



Family Portraits

March 2005



SOS Sahel International (UK)

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Summary

Family portraits are tools for understanding and communicating how real families organise their time and other assets over time to make a living. The process of making and sharing the family portrait has the capacity to take individual and family perspectives to the level of policy change.

Why do a family portrait?

- To enable individual family members and families as a whole to better understand and analyse in detail their survival strategies
- To develop a historical perspective on the survival strategy of a family
- To help families and decision makers (e.g. in government or in development programmes) to understand the dynamics of mobile communities
- To enable families and communities to analyse the obstacles to their development and propose solutions
- To help decision makers better understand how people live, and how certain issues (HIV/AIDS, wage labour, conflict, access to natural resources) influence their lives
- To ensure that external interventions are informed by people's realities
- To help decision makers understand that ignoring different social groups represents an obstacle to development, and to bring them to accept a more inclusive approach to policy making and development practice

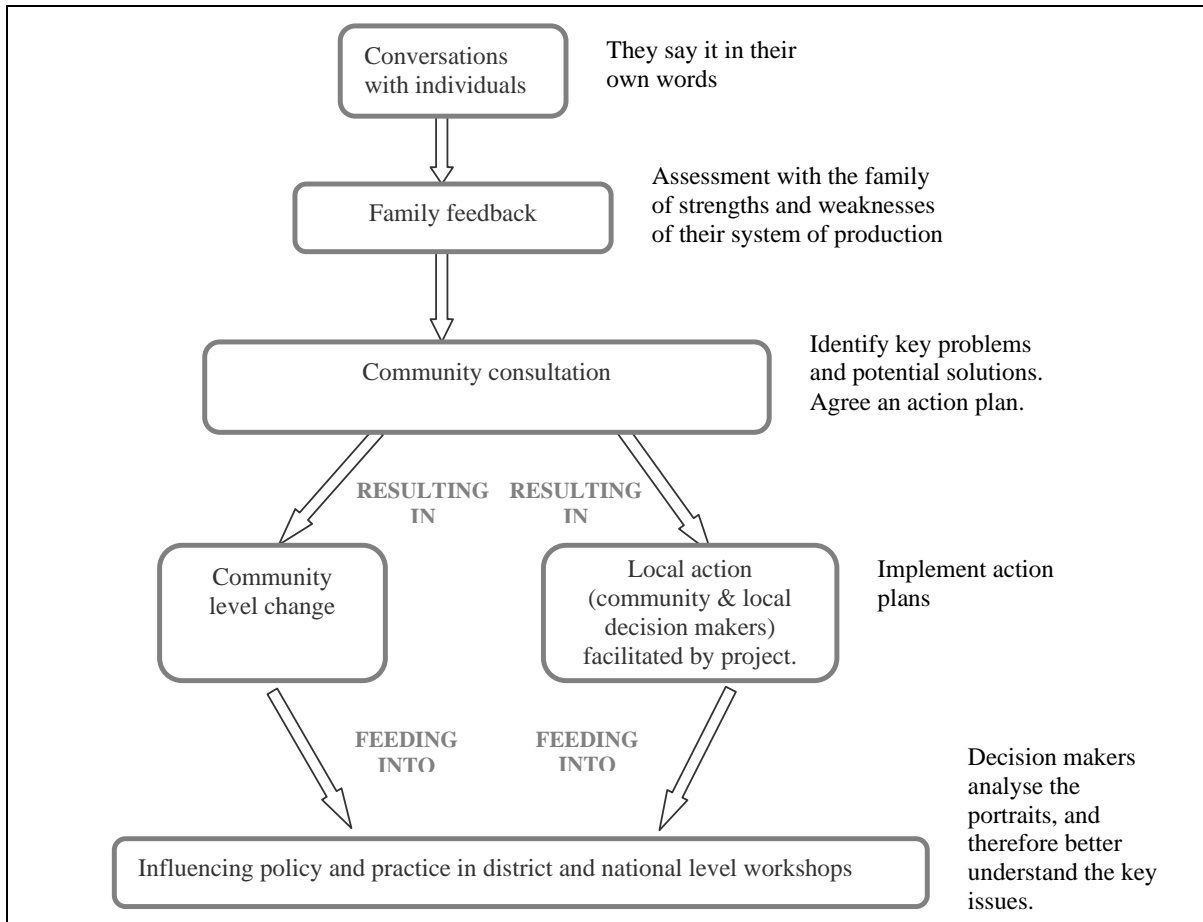
What is a family portrait?

A family portrait is a description and analysis of how a given family collectively organises its labour and other productive assets, such as land and livestock but also access to credit or social relations, in order to make a living. The portrait provides a great deal of detail on specific activities carried out by individual family members on a seasonal and historical basis, and highlights the major constraints they face in their struggle to provide for themselves.

The family portrait is a research tool, but one which presents an immediate human dimension to many of the issues surrounding sustainable development. Although the family portrait is a 'snapshot' of a given family who may not necessarily be representative of their community, it can be used to great effect to gain an in-depth understanding of broader livelihood issues and dynamics at community and higher levels.

The family portrait can be used in a pure research sense, as it often was in the past, where only the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the family. However, when it is used properly it is not an extractive tool but one that can develop mutual understanding between family members (men-women, young-old) but also between families, and between families of different groups. It is also potentially very powerful when used within a context of a broader programme of development work. It allows a participatory process of analysis by the family, their immediate community and even external people (other villages, local government, project workers etc). The process of making and sharing the family portrait has the capacity to take individual perspectives to the level of policy change.

The family portrait process – from individual perspective to policy change



Experience has shown the family portrait to be a 'tool of empowerment': a tool that contributes to greater and more informed dialogue, understanding and social inclusion, a tool that can help local, more marginal people contribute to policy design and implementation, particularly at the local level. But the family portrait is no more than a tool. As with all tools it needs to be used properly and contextually. It should be continually updated, or 'sharpened', with use. It is also a tool that can be easily misused, if used insensitively or without reference to context.

