



Drylands Programme

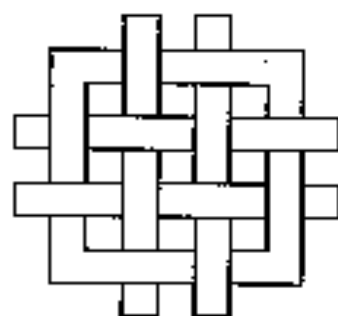
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**The Role of NGOs  
in Reforming  
Natural Resource  
Management Policies  
in Burkina Faso**

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**Souleymane Zeba**

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Souleymane Zeba is the president of the **NATURAMA** Foundation in Burkina Faso. Since 1996, he has also chaired the **SPONG**, the main NGO group in Burkina. He is a rural development engineer, specializing in water and forestry. From 1986 to 1992, he occupied the post of National Director of Forestry and Wildlife within the Ministry of the Environment.

This study has been conducted by **NATURAMA**, with financial support from the **WRI** (World Resources Institute) and the participation of some 30 NGOs and state agencies. Its aim is to strengthen the role of civil society in the design of environmental policy in Burkina Faso.

Address: **NATURAMA**, 01 BP 6133, Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso.  
Fax: +226 36 19 25

## CONTENTS

Acronyms	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
CO-OPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NGOs	2
Political and economic changes fostering pluralism	2
Policy measures favouring local communities	2
POLICY-MAKING WITH REGARD TO NRM	4
The institutional framework of NRM	4
Factors determining policy-making	4
NGOs AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POLICY	6
The role of NGOs in policy implementation	6
The role of NGOs in formulating policy reform	6
The contribution of NGOs to changing NRM policies	7
Constraints on NGO participation in the development of national reforms	8
Current channels for NGO negotiation with the political authorities	9
THE PARTICIPATION OF NGOs IN POLICY REFORM: NEW HORIZONS	9
Current and future opportunities for participation in policy debate	9
Informing NGOs of opportunities for participation in political reform	10
Changes needed to involve the population in NRM reforms	11
Policy issues where the NGO contribution could be most valuable	12
RECOMMENDATIONS	14
Annexe	16
Bibliography	20

## Acronyms

AFVP	Association Française des Volontaires du Progrès
ALR	Agrarian and Land Re-organization
AVLP	Association Vive Le Paysan
BLONGA	Bureau de Liaison des ONG et Associations
BSONG	Bureau de Suivi des ONG
CILSS	Comité Inter-états de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GERES	Groupement Européen de Restauration des Eaux et des Sols
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INERA	Institut National d'Etudes et de Recherches Agronomiques
IRBET	Institut de Recherche en Biologie et Ecologie Tropicale
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
NEAP	National Environmental Action Plan
PAED	Programme des Associations pour l'Environnement et le Développement
PDP	Popular Development Programme
PNFV	Programme National de la Foresterie Villageoise
PNGT	Programme National de Gestion des Terroirs
SANREM	Sustainable Agriculture and National Resources Management Collaborative Research Support Program (USAID) Project
SIX "S"	Se Servir de la Saison Sèche en Savane et au Sahel
SPONG	Secrétariat Permanent des ONG
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WRI	World Resources Institute
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

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# THE ROLE OF NGOs IN REFORMING NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POLICIES IN BURKINA FASO

## INTRODUCTION

*"Governments... can certainly not master the issue of sustainable development because future generations cannot vote. Companies... cannot master the issue of sustainable development because future generations are not today's consumers" and "NGOs are too concerned with making themselves understood instead of trying to understand others... and are too worried about keeping themselves pure... to cooperate with them"*

This caricature, which is undoubtedly provocative, suggested by Lloyd Timberlake<sup>1</sup>, encourages us to think about the relationship between governments, private companies and NGOs.

In Burkina Faso, as everywhere else in the Sahel, the combination of economic stagnation and strong demographic growth has caused serious environmental problems. Although the national authorities are aware of the need to act, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the public sector has not produced the expected results in the field of natural resource management (NRM). The shortcomings are mainly due to the fact that NRM policies have not always been carried out in cooperation with the private sector, NGOs and civil society in general. In fact, for some time, analysis of problems and the development of new strategies have been a matter for the government, whereas NGOs were confined to implementing projects in the field.

