

## **CEPF Indigenous Peoples' Planning Framework (IPPF)**

**Title of project: Integrated River Basin Management in Ait M'hamed and Imegdale rural communes, Morocco**

Project number: 63843

Project leader: Global Diversity Foundation

Project partners: High Atlas Foundation, RESING, Cadi Ayyad University, Institut Scientifique

The beneficiaries of the project – community members in the High Atlas Mountains – are the primary stakeholders of this project. Although the term 'indigenous peoples' is only selectively used within Morocco to describe Amazigh (Berber) peoples, they meet the definition noted in CEPF's Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) and under the terms of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In common with the CEPF – and the IPPF – a main goal of our project, and a primary objective of GDF and our partners, is to support Indigenous and other local peoples in community-based conservation and activities that enhance local communities' tenure and sustainable resource management.

### **Project summary**

The main objective of the project is to assist communities in two pilot sub-basins to engage in traditional and innovative water catchment management techniques conserve important areas of biodiversity and improve their livelihoods. The expected outcome is much needed river basin management experience, based on multidisciplinary research and practical actions, that will benefit 30,000 rural dwellers in key watersheds and biodiversity areas and that can be applied in other parts of the Atlas Mountain corridor in Morocco and elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

Our project focuses on two rural Amazigh communes in the Atlas Mountain corridor of Morocco – Imegdale and Ait M'hamed – that have extensive river basins hosting fragile water systems as well as irreplaceable biodiversity. The project partners are already engaged in work in these communities to develop collaboration and financial mechanisms that improve the conservation of protected areas while enhancing sustainable livelihoods and promoting community management of priority key biodiversity areas. These communities are situated in highly biodiverse areas – with significant levels of plant endemism – and are highly dependent on agriculture, with approximately 70% of the population involved in animal husbandry and crop production.

### **Overview of the indigenous peoples affected by the project**

The Amazigh are the ethnic group indigenous to North Africa, comprising distinct cultural groups who speak Berber languages. They are distributed from

the Atlantic Ocean to the Siwa Oasis in Egypt, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Niger River. The overall population of Berber-speaking peoples is estimated at 25-35 million, with the vast majority living in Algeria and Morocco. An estimated 40% of the Moroccan population is Berber-speaking. Our project focuses on Amazigh communities of the High and Middle Atlas Mountains south and east of Marrakech.

### **The project partner communities**

Ait M'hamed in Azilal Province has a population, as reported in the 2004 census, of nearly 21,742 people in 3190 households in 47 douars, with an average of 6.8 people per household. The rate of population growth from 1994 to 2004 was 1.4 %, so it is probable that there are now more than 22,000 inhabitants. The active population is calculated to be 53,4% of the total, with another 39,1% youth (14 years old or younger) and 7,5% elderly. The residents are culturally diverse, coming from Ait Messad, Ait Atta, Ihnsaen, Ait Isha, and Saharan tribal origins (albeit all Amazigh-speaking). The population is highly rural, with only 10% of people living in urbanized areas. Indicators of development are low: around 10% of the households have domestic drinking water, electricity and plumbing.

Agriculture and animal husbandry, dependent on grazing in forests and pastures, are the primary economic activities, supplemented by beekeeping. Most agricultural plots are smaller than 5 ha, and irrigation reaches only 6% of cultivated lands. There are about 94,000 apple, almond and walnut trees, far from the agroforestry potential of the commune. Seasonal and permanent migration are an important factor, with more than 350 families having definitively left the area, and more than 2,200 individuals who seek temporary work in Morocco's urban areas.

Imegdale, in Al Haouz Province, has a population of over 5,500 people in more than 1,000 households, with an average of 5.3 people per household, distributed in 17 douars (villages). As with Ait M'hamed, the population is highly rural, and indicators of development are low: only 7% of the households have domestic drinking water, 14% have electricity and 29% have a septic tank. Almost a third of the population (31%) is 19 years old or younger, 34% is between 20 and 49 years old, and 35% 50 years or older. The wild harvest of thyme, lavender, Artemisia and other medicinal and aromatic plants is an important economic activity of nearly 900 community collectors.