Making a family portrait

The essential steps

- *Develop a field guide* to guide research activities
- *Select a family* willing to devote time and effort to the development of their portrait
- *Work with the family to create the portrait* over 4-5 days, conducting informal conversations, observation and more visual participatory exercises guided by the field guide. Analyse information, write up and prepare further lines of enquiry with the family. Follow up until the field research team and the family are satisfied that the portrait is relatively complete and accurate
- *Hand back the portrait.* Transcribe the portrait in the local language with photographs and feed back the portrait to the family
- *Community consultation and policy influence.* Use the portrait to inform and facilitate reflection with the wider community and other decision makers

1. Develop a field guide

Develop the field guide on the basis of experience in the local area, perhaps through consultation in a training workshop. The field guide helps to structure the portrait and provide context for the study. The field guide:

- indicates why the family portrait is being done, e.g. to discuss conflict over access to natural resources, the impact of HIV/AIDS, or the extent and impact of wage labour
- lays out the context for the portrait, e.g. rural/urban, drylands/wetlands
- suggests lines of enquiry into different systems of production open to a family in the area of the study, e.g. wage labour, agriculture, pastoralism or factory work

The field guide is not a list of questions but a series of issues relevant to how families make a living in the area. Their relevance to the family, and to different individuals in the family will differ, so the field guide should not be treated as a compulsory checklist. An example of a field guide used in Mali is given in Annex One.

2. Select a family

The length of time it takes to do a portrait means the choice of family is critical. Be clear about your objectives: they determine the family and community you should aim to work with. If there is a focus on specific issues (e.g. pastoralism, wage labour, gender) the family must have experience of them. If the objective is more diagnostic or open-ended, a family considered representative of the community is more appropriate.

Spend time explaining to the wider community what you are trying to achieve and the process of making a family portrait, as their participation is essential for any wider or lasting impacts. Discussions with the community might include the type of family needed, the time the family would have to devote to the portrait and the openness and honesty required. The community can then choose the family, although be aware that local hierarchies can introduce biases (e.g. they choose the chief's family). Think of a strategy to counter this, perhaps when setting up the criteria, before handing over the choice to the village meeting. Sometimes nothing can be done about such biases, in which case it is important to acknowledge them whenever the portrait is used.

3. Work with the family to create the portrait

Collect information and insights from the family by spending time as a field research team with them for a period of four to five days. Take notes and, where possible, take photographs too. Follow the visit with analysis and write-up in the local language. Supplement the initial visit with further shorter visits as needed.

First develop trust and a personal relationship with the family. Spend time with each of them and listen to their perspectives. Ask some open-ended questions and build on their answers. Try to empathise with the family and help them to take the lead. You need to respect diversity in the family: people have different views and you will find inter-generational and gender divisions. Remember that it is not necessary to make people agree. Some information about how people access their livelihoods is very sensitive, thus it is important to respect who the family wants to include in discussions – they may not want outsiders. So certain discussion may need to take place with just the family head. If there are things they do not want to tell you don't pressure them, as it is through trust and confidence that you will learn how the family survives, not by asking direct questions.

Let the field guide help to structure your approach, but rather than follow it rigidly, engage the family in a 'conversation'. Questions should be open-ended (see below for examples). Your focus is to encourage them to talk and explain their lives in their own words. If they simply respond to questions, their own understanding of the issues will not be developed. Talk to different family members, groups within the family, and close friends. Do not spend all of the time with the head of the family. Use participatory techniques to deepen analysis of issues they identify, for example drawing a Venn diagram of social relations. Participate in daily activities: collecting water and firewood, cooking, or going to the market.

Use of open-ended questions

Issue in the field guide: Significant events for the family and how the family responded to shocks to their production systems.

Approach: Ask 'Could you tell us about the most significant events your family has experienced?'

How to follow up: Build on what he/she said. Ask why it was so significant, what were the lasting impacts, how they reacted to it, and in what ways it changed the way they lived or how they made their living. If there were major events such as famines or wars that occurred but they do not mention, ask why. Finding out how they coped during a drought could also be interesting.

Respect the family's other priorities. Don't spend too long talking or they will get bored. Mix interviews with participant observation. Give them space and use this free time to write up notes and think about further lines of enquiry. Stay with them if possible but also try to reduce the negative impacts of your stay (e.g. extra work for the women, disruption to daily routine). Depending on the culture bring food, or gifts, or arrange a community meal that everyone can benefit from. Your field research team needs to reflect the family: include both men and women, who speak the same language as the family. Translation is time consuming, breaks continuity in discussion and is boring for the family.

Write-up and analysis take time. The information collected will be disordered and further visits to the family will be necessary to deepen analysis around key issues they identify. Remember – you will never finish. Families change and contexts change: each time you visit mutual trust will increase and you will find out something new.

4. Hand back the portrait

After the visits, analysis and write-up, verify the portrait with the family and hand it back to them. The aim is that the family 'owns' its portrait and all members have a deeper understanding of how they make their living and survive. Feedback can take the form of a family meeting. Present the portrait verbally and visually, using tools such as flowcharts, and discuss issues as openly as possible. This way family members see their system of survival as a whole:

individuals in the family, their activities and social relations; the environment; the government; and the interrelations between these parts. The field research team should facilitate an informed discussion with the family from the basis of this feedback.

The feedback needs to be done in the spirit of trust and confidence. If issues are sensitive the team should take advice from individuals about whether or not to include them in the family feedback. Also the family can at this stage take out any confidential information they do not want to be recorded or shared with the wider community.

5. Community consultation

If the family portrait was designed to contribute to a development programme it must engage with the wider community. Involving the community will show how representative the snapshot of the family is, and generate community-level discussion and analysis of problems faced by the family and the strategies they used to deal with them. Experience has shown that these discussions are particularly strong because they focus on the reality of an actual family living within the community.

At this stage the challenge for the field team is to facilitate the verification of, and discussion around key issues. The aims are to find solutions to common problems, develop action plans or inform decision makers (see below). It is important to keep the richness of analysis of the family without going into all the details. One approach is to use participatory exercises with groups of men and women based on a pre-classification of problems and strategies, followed by analysis of the causes of the problems, identification of solutions, and development of action plans.

Aims:

- To assess how representative the family portraits were of the wider community in order to use them in a broader programme of consultation about natural resource management
- To analyse further problems of access to, and conflict over, resources
- To identify local mechanisms for management of natural resources in the area.
- To develop local action plans to address problems identified

Using the relevant portrait, prepare cards representing each general problem the family faced (e.g. soil infertility, lack of labour, no access to watering points in the rainy season). The strategies the family used to overcome these problems (e.g. spreading manure on the fields, using village work groups, or moving the cattle elsewhere in the rainy season) can be put on cards of another colour. Present these cards to the meeting and ask participants to complete the two lists. Then in sub-groups of men and women, participants can categorise the cards within the matrices below.