This way of seeing the role of the government and NGOs severely affected the dynamics of development programmes. Now, new approaches are emphasizing the participation of local communities and NGOs in policy-making, and the institutional framework which holds back the struggle to protect the environment is being criticised.

However, the government of Burkina Faso and NGOs have a good relationship, based on mutual interest. The government expects NGOs to support development activities by providing financial and technical assistance and contributing towards implementing national policies and maintaining social peace. NGOs expect the government to reinvigorate the policy debate, resolve administrative problems, introduce tax and customs exemptions and provide moral support in dealing with donors.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from the Conference on the Environment held in the U.K., September 1993.

This study has been undertaken against a new background of structural adjustment and political pluralism. It aims to clarify the following three fundamental questions:

- What is the advantage of NGO participation in reforming natural resource management policies?
- What are the opportunities and limits of NGO policy action at local and national level?
- What recommendations can be made with a view to establishing satisfactory co-operation between the government and the NGOs involved?

## **CO-OPERATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NGOS**

### **Political and economic changes fostering pluralism**

Over the past few years, political changes have put Burkina Faso on the road towards democratization of public institutions and decentralization of power. This political context favours the participation of private organizations and civil society in decision-making. NGOs have greater freedom of expression and can take part in preparing NRM policies, especially within the framework of concerted efforts to combat desertification. Furthermore, the economic and financial changes brought about by structural adjustment programmes favour the contraction of the public sector to the advantage of the private and NGO sectors.

Finally, donors and particularly bi-lateral donors have exerted a decisive influence on the broadening of the political arena in Burkina Faso. In addition to their moral support, donors have helped in setting up democratic institutions (e.g. through legislative elections) and the training of the private sector, especially the press. They have also provided support in revising certain basic legislation and popularizing legal texts. They have also encouraged co-operation between NGOs and the state and facilitated NGO participation in the development of policy reform.

### **Policies favouring local communities**

Since the colonial era (1898-1960), natural resource management policy has been characterized by the predominant role played by the state in both designing and managing programmes. Until recently, the features of natural resource management were:

- the protection of gazetted areas and the adoption of coercive legislation;
- the concentration of resources and power in the hands of forestry services, to the detriment of the rural population and other private stakeholders.



A participatory strategy relating to NRM was developed following the failure of the main reforestation and soil restoration projects.<sup>2</sup> It drew to a large extent on the relative success of NGO programmes.

As of the 1980s, new environmental initiatives<sup>3</sup> have produced considerable results, despite certain defects:

- most programmes had a top-down approach: while the people did participate, they did not feel a sense of ownership of the results;
- although designed along multidisciplinary lines, programmes were implemented by sector-specific departments working independently of each other;
- the ambiguity of the landholding system held back community investments in managing collective natural resources.

Consequently, the government altered its strategy with a view to taking more account of local concerns regarding natural resource management. Politicians recognized the need to give local communities responsibility for the land on which they produce and allow them to control collective natural resources. This insight on the part of the political authorities resulted in a new natural resource management approach, commonly known as "village land-use management".

The government's wish to transform the monopoly state into a state facilitating local development initiatives was given concrete expression in 1988 through the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programme. This trend was reinforced in 1993 by the establishment of a National Commission on Decentralization and the enactment of certain laws. Rural areas are supposed to be included from 1997. The implementation of the national village land-use management programme (1986-1990) is another example of co-operation between NGOs and government. The influence of this programme has been extended in the last few years through numerous development projects.

However, despite the declared political will, there is some reluctance to change and delegate power, both at central and provincial level.

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<sup>2</sup> Work undertaken by the European Soil Restoration Group (GERES/VOLTA, 1982-1985) restored soil cover over some 300,000 hectares of land, at a cost amounting to more than 10% of the national budget. However, having failed to take account of the socio-cultural context and local communities, the results of this huge investment fell far short of those expected.

<sup>3</sup> With the emergence of a national village woodlot programme (updated in 1991).

