Strengthening the technical capacities of stakeholders.** This means: (i) identifying both “new profiles for local development” combining technical capability and social engineering, and the corresponding training needs, (ii) better training tailored to the new approach to rural development, (iii) better access to information (in technical sourcebooks and available expertise for development), (iv) systematic involvement of technical people in the evaluation process, (v) the development and dissemination of technical standards and processes for the implementation of works adapted to the various local contexts, (vi) enhanced training for rural youth in agricultural jobs and new employment opportunities in training and facilitation, and, (vii), support for the insertion of training school graduates in working life.
- **Better grasp of the target area** (context, socio-economic stakes, innovative local processes, agro-ecological specifics) by capitalising on the approach adopted by the new generation of development projects for this purpose.

Resource centre. The application of the above recommendations should include the establishment of a resource centre. This would provide an interface for capitalising on national and international experiences and the circulation of information and support methodology that would be dedicated to local rural development. The centre would provide a context for the exchange of experiences and discussions on local development. It would be designed to mobilise the necessary expertise to marshal and disseminate good project practices, and provide methodological support targeted at stakeholders as requested. This might take the form of a foundation with a board of administration and would be governed by the associations' statutes and declared a public utility.

II.4. Elaborating a Charter For Rural Development

It would be advisable to adopt a specific framework of action for rural development as a support to the decentralisation process and to provide effective support to productive activities in the rural areas. The 2020 Strategy for Rural Development suggests a holistic approach. Translating this approach into a National Rural Development Charter could turn this into a political commitment and provide its promoters with the legal tools for its implementation.

Such a charter would allow institutionalising the principles and approaches which the 2020 Strategy advocates. In addition, it would allow for the establishment of institutional devices necessary for the integration, the financing and the support of rural development programmes and projects as highlighted in the present study. Thereby, it could lay the rule according to which the implementation of programmes of rural development must be based on coherent and transparent procedures. This could take the form of a single programme of rural development for the region, matched with adequate financing mechanisms and procedures – thereby respecting the principles of territorialisation and integration.

Such a charter could also encourage the allocation of financial resources to local rural development projects managed by communes using a participatory process. And, lastly, it could encourage financial engineering techniques with respect to rural credit, offering the ideal synergy between public and private funding, reduce current financial constraints on rural enterprises, promote productive investment, and diversify rural economies. Greater participation by the public and private banking sectors (and that of other intermediaries) should also be encouraged.

The preparation of this Charter could offer an excellent opportunity for a national dialogue on the 2020 Strategy and its dissemination and appropriation by all concerned stakeholders. This exercise could also explicitly demonstrate the extent to which policies on decentralisation, land management, desertification control, poverty reduction, and the concept of sustainable rural development are interrelated. The preparation of this Charter could give rise to the revision or abrogation of Law 33-94, which has governed interventions in the Rainfed Development Sites (PMVB) for the last ten years.

MADRPM could both instigate and guide the preparation of this Charter through its State Secretariat for Rural Development.

II. ADOPTING A BROAD-RANGING APPROACH TO SUPPORT PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

III.1. Better and more accessible information for economic operators

The first need is to generate more relevant information on topics of possible interest to economic actors

by developing a vision of *regional economic potentials*. This would require prior identification of: (i) *the potential and strong points* of the various regions, (ii) *promising markets* for farm and other rural products – local, regional, national and even, international markets, and (iii) the needs and potential of *rural professions*. This would not be a one-time exercise. It would involve the introduction of a dynamic analysis with regular inputs and updates, which could be led by the regions and involve the participation of local economic stakeholders. Not confined to agricultural activities alone, it would contemplate the full range of potential economic activities, with a view to *diversify rural activities*. Information systems could also bring local stakeholders up to date on the *legal framework* governing their specific activity, *financing opportunities*, and *available technical or organisational support* and how to access it.

The next step would be to enable access to this information for rural stakeholders. One of the most effective solutions would be to set up *public action relays* in rural areas. This information and orientation could be conceived as a private service, with responsibility for it given to *young graduates* living in the area. Alternatives could be *private service centres* or using existing professional organisations as relays for the information. These solutions are not exclusive and could be conceived as complementary. The use of new information and communication technologies is also conceivable, provided it is coupled with assistance, training and advisory services, or turned over to local media such as rural radio which could also act as relays.