Classification of problems matrix

	Experienced by all families	Experienced by some families	Experienced by one family
Getting worse			
Staying the same			
Improving			

Classification of strategies matrix

	Used by all families	Used by some families	Used by one family
Introduced by this generation			
'Always' existed			
Not used any more			

In plenary, each group presents their analysis and discusses differences. If women are not comfortable speaking openly, a female project worker can present their analysis. Emerging common views can be noted, but not imposed. This exercise verifies how representative the problems and strategies of the family are of their community, producing a picture of the community-level problems and strategies.

The classification can then be 'interviewed' to deepen understanding of both the problems the community faces and how they have been tackled.

Interviewing the matrix: types of questions for the facilitators

Why do some problems only affect certain families?

Why are some families able to implement a certain strategy and others not?

Why are some problems getting worse and some improving?

Why have you stopped certain strategies?

What motivated you to introduce a new strategy – where did you learn about it?

The final step, which might be best conducted the following day, is to discuss the problems relating to access to natural resources which do not have corresponding strategies. These are often problems that cannot be addressed at the family level (e.g. conflict over woodcutting, lack of routes to access pastoral land and watering points). This discussion and analysis can be a useful starting point for the community to develop action plans for dealing with community-level problems. Action plans include identified solutions, responsible people, and required external support.

Family portraits can also be used as a tool in deliberations with higher-level policy makers. Some examples of making use of appropriate opportunities are given below in the next section, which describes the experience of using family portraits at household, community and government policy levels in Mali.

Examples of using family portraits in Mali

As an example of a family portrait in action, this section gives a critical account of how the Bankass Environment Project (SOS Sahel UK in Mali) used the family portrait tool to promote equitable and inclusive natural resource management in Mali.

Context

At the end of its first phase in 1997, the Bankass Environment Project identified the non-involvement of women and non-resident pastoralists in local decision-making processes as a major problem. The first phase of the project had responded to local priority needs for environmental management, and identified different stakeholders and institutions with an interest in or control over forests, water and land in Bankass District. The second phase, 1998-2002, focused on developing the capacity of local groups to manage natural resources within the context of newly decentralised government, with a particular focus on involving women and mobile pastoralists. The key institutions involved were traditional associations for natural resource management, decentralised government (communes and Bankass District), and the government technical services.

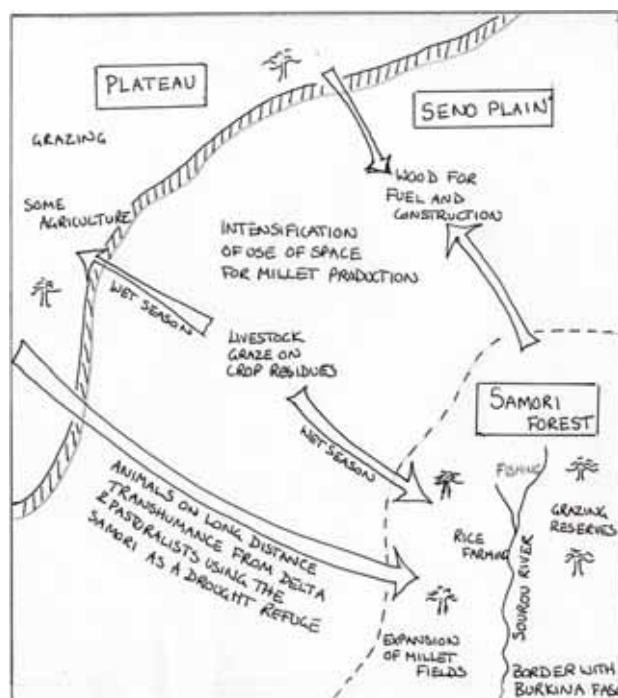
The exclusion of pastoralists from decision-making in natural resource management was also identified by SOS Sahel projects in Sudan, Ethiopia and Niger. This gave impetus to the Shared Management of Common Property Resources (SMCPR), an action-research programme funded by DFID, Comic Relief and NORAD. SMCPR aimed to develop competencies amongst staff to carry out action research with local partners with the aim of

including all the stakeholders (with a focus on pastoralists) in decision-making on natural resource management.

Natural resource management in Bankass District

Bankass District includes three agro-ecological zones, which define natural resource use in the district. To the north the Plateau reaches altitudes of 400 – 500 metres, with vegetation ranging from the thin layer of grasses found on rocky terrain to gallery forest in depressions along the ravines and wooded savanna on the sandy soils close to the cliffs. The Seno in the centre of the district is a huge sandy plain covered in fields. In the South the Samori Forest with clay and silt-clay soils boasts relatively plentiful forests and permanent water from a branch of the River Sourou.

Interactions among the agro-ecological zones in Bankass District



The differences in resources among the zones means that they serve interdependent functions for the population. The Plateau and Samori are rich in pastures and forest resources while the Seno is exclusively agricultural. Livestock from the Seno graze on pastures in the Samori and Plateau during the rainy (agricultural) season, people from the Seno use wood from the Samori and Plateau for fuelwood and construction, and livestock from the Plateau and Samori feed on crop residues and drink water from the wells in the Seno during the dry season.

There is, however, increasing evidence that this interdependence is breaking down. The Samori is a major pole of attraction for both residents (Dafing and Dogon farmers and Peul agro-pastoralists) and non-residents (Peul transhumant pastoralists). Pastoralists have long used the Samori as an annual wet season grazing area, and as a special resource in times of drought. However, there has been permanent water in the River Sourou since 1989, due to a dam constructed in Burkina Faso, which has resulted in an influx of sedentary farmers and agropastoralists who have expanded land under cultivation and diversified their livelihoods to include rice farming and fishing.

The Plateau, once abandoned due to its poor agricultural land and low security relative to the Seno plain, is now attracting resident and non-resident groups who farm regenerated lands and use forest resources for grazing animals. Meanwhile, agricultural expansion and intensification in the Seno means encroachment on grazing areas and livestock corridors. Crops are often damaged when livestock move either north to the Plateau or south to the Samori.

Thus the pressing issue is how to ensure equitable use of resources under conditions of increasing competition. At the moment this is not happening: land use is relatively anarchic and there is conflict among social groups and exclusion of certain groups especially pastoralists and women. In part this can be explained by increasing populations in the area and declining resources, but there are also structural causes such as the lack of appropriate institutions at both national and local levels.

At a local level customary institutions are weak, under-resourced, often inequitable, and unable to respond to change. Since colonial times they have been sidelined by governments. At a national level, laws have been inappropriate and applied without consideration for local differences. Forestry agents have been notoriously corrupt – resulting in non-cooperation of communities and sometimes conflict.