## **POLICY-MAKING WITH REGARD TO NRM**

### **The institutional framework of NRM**

The institutional landscape in Burkina Faso is characterized by the large number of decision-making bodies involved in NRM. Apart from the president of the country who has discretionary power and the prime minister, decisions are taken at the following levels:

- a) The Ministry of the Environment and Tourism (now the Ministry of the Environment and Water) is the primary institution involved. It is, in principle, the institutional guarantor of ecological balance.
- b) The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources is responsible for the management of soil and grazing land. It also oversees the PNGT (National Village Land-Use Management Programme) and many rural development projects.
- c) The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Mines is involved in setting the prices of certain products such as firewood and managing the mining sector.
- d) The Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education and Scientific Research handles all manner of research into natural resources. It oversees a Forestry Research Committee.
- e) The Ministry of Economics, Finance and Planning is responsible for national and regional development.
- f) Inter-ministerial structures act as advisers to the Council of Ministers in respect of decisions relating to NRM.
- g) The Assembly of Popular Representatives (ADP) is responsible for voting on national laws, in particular fundamental legislation on the environment. It is made up of the Chamber of Deputies and the Chamber of Representatives of Civil Society (including NGOs and environmental associations).

### **Factors determining policy-making**

It is very difficult, in the absence of access to adequate sources of information, to grasp how new policies are made. Analysis of the socio-economic and ecological context goes some way towards providing an answer.

The Sudano-Sahelian zone to which Burkina Faso belongs is experiencing a widespread crisis in its eco-systems, characterized by the advance of desertification and by a great reduction in renewable resources (water, flora, fauna) and soil fertility. Moreover, the country has also been affected by strong demographic growth and recurrent droughts since the 1970s. Burkina Faso is also suffering degradation in peri-urban areas due to increasing urbanization.

There are many socio-economic and environmental consequences:

- inadequate agro-pastoral production;
- an energy crisis related to dwindling forestry resources;
- lowering of the water table, with increasingly uncertain yields from the aquifers;
- worsening erosion and falling soil fertility;
- social unrest (e.g. conflicts between farmers and herders).

These factors are sufficiently serious to influence political decision-making. On top of this, there are changes in the international and policy context marked by:

- The effects of various international and regional conferences such as Rio 92;
- The influence of United Nations Agencies (FAO, UNESCO, UNEP, etc.), financial institutions (World Bank, IMF, etc.) and international NGOs (IUCN, WWF, WRI, etc.), as well as the obligations arising from the ratification of various international agreements designed to ensure better natural resource management;
- The conditions imposed by certain bi-lateral donors<sup>4</sup>;
- Decisions taken by regional structures such as the CILSS and the assertiveness of research agencies and institutes involved in NRM (IRBET, INERA, etc.);
- The emergence of economic interest groups and associations involved in natural resource management (e.g. hunters' associations);

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<sup>4</sup> Some donors make their funding conditional on the adoption of reforms or policy measures by the government.

- The emergence of national and local NGOs, as well as human rights and environmental protection movements (e.g. Burkina Consumers' League);
- The establishment of environmentally concerned political parties (e.g. Burkina Green Union).

## **NGOs AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

### **The role of NGOs in policy implementation**

Nowadays, NGOs play a major role in rural areas working directly with villagers, especially on drinking water supply, erosion control and reforestation, agro-forestry and firewood projects. Their achievements in the field are impressive in scale. Several of them (AFVP, "Six S", etc.) are officially acknowledged as key players in the local and regional development process and are increasingly involved in natural resource planning and use. Programmes of support to community environmental initiatives such as the "Africa 2000 Network" or Solidarité Canada Sahel have, in addition, increased NGO intervention capacity.

The strength of NGOs in the field comes from their flexible, multi-disciplinary approach and their ability to negotiate with the villagers: NGOs can, in fact, provide a response to the many concerns of local people (agriculture, animal husbandry, water supply, forestry, education, etc.). This multi-disciplinary aspect is particularly interesting in that it enables an overall approach to be taken to environmental protection. In addition, NGOs are in a position to act more quickly in view of their independence and small size.

### **The role of NGOs in formulating policy reform**

The Government appreciates the efforts made by NGOs to promote development and respects their autonomy. However, the Government would like to design, direct and co-ordinate its own national development policy. Although there is no precise government position with regard to the role that NGOs should play in reforming policy, there is a tendency to confine NGOs to implementing development projects.

Furthermore, some NGO officials think that these organizations should not "get involved in politics". It must be recognized that some donors are opposed to NGOs taking part in the political debate.<sup>5</sup> Because of this, many NGOs prefer to maintain a neutral image rather than jeopardize their chances of funding.