### **Free, prior and informed consultation**

Our local partners, HAF, have long-standing relationships with both communities involved in the project: they have carried out participatory planning exercises and community diagnoses for a number of years. These exercises all pointed to a foremost community priority for their development: improved irrigation and water resource management for agricultural and domestic uses. Therefore, this project responds directly to the communities' expressed aspirations and needs for the future. Through further community meetings, during which the project itself was discussed, we have entered – through our partner HAF – into formal agreements with the authorities of both communes for the implementation of this project.

Through continuous interchange and community meetings, we continue to maintain a high level of consultation to ensure that every stage of the project benefits from the consensus of all the members of the community. Abderrahim Ouarghidi, HAF's project manager who speaks fluent Amazigh and has a long-term relationship with both communities, is employed as the project's community liaison, and other Amazigh-speaking HAF staff such as Malika Kassi support the work. This ensures a high level of trust among community members (including women), which is essential for the project to continue to respond to community needs throughout the implementation process.

### **Participatory approaches**

We are dedicated to participatory development approaches that build partnerships determined by the participating communities themselves. We establish development projects that local communities design and manage, and that are in partnership with government and non-government agencies. Our participatory development approach includes beneficiaries as active partners in every step of the development process - from prioritizing development goals to project implementation and management to monitoring and evaluation, which include a mechanism for complaints and conflict resolution. Key to this approach is the facilitation of community planning meetings where beneficiaries together determine the types of projects they want to undertake and create action plans.

Our approach is based on participatory methods applied by trained facilitators and community researchers to allow local communities to decide what is in their best development interest. In facilitating this collective decision-making process, we ensure the inclusion of those who might ordinarily be excluded or marginalized. We support the sustainable development of community members, in particular women and young people. In training community members to work through participatory approaches, the training itself encourages the formulation of ideas, priorities and development projects – as well as ensuring a corps of local leaders trained in techniques necessary for their implementation. In this way, the learning is experiential and mutual. The participants learn by doing and GDF, HAF and Resing actively broker partnerships with donors, private enterprise and public sector organs to ensure the sustainability of the projects.

Local researchers use participatory planning methods to engage other community members in matrix scoring and ranking to prioritize opportunities. They also use visual forms of analysis, such as community, resource and visioning mapping, which help to analyze household wellbeing, risk identification and community assets and gaps. Diagrams identify key institutions that support development, daily and weekly work activities across seasons, historical timelines and root cause analysis. Participants build their abilities to evaluate solutions to problems, create and present action plans, link funds with project priorities, manage implementation, monitor results (with quantifiable and qualitative measurements) and apply strategic advocacy. Local facilitators and community researchers engaged in planning processes bring people together and apply activities to identify and carry out projects. The community researchers and external facilitators organize community meetings, remove

barriers to participation, encourage dialogue, ensure all voices are heard (women, youth, the elderly, ethnic groups, the disadvantaged, the sick and disabled), manage competing interests, analyze factors that affect projects, build confidence and self-reliance, form partnerships, inform beneficiaries of resources available and create a bridge between people and institutions.

### **Capacity-building**

An important part of our participatory process is capacity building and awareness raising for the external facilitators who work directly with local researchers and other community members. HAF has an ongoing training program in participatory democratic planning and project management in Morocco that develops the skills of university students, members of civil society, and elected representatives. It includes workshops in participatory community planning and development sessions on team learning approaches to sustainable development, project management and advocacy, as well as full support after training. Participatory training modules emphasize the experiential learning experience in a real community setting and help develop participants' skills in management to enable them to effectively support the identification, implementation and evaluation of initiatives for local human development throughout the life cycle of the project and enable them to advocate for these projects among public and private sector stakeholders.