Since the early 1990s the Malian government has undertaken an ambitious programme of decentralisation. In 1999 local elections for representatives of newly demarcated communes were held. These communes are legally responsible for the management of natural resources within their locality. This has bought real hope that decentralised natural resource management can be tailored to local realities, and that people who depend on resources can negotiate conventions and rules governing their use.

But local does not necessarily mean inclusive or most effective. Mobile and sedentary pastoralists and women need a voice in local decision-making bodies. At present in Bankass District this is not happening because:

- Mechanisms do not exist to involve transhumant pastoralists in, or inform them of local decision-making processes
- The dominant mindset amongst farmers and decision makers is that pastoralism is destructive, which they use to validate policies to encourage sedentarisation and expansion of agricultural land
- The farmer herder dichotomy persists with decision-makers and populations who do not appreciate the diversity of systems of production and interdependence among them
- Customary law supports the idea of the first occupant which favours agricultural occupation over season use of pastoral resources
- Cultural norms, low levels of literacy and basic education for women, and heavy workloads mean the extent and quality of women's participation is low
- Seasonal movement of herders across communes, districts and regions, exploiting different resources means that the commune is not always the best level at which to decide on resource access and use

The key challenge is that people recognise they all have to share the resources in the long term. For local management to work, institutions (local government and local natural resource management associations) have to involve all stakeholders in decisions about how resource access is regulated.

The project approach was to support a process to allow local populations to better understand the dynamics of their natural resource use; the dynamics of how their use interacted with other groups; and the synergy that exists and could be further developed

between groups. This analysis would enable them to identify institutional mechanisms to better manage competition for resources and overcome the constraints to production (e.g. soil fertility, conflicts, access to water). The project could then support an informed debate with decision makers at all levels whilst ensuring democratic and equitable involvement. The family portrait played a key role in this process, bringing understanding of different systems of production to the debate, as well as facilitating inclusive consultation and action from a family to district level.

Making four family portraits in Bankass District

The project team made four family portraits between 2000 and 2002. Two portraits were of families of pastoral origin who also practised agriculture, one in the Samori and one in the Seno; one with a resident farming family in the Samori who also fished; and one with a transhumant pastoralist family, who travelled between all three zones and further afield. The team felt that four portraits would develop a reasonable picture of the range of systems of production in Bankass District, their locations and their interdependence. The number was also limited by time and budget constraints, and the need to feed into ongoing activities on natural resource management in the district.

Tips for doing a family portrait – as learned from the Mali experience

- Team members should speak the language of the family, include men and women, and have empathy and a flair for enquiry
- Let the family dictate the breadth and depth of the enquiry – you can't force them to take you into their confidence
- Have a realistic time frame so that the portrait can feed into a broader programme of development, for example project design, community consultation about a specific issue, local action, or monitoring and evaluation
- Make sure the team understands that this is not a piece of work that will end – it should be treated as a resource that can be used in workshops, publications, and community consultations
- Get the wider community involved – they will be curious
- Keep an open mind, let the process of the family portraits lead you within your broad objectives

Selecting the families

Three families were chosen at village meetings. The SOS Sahel project was well known in the area, which made introducing the idea much easier. The objective, process, and criteria for choosing the family were explained. The criteria were: sufficient time to participate, openness to discuss livelihood strategies, and some elderly members to help gain a historical perspective. The choice of family was then handed over to the community.

In two villages the chief's family was chosen. Although by no means the richest in the village, it is probable that they were chosen because of their status, and did not represent a typical family of the village. The only advantage was that they were well informed on issues relating to access to natural resources, and changes over a relatively long time.

Several transhumant families were known to project staff from a study of transhumance undertaken in 1999/2000. Several families were contacted through their dry season hosts in the district. The venue for the family portrait study was agreed with the host and transhumant family.

Drawing the portrait

The initial visits lasted about four days with a small team (male and female) that stayed with the family. Building trust was essential at the beginning of the process and this took time. The first discussions were with the head of the family. When mutual confidence was built up other family members were drawn in, and separate exchanges could take place. As trust between the team and the family developed, so did the breadth and depth of discussions.

Engaging the family in a conversation meant information was gathered in a very haphazard way. Discussions often needed to be broken up to fit in with work, past events weren't always referred to in a linear way, and switching between time periods was common. Furthermore, perspectives of different members of the family of the same event differed. It was therefore vital to re-examine the information with the help of the field guide in the evenings, in order to plan how to orientate discussions the following day.

Accompanying the family in its daily tasks, the men to water the cattle or the women to collect water or fuelwood, reduced the disruption of the project team on the family and provided informal settings in which to chat about that activity and how it had changed over time.

Women were often reticent talking individually or in small groups within the household compound. It was important to find an appropriate space to enable them to talk freely, often while cooking, or over a shared task. The team also used seasonal calendars with women, where they examined income generation through the sale of milk and milk products.

Finding an appropriate space to talk with women



Peul woman mending a calabash

The families were not homogenous units and dealing with internal tensions and inequalities required sensitivity and tact. Ownership and management of the herd within the family, and the issue of succession was often cited as a key problem by the head of the family. When such sensitive intra-family issues were broached, if the head of the family was unwilling for someone to contribute, or that person was reticent speaking in front of the head, their point of

view was often omitted. In the same way the team had to deal very sensitively with conversations that did not include the household head.

After the first visit the team analysed the collected information, wrote up a first draft and developed a further field guide of issues to explore with the family. Up to three more visits were made until the team and the family were satisfied that they had a relatively comprehensive account. In the case of the transhumant family, the team visited both wet and dry season grazing areas. Creating a portrait of a family was not an exhaustive process. At each visit, there were further developments, arrivals and departures. However to feed into ongoing consultations on natural resource management, and mindful that the objective was not pure research, a 'final version' was agreed with the family.

Time and money

Costing out such an exercise is difficult because it fed into an ongoing process with many outcomes. However it was time consuming for the project staff and the participating families. Training for the staff took place in March 2000 and the workshop for decision makers at district level took place in February 2002. Drawing the portrait involved up to four visits staying with the family initially for 4 days and then a 2-3 days each time. Language was also a problem as 3 families spoke Fulfulde, only spoken by a few project staff. Thus the team comprised of at least one male and one female Fulfulde speaker, as well as other staff involved in the family portrait work.