<sup>5</sup> Most donors consider that their funding should not support lobbying or the development of political movements.

## The contribution of NGOs to changing NRM policies

NGOs seeking to influence natural resource management policies must battle on several fronts, including government authorities, private sector, media and grassroots communities.

### **The impact of environmental NGOs (ENGOS) at Government level**

The 1984 Popular Development Programme saw the first government attempts to involve NGOs in drawing up national plans. However, the political context was not particularly favourable to genuine, effective NGO participation in decision-making. More recently, the preparation of the second Five-Year Plan for Popular Development (1991-1995) and the National Environmental Action Plan has given rise to more open debate involving NGOs.<sup>6</sup> Some of the latter were also involved, to a lesser extent, in drawing up the Environmental Code. However, apart from a few exceptions, most NGOs have not played a significant role in reforming national policy.

### **The impact of ENGOS on the profit-making private sector**

ENGOS rarely have any influence over the profit making private sector. They have not developed a critical attitude towards the negative effects of this sector on the environment: companies causing pollution, firewood and timber-producing enterprises, hunting firms, etc. In addition, the profit making private sector rarely contributes towards funding ENGOS.<sup>7</sup>

### **The impact of ENGOS through the media**

Overall, ENGOS think that education is the key to development. The results of their activities catch the eye of the media who give them publicity. The press is of major importance in spreading ENGO ideas in Burkina Faso. For example, the media campaign waged by NATURAMA helped to influence public opinion in favour of saving the gazetted forest around the dam (Bois de Boulogne) in Ouagadougou.

The impact could be greater if NGOs were to take a more collective approach, if they made better use of the communications media and if they took advantage of the opportunities available to them at national level in this field.

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<sup>6</sup> As part of the 1991-1995 Five Year Plan, institutional measures were taken to ensure that NGOs could work in harmony with national strategies and policy.

<sup>7</sup> However, some twenty private companies are involved in funding NATURAMA's programmes.

### **The impact on local authorities**

The privileged relationship between NGOs and local people enable the former to influence political reform at local level through the "village land-use management" approach conducted in close co-operation with villagers. The NGOs can act, for example, as intermediaries to bring certain problems to the attention of the local administrative authorities.

### **Constraints on NGO participation in the development of national reforms**

NGOs have certain characteristics which may explain their limited role in formulating national policy reforms. Particular constraints include: inadequate human and financial resources, difficulty in reaching agreement between organizations, the apolitical status of NGOs and their delicate position with regard to certain donors.

If NGOs wish to have any influence at national level, they need to take up a position as partners of the Government. However, in order to negotiate as partners, they must be able to understand national policies and their interdependence. This implies that they must be able to recruit well-informed policy-makers with a high level of political maturity. As their human and financial resources are very limited, NGOs are not presently considered as partners of the Government, but rather as implementing tools at the disposal of the state.

In 1984, wishing to improve NGO co-ordination, the Government set up the NGO monitoring office (BSONG), responsible for normalizing working relationships between NGOs and state agencies. The NGOs themselves saw the need to co-ordinate their activities and set up the permanent NGO secretariat (SPONG), for national and international NGOs, and the liaison office for NGOs and associations (BLONGA), specifically for national NGOs. In addition, several NGOs and associations got together in 1993 to set up the PAED (Environment and Development Programme). Other NGOs set up a consortium in the same year known as the CGCONGA/ED (General Consultative Framework for NGOs and Associations on Environment and Development). Despite the existence of such networks, NGOs have difficulty in reaching a joint position, making proposals and getting the Government's attention.

Finally, opportunistic fundraising from donors can go against the sustainable development or long-term planning approach. One needs to bear in mind the attitude of certain donors towards the political role of NGOs and the apolitical nature that most NGOs declare in their Articles of Association.

### Current channels for NGO negotiation with the political authorities

NGOs are usually keen to share their opinions and experience with a view to drawing up reforms. In addition to informal, discreet contacts with the authorities, NGOs have the following means of making their voices heard:

- official meetings (seminars, gatherings, various types of national conferences);
- press (newspapers, radio, television);
- lobbying;
- legal action; the constitution entitles associations to take court action against environmental damage;
- organizing petitions against certain laws;
- presenting the results of NGO projects in the field to the authorities;
- written proposals (letters to the Government);
- using NGO networks and the BSONG.

