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**SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH AND NATURAL
RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM
KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNORATE IN IRAQ**

by

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"Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and Natural Resources Management: A Case Study from Kurdistan Regional Governorate In Iraq"

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KRG Mountain and Rural Territories through the Analysis of 6 Villages

- Rapid survey and analysis of six villages (2 in each Governorate)
- Profile of the KRG mountain and rural territories to show the main weaknesses and strength of the KRG territories, and the vulnerability and resilience of the communities to drought and other natural disasters
- Better understanding of the livelihood systems, and the requirements for a sustainable natural resources management strategy that will contribute to increasing the resilience of the communities to drought and other natural disasters
- Field visits and rapid assessment in six villages, two in each Governorate of Sulaimanyah, Erbil and Duhok taking in consideration areas that were affected by drought

Some Findings

- People are migrating to the cities or abroad looking for more stable livelihoods and better paid jobs
- Projects are implemented as a response to specific problems/issues
- Projects are scattered and un-coordinated; there is no program approach
- The current institutional/administrative setting is in a transition phase

Profile of KRG Mountain and Rural Areas

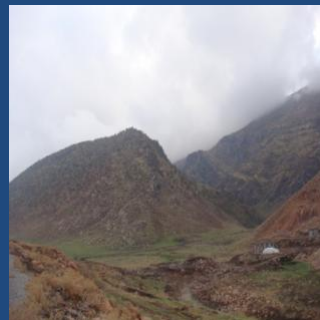


Sectors of Activities

- Agriculture: tends to disappear; survival strategies of the past are no longer viable; fruit orchards; cottage gardens; traditional crops; rain-fed agriculture; modern irrigation just starting
- Livestock production: traditional goat and sheep grazing; traditional cattle production in some areas
- Forestry: Forest plantations; Natural forests managed in a traditional system;
- Agro-sylvo-pastoral system: very well integrated in the landscape; threatened by the changes in the land-use practices



- Industries: small industries (food products; local use)
- Social services: rare; medical services; cultural centers; schools; recreation facilities. Development by both private and public initiatives
- Tourism: increasing importance but still very shy; agri-tourism and rural-based tourism could encourage the traditional agriculture and contribute to the reduction of the migration to the cities; mismanagement and uncontrolled evolution could destroy the landscape and the fragile ecosystems; the stabilization of the situation will lead to an increase in tourism



The Pluriactivity

- Most of the agricultural activities are only undertaken on a part-time basis (either seasonal, or daily)
- For their economical survival, rural people are pluriactive
- Most people are looking for employment (civil servants, peshmerga) for stable incomes; this sometimes provides stable incomes but diverts the young manpower from all productive sectors, including agriculture.
- Pluriactivity reduces the vulnerability to drought and water scarcity

Regional specificities



- The specificities can be categorized into three general categories (based on the SARD-M):
 - constraints
 - diversity
 - potentialities.

Constraints



- **Inaccessibility: inequity of access to resources, information and opportunities.**
 - Water resources
 - Basic services; markets; rangelands
 - Credit facilities
 - Agricultural inputs

- **Fragility: vulnerable to degradation and drought.** In most cases, the damage is irreversible or reversible only over a long period of time.
 - Aged manpower
 - Strong dependence on rainfall
 - Destroyed infrastructures

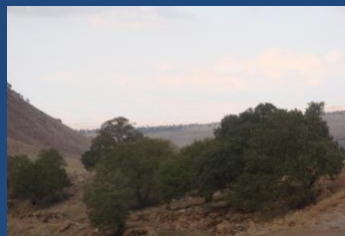


- **Marginality: man-made handicaps which prevent participation in the mainstream pattern of activities, both in mountain and in plain areas.**
- Post-war rehabilitation; no attention to livelihood systems in mountains and rural areas
- Even in times of drought, water is available in cities but not in mountain villages
- Lack of job opportunities and unwillingness to return
- Lack of industries and transformation units (Erbil Yogurt)
- Un-adapted land-tenure and taxation system

Diversity



- **Immense variations within short distances**
- Natural: Home to a large number of biological resources; not fully studied.
- Social, cultural and institutional make-up: Different religious communities. Decision making structure based on political, religious and tribal considerations
- Economic: Water-use rights vary from village to village. Limited economic benefit from agriculture, rangelands, forests, small industries.
- The **harnessing of this diversity in a sustainable manner** is therefore an important issue for mountain areas.



Potentialities: “building on potential”



- **Potentials for products and activities that have a comparative advantage, enhance both productivity and human welfare on a sustained basis.**
- Better and more sustainable water resources management
- Agriculture: much more than the mere production of food, fiber and commodities.
- Good quality traditional crops
- Sustainable Land Management (including forests and rangelands)

Mountains and rural areas provide a wide range of goods and services essential for guaranteeing the availability of vital resources to the rest of the society in relation to:

- water
- biodiversity
- landscape
- risk prevention
- specific products and culture

resulting in a series of **interdependencies between upland and lowland areas.**



Drought, a Livelihood Problem

- Water scarcity and unavailability are a combination of drought and miss-management of water and natural resources
- Water scarcity and poor livelihood systems are exacerbated by the successive wars
- Drought events are expected to occur more frequently and for longer periods
- In KRG, rainfall varies from 200mm to more than 1,000mm/year



- Most water systems (kahreezs, wells, channels...) are destroyed
- The sustainable management of water and natural resources, combating desertification/land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought will contribute to the improvement of the quality of the urban and rural livelihood systems
- There is a strong need to build a resilient society to drought.