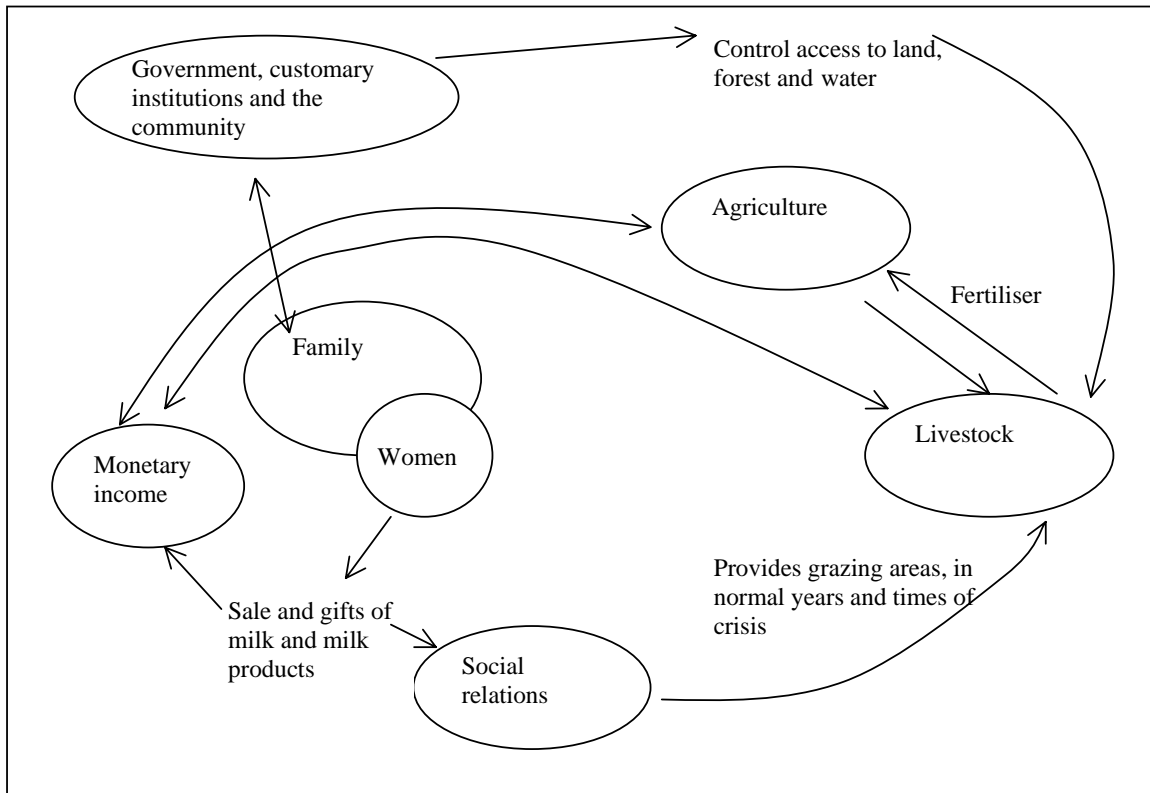
In addition to work in the field, translation into French, critical analysis and writing up all took time, and was not easy for the team. There were moments when the team, used to less time-intensive tools, questioned the value of family portrait as a tool for development. However through the community feedback meetings and the use of materials with decision-makers the strengths of the tool relative to other methods became evident.

Handing back the portraits to the families

In reality, feedback to the family was ongoing – a fundamental part of maintaining trust and always building on earlier discussions. In addition the team spent a separate day feeding back the entire portrait to all family members to engage them in a wider discussion and to verify that information was correct. To make the process more interactive, and to ensure illiterate family members could follow, the team prepared visual representations of the interrelations between the different systems of production (e.g. farming, fishing, herding), the family, and their links to other people, institutions, and places (see below).

The development and analysis by a family of their own portrait enabled them, collectively, to see and understand their own survival strategies, and how their different activities were interdependent. The two pastoralist families saw clearly how much they invested in relations with host families in the grazing reserve areas, in southern Mali and Burkina Faso, that they only use in very bad years. The family feedback also illuminated issues of identity : Belco Diagayete, a Peul, called himself a pastoralist, but on examining how his family survived he realised that the family depended more on agriculture than livestock. Similarly another Peul family concluded in the family feedback meeting that in order to secure their livelihoods they would have to focus more on agriculture than pastoralism, but when it came to their identity they remained 'pastoralist'. This illuminates two issues: that pastoralism is being squeezed as a livelihood strategy forcing people to turn to agriculture; and that the cultural division between 'farmer' and 'pastoralist' still prevails locally, but does not describe accurately what people do.

Example of schematic diagram used to present portrait to family



The family feedback was also a time to plan the objectives and methodology of the community consultation meeting.

Community consultations

Community consultations based on the family portraits turned out to be powerful fora for discussion and planning. People at the community consultations felt that the issues were of direct relevance to their livelihoods, ensuring lively and committed participation, plus they had a sense of ownership from having themselves chosen the family for study. The issues up for discussion had already been subject to lengthy and detailed analysis with the family, which the community meeting built on, using matrices to define common and specific issues within the community (see below for examples).

This engagement at community level resulted in a wider analysis that complemented the very detailed discussions held with the family. It was also useful for the family, as one family member commented how he was reassured to see other people discussing the same challenges and problems his family faced.

Examples from community consultations of use of matrix

Consultation with farming community at Oula

<i>Problem:</i>	Abandoning fields in the bush because crops are being damaged by animals
<i>Classification:</i>	Problem experienced by all families which is getting worse
<i>Details:</i>	The animals that damage crops belong to the Peul (pastoralist groups) and the most damage is done at night. The conflicts are harder to resolve because the Peul are rich and are able to bribe the authorities.

Consultation with transhumant pastoralists

<i>Problem:</i>	Difficult to access the Sourou River to water the animals
<i>Classification:</i>	Problem experienced by all families which is getting worse
<i>Details:</i>	Each year there are more rice fields alongside the river, the passages left for the animals are so narrow that you need more herdsmen to avoid damaging crops.
<i>Problem:</i>	Settlement of farmers in grazing areas
<i>Classification:</i>	Problem experienced by all families which is getting worse
<i>Details:</i>	The traditional authorities who allocate land do not recognise the rights of pastoralists to the land, nor defend their interests.