The mechanisms for consultation between NGOs on the one hand and between NGOs and the State on the other are as follows:

- The meeting to bring New Year greetings to the President of Burkina Faso, traditionally seen as an occasion to mention NGO problems and grievances;
- The annual NGO meeting with the Minister of Planning;
- The NGO Monitoring Office (BSONG);
- The Permanent NGO Secretariat (SPONG).

In addition to these traditional mechanisms, new structures, such as the second Chamber of Parliament<sup>8</sup>, the PAED and the CGCONGA/ED, have recently been introduced.

## **NGO PARTICIPATION IN POLICY REFORM: NEW HORIZONS**

### Current and future opportunities to take part in the policy debate

In Burkina Faso, the results of economic and political change are becoming clearer and offer new prospects to NGOs seeking to stimulate political reform:

- democratization, instituted in 1990-1992, required reform of development policies at all levels. In view of the fact that all these policies have effects on

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<sup>8</sup> Messrs. Souleymane Zeba, President of NATURAMA, and Paul Bayili, representing the ANGDB, were elected by the associations to put forward the environmental point of view in this second chamber.

the environment, reforms relating to natural resource management will be iterative and will go on for a long time;

- the Structural Adjustment Programme adopted by the Government advocates a new approach to the national division of labour, with greater involvement of the private sector and NGOs;
- the implementation of the National Environmental Action Plan implies updating institutional mechanisms and the active participation of NGOs in environmental management;
- the trend towards decentralization necessitates reform of urban environmental management (giving responsibility to the communes) and of the system of ownership of natural resources such as communal and departmental forests;
- the forthcoming preparation of a National Action Plan against desertification to apply the provisions of the United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification, adopted in October 1994;
- the enforcement and monitoring of the provisions adopted by the Rio Summit (June 1992): Convention on Bio-diversity, Agenda 21, etc.

#### **Informing NGOs of opportunities to take part in policy reform**

If NGOs are to be involved in policy reform, they must be regularly informed about the new directions in which the state intends to move. This means that an inter-NGO and NGO-State consultation framework must exist. In this respect, the following recent measures are noteworthy:

- the nomination of members to take their seats on the Economic and Social Council;
- the appointment of NGO representatives to the second chamber of the Burkina Faso parliament;
- representation of the SPONG on the NEAP Co-ordinating Committee;
- the establishment of the BSONG within the Department of Co-operation;
- NGO representation at sessions of the PNGT management committee.

It would be helpful if the annual meeting between the Government (Ministry of Planning) and NGOs could be backed up by meetings at ministerial department level (for example between the Ministry of the Environment and ENGOs). This would provide an opportunity for systematically informing NGOs and allowing them to take part in planned reforms. In the same way, as part of current moves



towards decentralization, it would be useful to set up a consultation framework, for each province, between the local political authorities and the various partners in development (including NGOs).

### Changes needed to involve the population in NRM reforms

The participation of the population in NRM reforms is limited by the underlying culture of the institutional and legal framework, as well as the attitude of the elite towards small farmers.

#### **The institutional and legal framework**

The institutional framework has retained the authoritarian nature of colonial policy, where taking and implementing decisions was the exclusive preserve of elite members of the administration. The administration usually claims that it does not have the resources to inform and involve the population in drawing up statutes governing NRM. This argument is reinforced by the fact that there is no legislation obliging the authorities to consult the people when drawing up development strategies. Everything depends, therefore, on the goodwill of the authorities.

Furthermore, laws are usually drawn up on a technocratic basis. Legislation concerning natural resources in Burkina Faso has long relied on the rationale "conservation = exclusion": according to legislators, the supposedly fragile, defenceless environment should be protected by keeping the local people away from it. Local people are considered to be the main cause of environmental degradation.

Finally, pending the extension of decentralization to rural areas, the law makes no room for provincial or regional policy. All policy is national, applying throughout the territory, with no account taken of economic, ecological and socio-cultural diversity.