III.2. Better project targeting, better and more accessible technical support

The most critical problem for productive activities is the lack of support available to project initiators. Several simple measures could substantially reduce the failure rate of small productive projects. The first thing would be to systemise simple analyses of financial feasibility and marketing prospects. Greater consideration should also be given to *learning from the lessons* of similar small projects. A first step might be the dissemination of existing tools to facilitate the analysis, monitoring and evaluation of small projects²¹.

Another, though short-term, solution could be the mobilisation of existing skills for support to micro enter-

21. Such as the RurallInvest methodology developed by the FAO Investment Centre, for which there is genuine interest in Morocco.

prises, at least for projects with components involving support for income-generating activities. Associations working in the micro credit sector might offer working methods and tools they have developed for productive projects in the rural areas.

III.3. Develop and utilise new financing systems and tools

Set up incentive mechanisms. The analysis revealed the limitations of the participatory approach in support of productive activities as practised in Morocco. One solution would be to develop economic development programmes and leave it to the farmers or other stakeholders to adhere to the proposed programmes or not. This would imply setting up incentive mechanisms in accordance with simplified procedures. The use of existing subsidies would make it easier to correctly target public spending and enhance its impact, while minimising costs and reconciling the objectives of farm policies and bottom-up approaches. The recommendation here is to *adjust the levels of beneficiary contributions*, making this a proper incentive tool by introducing different levels of contributions, based on the strategic importance of the proposed measures, and at the same time generalising the adoption of *criteria of eligibility* based on project objectives.

Support the development of micro financing institutions in rural areas. The urgent issue here is: (i) to amend current legislation on micro credits so as to introduce the option of *mobilising savings*, (ii) to provide financial support for the introduction of experienced micro credit institutions in rural areas, and, (iii) to support the establishment of an alternative credit system based on savings

cooperatives.

Revise and harmonise the legal framework of investment. It is recommended that the Farm Investment Code and the Charter for Investment be revised to encourage investment in and diversification of economic activities in the rural sector.

III.4. Promoting supply chain integration

One of the fundamental recommendations of 2020 Strategy concerns the integration of supply chains. The objective is to give a new impetus to supply chains and enhance value added in rural areas through better marketing methods, post-harvest and processing.

The activities to be implemented should be adapted to the different products and local production areas. Reorganising marketing might range from simply combining sales, or go further, to conditioning and packing or even primary processing. Greater enhancement could also come out of product differentiation by encouraging the use of labels or even geographical indications.

As to methods of implementation, public stakeholders should not substitute for private operators in the organisation of marketing and product enhancement. Revitalising supply chains needs to be designed with a dual purpose of strengthening farmers' organisations as well as promoting links between farmers' organisations and the private sector, while supporting structural investments as accompanying measures. Positive experiences in this area deserve a closer look and should be drawn upon to a greater extent.

Appendix : List of projects analysed in the field

Table : List of projects analysed in the field	
PROJECT TYPE	PROJECT TITLE
Small and medium-scale irrigation projects	Tiznit Small and Medium-scale Irrigation
	Korimat Hydro-agricultural Scheme
Rainfed agriculture development projects (PMVB)	Tanant PMVB
	Ouled Dlim PMVB
	Reggada PMVB
	Akermoud-Moulay Bouzerktoune PMVB
	Sidi Ahmad or Moussa PMVB
Watershed management projects	Participatory Forestry Development in the Province of Chefchaouen
	Sidi Driss Watershed Erosion Control
	Oued Lakhdar Watershed Management
	Abdelmoumen Dam Integrated Watershed Management
Pastoral development projects	Tafilalet/Dadès and Errachidia Projects
Environmental projects	Transhumance for Biodiversity Conservation in the Southern High-Atlas
Integrated rural development projects	Al Haouz Mountainous Areas Rural Development Project ²²
	Irrigation Based Commune Development Project (DRI-PMH) ²³

21. Project launching and evaluation coincided with the preparation of 2020 Strategy.

22. This was the first project to explicitly refer to 2020 Strategy. The project evaluation document specifies that « the proposed irrigation-based commune development project (DRI-PMH) will be the first concrete application of the Moroccan Government's « 2020 Rural Development Strategy » which recommends a more participatory and integrated approach to rural development» (Cf. World Bank, Report n° 22002-MGR, Project Evaluation Document, 30 April 2001).