Community feedback meetings resulted in learning and action by communities and partners to address issues they identified. Two examples are:

1. Pastoralist organisational development

A group of transhumant pastoralists in the Samori Forest identified conflict over access to water, and grazing resources in the rainy season as their key problem. On-going migration of farmers into the area which was previously uncultivated forest, and the resulting expansion of rice cultivation along the River Sourou has cut off access routes to the river and reduced grazing areas. The resulting conflicts are harder to resolve because in-migration means that traditional host-pastoralist relationships do not exist. Participants identified the lack of communication and consultation among pastoralists who came to the area in the rainy season, migrant farming villages, and the local natural resource management association as a key problem. They decided that the fact that they were not well organised themselves, contributed to the lack of consultation over land use. Their action plan was to set up an association of transhumant pastoralists to act as the point of contact for sharing information, and to represent their interests in local decision-making on natural resource management.



Rainy season camp for transhumant family in the Samori Forest

2. Cross border relationships

Oula, a farming village close to the border with Burkina Faso, has suffered from ongoing conflict between Malians and Burkinabe over woodcutting in the Samori Forest. More stringent rules (and increasing privatisation of natural resources) in Burkina Faso meant that Burkinabe crossed the border to cut wood on Oula village lands for use and sale. This resulted in over-exploitation of forest resources and conflict

when woodcutters were challenged. When the conflict escalated women were unable to access markets and health facilities in Burkina Faso upon which they depended. This was discussed at the community feedback meeting of a family from Oula. The community requested support from the project to lobby for and help organise a meeting between the authorities and key stakeholders of Din in Burkina and Baye in Mali. The meeting resulted in a commitment to respect the laws in Mali and Burkina, and a cross-border forum meeting every six months to manage conflicts over natural resources.



Peul women selling milk and milk products at market. When conflicts occur they are unable to access markets, essential for their role in supporting the family.

Project level learning

The level of detail of the first part to the study enabled project staff to learn more about systems of production and how survival strategies have changed over time. The tool enabled some analysis of how robust different systems were, and the constraints to increased livelihood security. Much of this discussion centred on how the family survived the shocks of the 1985 droughts, and whether present systems could withstand such a shock again.

The need for reconciliation between pastoralists and farmers was evident. Although pastoralists maintain strong links with their host families in all areas except the Samori, other customary arrangements are eroding. Soil infertility was consistently identified as a key problem, but there was no evidence that farmers encourage herds onto their fields in the dry season. Farmers prefer to use their own animals to fertilise their fields or transport manure from the homestead (despite shortages of labour) rather than attract herds to graze on crop residues in their fields. In addition, crop residues are increasingly used for fuel in the absence of wood, and for animal fodder for animals in the homestead. This leaves less crop residues for herds using agricultural land in the dry season. These changes in practices need to be discussed further with both farming and herding communities to understand if they represent more effective arrangements or are just symptomatic of the breakdown in trust between farmers and herders.

The portraits demonstrated unequivocally that traditional divisions along ethnic lines no longer determine how families secure their livelihoods. Peul (traditionally pastoralists) farm and Dogon (traditionally farmers) keep livestock, and all groups depended to varying degrees on an increasingly wide range of activities. Thus, negotiations over access to natural

resources should not be conducted through a lens of herder/farmer stereotypes. For example, defining livestock corridors requires the consent of everyone who has an interest in the resources in the corridor.

The portraits also contributed to understanding where decisions should be taken about natural resource management in the District. The Samori Forest is a strategic resource, not only for the people who live there, but also for the population of the Seno zone who depend on it for fuelwood, and transhumant pastoralists who use it in the rainy season or as a reserve in bad years. Therefore devolving decision-making powers to the three communes that make up the forest would not result in an inclusive arrangement. For sustainable management decisions need to account for the interests of all stakeholders, including those outside commune boundaries.

The insights that project staff gained from the family portrait process gave them the confidence to tackle the issues of inclusive natural resource management at a district and regional level, to inform government policy and practice.

Use of portraits in lobbying for policy change

The portraits, in depersonalised and condensed format, were key tools in a workshop for district level decision-makers (district councillors, technical services and government representatives). The aim of the workshop was to:

- Share with decision-makers research undertaken with the population (family portraits and a pastoralist map)
- Promote inclusive and democratic management of natural resources in the district as the approach that ensures sustainable use and reduced conflict
- Generate an informed discussion about the conditions necessary for inclusive management to occur in Bankass District
- Develop an action plan to move towards joint management

The family portraits were used to bring participants to draw their own conclusions. They were asked to analyse anonymous portraits to identify the key problems faced by the families. They saw for themselves the complexity and diversity of survival strategies, the importance of mobility, and the interdependence in the use of resources from the three agro-ecological zones. They then identified and discussed the problems that could be attributed to exclusion of certain groups from decision-making structures. Participants recommended that decision-making structures should be inclusive and democratic.

This led to a discussion about the necessary conditions for inclusive management. The participants proposed setting up consultative natural resource management fora at commune level including all stakeholders in natural resource management. Three members (including at least one woman) would represent each forum at district level where natural resource management issues that cross commune borders could be resolved.

Giving the participants the raw materials to work with meant they drew their own conclusions. This is far more powerful than a research report or straight presentation of research findings. The family portrait is used both to learn but also to get real decisions made, to convince people of different realities not by telling them they are wrong but helping them see or find out for themselves. This was true for all the actors involved, the family, project team, community and decision makers.

ANNEX ONE: FIELD GUIDE USED IN MALI

There are three main subjects to approach with the family in order to be able to understand the way in which it runs its life, its production systems, its relations with other people and groups, its strategies, its vision for the future, etc.

- The family
- Activities
- Resources

2.1 The family

Questions to pose in relation to the family:

- **Its composition:** age of the Head of Household, birthplace (and possibly of his/her parents, especially in the case of a family of migrants which was displaced recently); age of the children; family ties between all the members of the families (especially in the case of a large family); to clarify if they share the same fields (e.g. large collective field) and/or the same herd, identifying carefully the cases where it is only about division of labour, with each one keeping its quite separate harvest or animals and where the head of the household retains complete rights. To ask whether there are members who are educated (French school, literacy training, Koranic school, children at primary or secondary school, or even at the university...).
- **Current location of its members** by identifying in the family the members who are not currently present: seasonal migrants, members away on transhumance with the animals, long term migrants who still have economic bonds with the family, in particular those sending regular money.
- **Its history:** place of origin; routes of displacement; to trace a chart with key information (dates of arrivals and departures, links/relations on the way; problems encountered, etc).
- **Social integration:** all the relations which they have with other individuals and groups on the spot including associations, co-operatives, religious or political chiefs, surrounding neighbours, villages or projects operating in the zone.
- **Great events:** retrace/confirm the major events which marked the life of the family (droughts, independence, wars, displacements, migrations, etc.) and identify the terms used to indicate these events (these terms will be used as bench marks when one discusses changes observed in activities).
- **Activities:** to identify the main activities of the family; possibility of using PRA tools to identify them and classify them by order of importance, the simplest and most effective criterion being often about an activity "on which the family depends" (income as well as home consumption).