#### **The attitude of the elite towards small farmers**

Illiteracy (affecting about 80% of the population) and lack of information greatly limit popular participation in reforming NRM policy. This illiteracy has often been used as a pretext to marginalize people from decision-making relating to natural resources. However, the lack of consideration for and confidence in the experience and know-how of small farmers is the real reason for their marginalization.

All statutory instruments reveal the constant desire to assert state ownership of natural resources in order to ensure total control over their use. Consequently, the population has ceased to feel responsible and sees NRM as a matter for the state's administrative and technical institutions. Nowadays, new political concerns are perceptible, raising hopes that favourable conditions can be established for popular participation in development strategy.

## Policy issues where the NGO contribution could be most valuable

### **Decentralization**

Further decentralization is necessary if current natural resource management systems are to be improved, in urban centres as well as in the countryside. The management of urban and peri-urban natural resources must be reformed in order to give responsibility to the communes. NGOs could play a major role in designing these reforms and testing their application. The experience and non-governmental status of these organizations should be especially useful. Furthermore, NGOs would be well placed to contribute towards formulating reforms at the rural level, in view of their sound knowledge of the terrain.

### **The "8,000 villages, 8,000 forests - one school, one woodlot" project<sup>9</sup>**

The commitment of the President of Burkina Faso to the above project provides NGOs with a favourable opportunity to turn to good use their field experience in managing village forests and providing environmental education in schools. NGOs should take the initiative to contribute towards this major project and give their advice. In particular, they could play an effective role in communications between villagers and the authorities.

### **The fight against poverty**

Poverty is often the main cause of natural resource degradation. In the Sahel today, NGOs, governments and donors are concerned to reduce poverty and improve natural resource management. This implies political, institutional and legislative reform in order to take account of local reality, ensure that new mechanisms can further mobilize village communities and make an impact on resource management. Here again, NGOs would be in a position to advise the government and monitor progress.

### **Valuing farmer know-how**

NGOs could bring community points of view and farmer knowledge to bear during discussions relating to policy reform. This would enable the government to sound out villagers' opinions on draft reform plans. In fact, NGOs are well placed to understand small farmers and hold discussions with state services.

### **Legislative reform**

The government is in the process of designing a new forestry code and statutes enforcing the environmental code. NGOs could make a considerable contribution here, as they are well aware of the communities' points of view on subjects such as

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<sup>9</sup> Project to safeguard the environment and combat desertification, mentioned by the president of Burkina in his appeal on 2nd June 1994.

hunting, illicit wood cutting, bush fires, etc. They have the advantage of being neither judge nor judged.

### **Environmental impact studies (EIS)**

The new environmental code has just made it compulsory to conduct EISs for all activities likely to have an effect on the environment. As these studies will be done by consultancies, it would be a good idea to arrange for double checking by third parties, to be submitted to the administration before it reaches its final conclusions. This service could be provided by an ENGO consortium, whose range of skills and environmentalist principles should ensure high quality work.

### **Preliminary testing of research findings**

Many of the findings of scientific research need to be tested in a few locations before wider dissemination. In the same way, some new policy concepts need to be tested on a limited scale before being put into practice. NGOs can play a role in preliminary testing in their project areas before the validity of these findings is confirmed.

### **The "village land-use management" approach**

The "village land-use management" approach is the main sustainable development policy currently applied in Burkina Faso and neighbouring countries. Many issues are under discussion with respect to this: funding local development, village land-use management plans, gender approach (women and village land-use management), environmental and socio-economic monitoring, etc. An NGO contribution would be most welcome in all these debates.

### **The United Nations Convention on Combating Desertification**

This convention specifically calls on governments to co-operate with NGOs in enforcing the measures advocated therein. Ways of organizing this are under discussion and it would be a good idea for NGOs to get together and make their opinions known, especially with regard to the approaches and tools to be used in the new generation projects.