- Traditional crops are adapted to the local conditions
- Some crops are highly demanding in water (rice); their production should be limited but not abandoned
- Traditional agricultural practices and water use should be improved
- Agro-biodiversity is rich and should be valorized
- Strong competition with imported crops and products (often subsidized in their countries of origin)

- The promotion of sustainable land and water development (in mountain areas) can play an important role to benefit lowland areas by ensuring adequate supplies of water, environmental stability, conservation of biodiversity, rural-urban population balance, etc.



A prospective scenario

- Sustainable Livelihoods through:
 - Sustainable land resources management
 - Traditional rural activities
 - Multi-functional land-use
 - Reduced conflicts of use
 - Developed local values
 - Responsible tourism
 - Creation of new jobs
 - Respect and promote the cultural values.

This scenario supposes a joint management of the land and water resources with all the concerned stakeholders.



**The Strategy for Sustainable Water And Natural
Resources Management
(based on the 10-Years Strategy of the UNCCD)**

**A Dry-Land Management Approach to Sustainable
Livelihoods and Combating Desertification, Land
Degradation and Drought in KRG**

Strategic objective 1:

- To improve the living conditions of affected populations:
 - Improved and more diversified livelihood base
 - Generated income from sustainable land management.
 - Reduced environmental and socio-economic vulnerability to climate change, climate variability and drought.

Strategic objective 2

- To improve the condition of affected ecosystems
 - Enhanced land productivity and other ecosystem goods and services in a sustainable manner contributing to improved livelihoods.
 - Reduced vulnerability of affected ecosystems to climate change, climate variability and drought.

Operational objective 1:

Advocacy, awareness raising and education

To actively influence relevant international, national and local processes and actors in adequately addressing desertification/land degradation and drought-related issues.

- Synergies with relevant planned and on-going projects and programmes at the national, regional and local levels.
- Desertification/land degradation and drought issues in KRG addressed in national and regional forums, including agricultural trade, climate change adaptation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, rural development, sustainable development and poverty reduction.
- Civil society organizations (CSOs) and the scientific community in the KRG and in the country engaged as stakeholders in the processes and desertification/land degradation and drought are addressed in their advocacy, awareness-raising and education initiatives.

Operational objective 2:

Policy framework

To support the creation of enabling environments for promoting solutions to combat desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.

- Policy, institutional, financial and socio-economic drivers of desertification/land degradation and barriers to sustainable land management are assessed, and appropriate measures to remove these barriers are recommended.
- Sustainable land management and land degradation issues are integrated into development planning and relevant sectoral and investment plans and policies.
- Donors and UN agencies mainstream drought mitigation objectives, water management issues and sustainable land management interventions into their development cooperation programmes/projects in line with their support to KRG sectoral and investment plans.
- Mutually reinforcing measures among desertification/land degradation action programmes and biodiversity and climate change mitigation and adaptation are introduced or strengthened so as to enhance the impact of interventions.

Operational objective 3:

Science, technology and knowledge

To improve scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought.

- National monitoring and vulnerability assessment on biophysical and socioeconomic trends in KRG.
- Baseline scenarios based on the most robust data available on biophysical and socioeconomic trends and relevant scientific approaches gradually harmonized.
- Knowledge on biophysical and socio-economic factors and on their interactions in affected areas improved to enable better decision-making.
- Knowledge of the interactions between climate change adaptation, drought mitigation and restoration of degraded land in affected areas improved to develop tools to assist decision-making.
- Effective knowledge-sharing systems, including traditional knowledge, are in place at regional, sub-regional and national levels to support policy-makers and end users, including through the identification and sharing of best practices and success stories.
- Science and technology networks and institutions relevant to desertification/land degradation and drought are strengthened and empowered to better support the implementation of the strategy.

Operational objective 4:

Capacity-building

To identify and address capacity-building needs to prevent and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.

- Engage in an assessment process to identify capacity needs for tackling desertification/land degradation and drought at the regional and local levels.
- Implement the resulting action plans to develop the necessary capacity at the individual, institutional and systemic levels to tackle desertification/land degradation and drought issues at the regional and local levels.

Operational objective 5:

Financing and technology transfer

To mobilize and improve the targeting and coordination of national, regional, bilateral and multilateral financial and technological resources in order to increase their impact and effectiveness.

- Integrated investment frameworks for leveraging national, regional, bilateral and multilateral resources with a view to increasing the effectiveness and impact of interventions.
- Donor community and concerned UN agencies provide substantial, adequate, timely and predictable financial resources to support initiatives to reverse and prevent desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.
- KRG increases its efforts to mobilize financial resources from international financial institutions, facilities and funds, by promoting the drought/Sustainable Land Management (SLM) agenda within the governing bodies of these institutions.
- Innovative sources of finance and financing mechanisms are identified, including from the private sector, market-based mechanisms, trade, foundations and CSOs, and other financing mechanisms for climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use and for hunger and poverty reduction.
- Access to technology is facilitated through adequate financing, effective economic and policy incentives and technical support, notably within the framework of South-South and North-South cooperation.

Conclusion

- The strategy for the sustainable management of land and water resources could be used as policy tool to enhance the integrated management of the mountain regions and mainly to increase the sustainability of the livelihood systems. This would result in the encouragement of the multiple functionalities of the rural space, which could lead to:
- The reduction of migration from rural and mountain areas
- The reduction in the abandonment of agricultural land
- The mitigation of land degradation and desertification, along with the protection of land and soils

- The improvement of the livelihoods of the local populations
- The reimplementation of the traditional agro-sylvo-pastoral system as the main land use system, to which the small industries and ecotourism components could be added, thus contributing to the sustainability of the livelihoods in the mountain zones
- The availability of water in a sustainable manner to all populations, both urban and rural
- The resilience of the society and the vulnerable groups, including youth, women and least favored groups, to drought and other natural and man-made risks

Thank you