Make a chart recalling the migration or displacements of the family.

2.2 Activities

In the Kelka zone, the following activities are practised by different user groups:

- Livestock production
- Agriculture
- Trade: small trade, forest products
- Others: craft industry, market gardening

2.2.1. Agriculture

- Different crops cultivated (to include here women's fields - the small scale agriculture that they practise and, possibly, cereal fields which they also cultivate).
- Location and estimate of the acreages (to use charts 1:200.000 to identify the location of fields particularly far away from the place of residence of the family; to evaluate (roughly) the total surface cultivated by taking for reference the nearest field).
- Agricultural calendar (to do it in detail can be heavy and complicated; here, it is mainly a question of identifying the principal activities and, consequently, the possible labour bottlenecks/ constraints between agricultural and pastoral activities). You may prefer to make an agricultural calendar only by group or village.
- Means of production (animal traction, equipment, manure, etc).
- Labour used (family, paid /external labour).
- Management of production (storage, taking away, who controls consumption of the harvest in the case of a large family exploiting a collective field?).
- Home consumption/sale/gifts/purchases: it will be good to have an idea of the level of food self-sufficiency over a given period (over 12 months, for example): quantities sold/bought and on which

markets; who is given gifts (marabouts/ parents / friends); to have an idea of the degree of self-sufficiency: rather than an exact calculation, to ask for the number of months (for example: " the harvest of last year enabled us to nourish the family for 4 months ").

- Practices of selling cereals or other agricultural products (at which period of the year, rough estimate by the owner of the quantities sold during the last twelve months) and of cereal purchases; identify where items are sold or purchased (at the village, at different markets...)
- Techniques of improvement of production: use of manure, anti-erosive bunds, *Andropogon gayanus*...
- Conditions of access to fields (historical aspects, dates, from whom it is borrowed, who it was bought from, how was it cleared? gifts, purchases, loans, inheritance, clearing etc.) and strategies of land securisation (land marks, for example enclosing with a live hedge or thorn-bushes, planting of fruit trees...).
- How are crop residues used, adventitious plants (leguminous plants such as *Zornia glochidiata* or *Alesycarpus ovalifolius*) and pastures between the fields.
- Constraints of production (discussion opened, general, being able to relate to various aspects).
- Important external factors affecting the agricultural system of production (e.g. problems of provisioning).
- General discussion at the end on the evolution of activities, its general situation, etc.

Example of table to recapitulate strategic information:

	Culture	Location	Conditions of access	Area	Labour	Means of production	" land Mark "
Field 1 (collec)	Millet	3 km in the south on sandy grounds	Inherited since 7 generations		Large family	Plough, manure of its own animals	Enclosed by thorn-bush
Field 2	Sorghu m fall	15 km at the edge of the pond	Loan with ...village of		He and wife	Manure	Small installation
Field 3	Rice	12 km have is close to ...	Contract of royalty		He + paid worker	Traditional manure	
Field of box	Gombo, sorrel				Women, girls		

2.2.2 Livestock production

The part on livestock production is relatively complex. It is thus advised to approach it in stages and discussing potentially significant or difficult issues (size of the herd and degree of control or the ownership of animals) when one feels a sufficient level of confidence between the team and the family.

If the former discussions on the family and agricultural activity have already made it possible to understand that livestock production is a more or less recent occupation, it may be necessary to ask:

- Since when they did start to do pastoralism?
- For which reasons?
- Which type of livestock (for example, did they start with the sheep and later, shift to bovines?)
- If they do only keep a few household animals, and have no mobile herd, why?
 - Would like they to?
 - What prevents them from doing it?
- If the family has just arrived in the zone, ask him whether it used to do pastoralism before.

Do not forget the specific case of livestock fattening –often women’s work, which involves sheep as well as bovines, in certain cases.

The best way of understanding how the system operates and, especially, its dynamics in space, is to enter by the door of the animals. By reconstituting, for each species, the circuit followed during the year, the pastures and the water points used, as well as the mode of guarding, one obtains a total picture very quickly.

The herd

Warning: It is important to check that the herd belongs to the family you are talking to and not to a broader family group or someone else entirely. If the head of household that you are talking to explains that the herd is kept and managed jointly, i.e. if he is unable to identify his own animals and does not have control on use of milk and sales, it is necessary either to give up the idea of analysing the herd, or to make a special interview with the person who actually manages the herd, probably, the head of the broader family group.

Key information to ask on the herd:

- **Species and their ratio** (history of the herd) do not forget the different species of animals: bovines, sheep, goats, camels, donkeys, horses (i.e. animals of transport).
- **Size of herd.** Do not ask this question immediately, but observe indirectly for 1-2 days; go and see the herd in the evening with the owner; etc.
- **Sex ratio:** it is good to know the numbers of females/males in order to understand the type of system (i.e. breeding for dairy and reproduction, or, breeding for investment and marketing) and if there are problems relating to the reconstitution of the herd (for example, none in gestation). This approach is less heavy than analysing the structure of the herd in detail.
- **Degree of control over animals:** (as with the size of the herd, wait for an appropriate moment), e.g.:
 - % kept for "strangers"
 - % loan
 - % pre-inheritance
 meet women to talk about this subject (they often have their own animals, either with complete or partial property rights).

Example of summary table for each animal species, to summarise all information: in fact this is taken from the model established during the training at Segou for the portrait of Ousmane Sow. This table describes the present situation. It quickly becomes interesting to find out about the systems of mobility used before (one can even make another table referring to a former period). In addition to conditions of access, the table can also include information on the strategies used to maintain an access right or the power to negotiate over a resource (for example, regular visits or sending of gift to an owner...).

BOVINES (current system)

Season	Pastures		Water points		Who?
	Where?	Conditions of access	Which?	Conditions of access	
Rainy season					
Cold dry season					
Hot dry season					

It is also essential to draw up (together with the family if possible) a map of seasonal movements with key information: periods of the year, conditions of access, current or potential conflicts, animal species, labour used, paths followed.

It is also essential to draw up one or more similar maps referring to various historical periods (e.g. before '73, after '73) in order to be able to visualise the evolution of the situation and problems. These periods will be identified on the basis of criterion identified by the family.