### **The forestry code**

In 1995, the Ministry responsible for forests, wildlife and fisheries began a national consultation exercise with a view to policy reform and the adoption of a new forestry code. NGOs involved in natural resource management should monitor this process and share their own and local communities' experience before these new policies and statutes are finalized.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the current climate of political openness and in the light of the ideas developed in the preceding section, we think that the following recommendations are relevant:

1. Making NGOs more aware of the role they can play in reforming strategies, their contributions could be decisive in formulating NRM policies.
2. Improving inter-NGO consultation through networks of alliances, in order to gain more credibility with the Government. It is vital that NGOs get together in order to submit joint, coherent proposals to the Government and move into the position of partners. The concrete result of such a partnership could be legislative reform relating to the current forestry code and the statutes enforcing the environmental code.
3. Working in favour of effective decentralization of NRM, as part of national moves towards decentralization begun by the Government.
4. Turning to good use NGO experience and sound knowledge of the field to test out large-scale programmes, e.g. the project "8,000 villages, 8,000 forests - one school, one woodlot". NGOs could, for instance:
  - \* clarify the management of village forests;
  - \* promote environmental education in schools;
  - \* act as intermediaries in communications between villagers and the authorities.
5. Following up initiatives to combat poverty in order to curb the natural resource degradation arising from poverty.
6. Helping to ensure that the knowledge of small farmers, in particular, is taken into account when drawing up draft policies.
7. Proposing a Government-NGO forum which would meet periodically to exchange information and discuss policy options regarding NRM.
8. Convincing donors of the appropriateness of funding NGO initiatives in favour of reforming NRM policy. In addition, donors should demonstrate their willingness to work with NGOs by allocating them more funds enabling them to capitalize on their experience and skills.
9. Setting up a skilled team which can co-operate with the Government in double checking the conclusions of environmental impact studies.

10. Co-operating with research institutes in order to play a part in preliminary testing of scientific research findings in the field. This principle could also be applied to some new policy concepts.
11. Working for the promulgation of a law making it impossible to ratify policy reforms relating to natural resource management without prior consultation of the communities involved.
12. Giving greater importance to training NGO officials to increase their skills in analysing national strategies, thus enabling them to put good policies into practice.
13. Promoting the dissemination of NGO experience in the field of natural resource management. This report could be circulated to NGOs and government agencies involved in NRM and a seminar organized for the purpose of discussing these recommendations.
14. Providing financial support to enable NGOs interested in reforming NRM policy to build on and develop their skills.

## ANNEXE

It is proposed to examine the tools and methods used by the AVLP (Association Vive Le Paysan), the NATURAMA Foundation and the Federation of Unions of Naam Groups in order to participate in policy debates relating to NRM.

### 1. AVLP

#### 1.1 Strategy and field of activity

The Association Vive Le Paysan is an organization set up and managed by small farmers, which conducts its activities with outside technical and/or financial support. Established in Burkina Faso in 1979, the AVLP currently aims to make sure that small farmers are aware of their ability to be mainly responsible for their own well-being. Its motto sums up its endeavours: "Millet and water for everyone".

Fields of activity:

- Agriculture, animal husbandry and environment;
- Formal and informal education (schooling for children and literacy training for adults);
- Human and animal health;
- Training and supervising members;
- Improving the position of women in development.

#### 1.2 Means employed to take part in reform

The association plans to influence decision-making at provincial and governmental level through the organization of symposia and programmes of action in the field. The methods used are indirect, in order to preserve the image of the association and maintain the confidence of the village communities which is so necessary for the success of the activities conducted.

#### 1.3 Why it is successful

The AVLP's activities are usually focused on a collective style of rural development which promotes village unity and the mobilization and active participation of beneficiaries. Right from the project identification phase, the villagers involved reach agreement on the desired objective and the participation of each individual. Other factors in the association's success include:

- A work ethic;
- Efforts to understand the rural environment shown in the permanent presence of a team in the field;
- The establishment of a light structure of the inverted pyramid type;
- Length of establishment (there were few other NGOs in 1979).

## **2. NATURAMA (Fondation des Amis de la Nature)**

### **2.1 Strategy and fields of intervention**

NATURAMA was set up in 1990 to work for the conservation of nature and its resources and to promote sustainable development. To this end, the foundation:

- gives priority to supporting local initiatives, especially those of communities which are already organized;
- attempts to make its field operations models which can convince the public and development agencies of the relevance of the approaches and techniques it advocates;
- seeks ways and means of giving women and children a greater role in the design and implementation of environmental programmes and tries to make the best use of local knowledge;
- endeavours to cultivate healthy but critical co-operation with public and private partners in order to strengthen environmental consciousness.

NATURAMA's current programme aims to:

- develop environmental education, especially with young people (pupils, students, youth movements, etc.). Information activities are backed up by the quarterly newsletter NATURA;
- develop demonstration projects in the field, especially relating to the conservation of biodiversity;
- conduct studies dealing with environment and development. Projects already tackled include: poverty and the environment; the "3 struggles"; the "8,000 villages, 8,000 forests"; and "one school, one woodlot" operations;
- promote communication within environmental NGOs and train trainers.

### **2.2 Means employed to take part in reform**

Participation in debates on policy reform is based on:

- working group deliberations on particular topics;
- contact with the agencies involved;
- seeking partnership with other NGOs on particular issues;

- using the press to inform the public and gain their support;
- support from honorary members (MPs, ministers, prominent personalities, etc.).

### 2.3 Why it is successful

Factors in the foundation's success are as follows:

- its scientific and technical basis, which enables it to take a stance in critical situations, and the diverse origins of its members, seen as a guarantee of objectivity;
- its capacity for critical analysis of activities harmful to the environment and its prompt response;
- the development of a partnership with national and international NGOs dealing with environmental issues.

## 3. The Federation of Unions of Naam Groups (FUGN)

### 3.1 Strategy and field of intervention

According to L.B. Ouedraogo, Chairman of the "Six S" association, "the basic point is first of all to make people accountable for their own problems and to help them to take full responsibility for solving them". In order to do this, the federation uses a three stage method which makes it possible to get round the constraints arising from various customs and taboos without destroying them. It consists of "cleverly bringing the farmer to design a project himself. The project is implemented by its designer under the critical eye of the technician, who may provide some useful advice. During the operation, a sustained effort of will, a love of work well done, determination and motivation are called upon. This commitment and concentration of the mind captivate the person concerned, dignifying the soul and making it possible to pay less attention to customs and taboos" (L.B. Ouedraogo, 1994).

The FUGN was set up in Yatenga in 1967, after which groups proliferated in neighbouring provinces and more distant regions. The Federation of Unions of Naam Groups now covers 4,700 groups in 18 provinces. The experience of Naam groups in Burkina spread into other Sahelian countries<sup>10</sup> and led to the establishment of the international NGO "Six S"<sup>11</sup>, based in Burkina Faso. The

<sup>10</sup> The Sahelian countries belonging to "Six S" are: Burkina Faso, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Togo, with Chad soon to join.

<sup>11</sup> "Using the dry season in the savannah and the Sahel", a title which contains six Ss in French.



Naam groups tackle immediate needs (combating hunger, water supply, etc.) and long-term projects (community activities to protect and restore the environment).

### **3.2 Means employed to take part in reform**

The federation organizes solidarity networks to support local initiatives, focusing on the poorest people. By means of training and motivation, "it helps new associations and emergent activities to get going" (Ouedraogo, 1996).

### **3.3 Why it is successful**

The FUGN has such an influence over the local people that outmoded policies no longer inspire them and government services are obliged to take this into account when designing new policies. However, despite its long experience and its fame, the federation has only been called upon by government agencies to contribute towards drawing up the Five Year Plans. It has not been involved in drawing up other policies such as those relating to agrarian and land reorganization.

The federation's success mainly derives from the way it works:

- it proposes collective activities taking account of small farmers' needs and know-how;
- it works with existing structures and local methods, which creates harmony between the groups through the culture, language and aspirations of the small farmers;
- "it has set up... an effective support system which enhances small farmers' endeavours, while respecting their autonomy" (Ouedraogo, 1996).

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## Drylands Programme

The Drylands Programme aims to contribute towards more effective and equitable management of natural resources in semi-arid Africa. It has built up a diverse pattern of collaboration with many organisations. It has a particular focus on: soil conservation and nutrient management; pastoral development; and land tenure and resource access. Key objectives of the programme are to: strengthen communication between English and French speaking parts of Africa; support the development of an effective research and NGO sector; and promote locally-based management of resources, build on local skills, encourage participation and provide firmer rights to local users.

It does this through four main activities: collaborative research, training in participatory methods, information networking and policy advice to donor organisations.

International Institute for  
Environment and Development  
3 Endsleigh Street  
London  
WC1H 0DD

Tel: (+44 171) 388 2117  
Fax: (+44 171) 388 2826  
E-mail: [drylands@iied.org](mailto:drylands@iied.org)

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