Later, these maps can be used by one group of users to show their situation to another group of users, the rationale of their system, etc. Such a tool can be very useful in regulating situations of conflicts, planning, etc. It also allows the team and the family to visualise how the production system operates in space.

Purchase of the supplementary products

- **Agro-industrial by-products** (cotton grains, oil cakes, etc.) – where does the family buy these products, for which animals in particular, at which periods of the year especially, etc.
- **Veterinary products**
- **Salt: salt lick, purchase of salt on the market..** (if there is a salt lick, make sure that it is clearly marked in the preceding maps and that you establish the conditions of access to this salt lick).

Exploitation of the herd

- **Sale of the animals.** This is important information for it makes it possible to really understand the place and the importance of pastoralism for the family economy (one might, for example, realise that large purchases of cereals are paid for from the sale of bovines...)

Information to be asked in particular:

- Species sold: cattle/camels/smallstock
- reasons for sale (for example, large purchases of cereals may require sale of bovines, while the sale of small ruminants meets smaller needs);

For each species sold:

- the number of animals sold during the last 12 months. This information is not always easy to establish for the small ruminants, for the sales are frequent. On the other hand, the family will remember precisely the number of bovines or camels sold, and be able to specify the type of animal (castrated bull, old cow, young heifer), for these are decisions made for important sales.
- where and when they were sold (market, village, etc.);

- prices obtained (for the small ruminants, ask the highest and lowest price obtained and for the bovines, try to obtain a more exact price for each animal sold (for example, the castrated bull was sold at the market of Korientze in February for 145,000 CFA);
- it can be also interesting, if the family is interested to give this information, who bought these animals (e.g. they sold it at the market to a livestock tradesman, or it was a small shopkeeper who came to see them on their premises, or it was a Fulani family which sold to a Bambara neighbor...)

•**Sale of milk and its derivatives** (This can be mainly related to women; so envisage a long discussion with them, for it is often their area and their family economy).

•**Purchases of animals** : take into account the fact that apart from reconstituting the herd after a crisis, the owner can also buy animals on various occasions, to increase his herd, to invest some savings, or to restore the dynamics of his herd (for example, purchase of one heifer to compensate for a mortality, or a destocking of females the previous year). Identify the number of animals by species bought during the last 12 months and the place and possibly purchase price, especially for the bovines. Specify in the case of purchases of cattle or camels, which animals they are. For example, one heifer bought from a nearby Fulani, for 70,000 CFA with two rice bags...

Crisis Management

- A whole variety of questions around strategies of the family to deal with the droughts, physical insecurity (e.g. rebellion), floods, etc.
- Strategies used by the family for better making safe her access to key resources: social relations, negotiations, strategic alliances maintained with certain villages or families, even distantly, to preserve rights to negotiate access to resources... At this stage, one should already have information on this topic, in particular in connection with pastoralism, with the transhumance maps and with the history of the family, including migration maps. One thus has a good basis for discussing crisis management (cf also the major events mentioned by the family on several occasions).

2.2.3 Trade

This is about complementary activities undertaken by the family during certain periods of the year to gain a little money, and to face difficulties. It is not about the activities of large livestock or cereal tradesman.

Small trade

- Products sold
- Place of purchases and sales
- Motivation for the activity (why? What advantages?)
- Length of time that the family has engaged in this activity
- Period of the year
- Rate/rhythm of sale and quantities sold (approximation)
- Means of transport
- Labour used
- Variation of prices according to season
- Conditions and means of conservation
- Constraints: competition, possible problems of quality, access to raw materials

note: Specifically approach the women on this topic, if they are concerned

Trade of forest and other wild products

- Products sold
- Gathering or processing site
- Conditions of access to these products (require a licence, free gathering, authorisation of residents...)
- Means of exploitation or methods of gathering
- Labour used
- How long involved in the activity
- Motivation for the activity (why? What advantages?)
- Period of the year
- Rate/rhythm and quantities sold (approximation)
- Means of transport
- Variation of prices
- Conditions and means of conservation
- Constraints: compete, possible problems of quality, access to raw materials including the disappearance of the resource; changes over time

Cattle trading

Here, as for small trade, we are concerned with small-scale trade of cattle, an owner buying some animals and reselling them on the local markets. It is not a question of a big cattle business. This small-scale strategy is used more and more, especially since the devaluation of the CFA.

•Strategies of purchase and maintenance of the animals until the moment of resale

- How many times has he/her bought and sold livestock in rotation in the year
- Numbers sold by species in the year (cattle/camel/sheep/goats)
- Profitability—the average profit for each sold animal
- Places of sale
- Motivations for the activity
- Period of activity (all dry season, for example)
- Length of time trading
- Labour used
- Variations in prices
- Constraints: competition, possible problems of quality of animals, access to agro-industrial by-products and to veterinary products to maintain animals before resale; changes in time.

2.2.4 Other activities

These are the complementary activities undertaken by the family for a period of the year and not a specialised trade (blacksmith, tailor, etc.) which represents the principal activity of the person/family.

2.3 Resources

It is not necessary to make a separate discussion on this point, for in fact, one should have all relevant information on resources by this stage, from the analysis of household activities. Take stock of all the resources:

- The state of the resource
- Problems of access rights,
- Problems of degradation and/or disappearance

Make a synthesis of all these points and hold a general discussion with the family on this topic (vision, constraints, etc...).

3. Interactions between the activities

Here it is a question of checking, of consolidating and, possibly, of discussing with the family the interactions existing between all the activities especially in relation to the organisation of labour, transfer of investment from one activity to the other, physical interactions between the activities.

- **Review availability of labour** in order to make sure that you have included/understood the family circumstances well. The point of reference remains the family structure (which gives a precise idea of the labour available). Compare with all the information collected in connection with the different activities (this is the moment to locate inconsistencies; one can also make reference to the agricultural calendars, and the tables on pastoral year by species to locate contradictions or any insufficiency of certain information).
- **Transfers of investments between activities,:** the income or the products of an activity may be invested in another activity either to make up a deficit, or to constitute a saving for a future investment. These transfers are one of the survival strategies to face uncertainty and to manage deficits. It is the reason for diversification into agropastoralism and other activities. A good harvest makes it possible to sell productions and to buy animals. On the other hand, in a bad year, the sale of animals will make it possible to buy cereal, the sale of bovine will make it possible to buy a cart, the sale of a sheep will make it possible to buy veterinary products for the remainder of herd etc....
- **Physical integration between agriculture and pastoralism:** manure for fields, animal traction, use of crop residues, manuring contracts, etc.