At the outset of the project we dedicated time to supporting the communities as they selected a small team of community researchers each (teams of 3 – two men and one women - in both Imegdale and Ait M'hamed). GDF has over 10 years experience working with community researchers in indigenous communities in Malaysia and Mexico; this has taught us that community researchers act as channels for capacity building of other community members.

### **Building on local strengths**

Hand-in-hand with capacity building is the concept of building on the partner communities' strengths. This is particularly true for the water management aspect of the project. Amazigh communities living in the High Atlas have a long history – accompanied by traditional knowledge and practices – of water resource management in an area where water is a scarce and precious resource. An essential phase (phase 2) of the project is the development of a participatory action plan for water management in both communes that builds on traditional water management knowledge and practices, complementing them with approaches that can help communities adapt to a rapidly changing environment and climate. The resulting action plan will seek to merge both approaches, ensuring that local communities have the tools to take the process forward themselves once the project is closed, while allowing us to scale the emergent plans up to other communities in the High Atlas where water resource management is a priority.

### **Culturally appropriate project benefits**

Because we are already working in the two rural communes that will participate in this project, we are well advanced in defining some of the culturally appropriate benefits they desire and in avoiding or mitigating potential adverse

impacts. For example, the participatory process in both Ait M'hamed and Imegdale have revealed that community members – and the associations and cooperatives they have formed – are eager to engage in actions that build infrastructure (including well and irrigation systems) for efficient water use for the development of cooperatively-managed nurseries of organic fruit and nut tree and medicinal and aromatic plants. Once established, the nurseries will provide tree stock for expansion of organic fruit and nut tree plantations – and medicinal and aromatic plants for enrichment planting of cultural landscapes – managed by the beneficiary communities. Activities in the field will be accompanied by the training of community members in water use and organic agricultural techniques as well as in the management of the nursery and plantations and the administration of associations and cooperatives to improve community decision-making and increase market leverage.

The project prepares the ground for further collaborative projects aimed at investment in infrastructure to manage water resources and to process and package and market organic products. Furthermore, these actions avoid negative impacts associated with agricultural intensification – such as the use of chemical inputs and overuse of water – and respect and draw upon traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous peoples. As part of our project cycle management, additional community needs will be explored in this participatory way, allowing prioritization of additional activities that emerge as we develop the water resource action plan, which can then be presented to other external funders for support.

### **Participatory monitoring and evaluation and dealing with grievances**

Continuous project monitoring at the community level is achieved principally through ongoing interaction of project staff and facilitators with community members and elected authorities. Abderrahim Ouarghidi, the community liaison officer for the project, has extensive experience in ethnographic and dialogue-based approaches to monitoring and evaluation of project progress. This day-to-day approach to participatory monitoring and evaluation complements the project's integrated monitoring and evaluation phase (phase 4). During this last phase of the project, we will assess the impact of implemented activities at a sub-basin level by monitoring environmental and social indicators. With respect to the indigenous communities we are working with, we will carry out well-known participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches such as interviews, surveys, community dialogues and participatory exercises, as well as other ethnographic methods to assess local perceptions of benefits and socio-economic impacts at a household and community levels.

Although no formal grievance mechanism is envisaged, Abderrahim's long-term relationship with community members (including women and elders) ensures a high level of trust. Through continuous interaction with community members and authorities, we expect him to learn of any incipient concerns and help us deal with them – through dialogue and agreements with the whole community – *before* they develop into grievances proper. In the unlikely scenario that grievances develop, these will be communicated to Abderrahim and other HAF and GDF agents (again, both formally and informally) during their regular visits

to the communities. Given our project's reliance on maintaining excellent working relationships with the two partner communities, grievances will be dealt with immediately through the means of community meetings, discussions with individual community members and authorities, and participatory decision-making to resolve any issues arising.

Grievances will be dealt with within at the most 15 days of their airing, and in keeping with CEPF policy, will be written up, included in project monitoring and shared with the CEPF Secretariat. In the unlikely event that the claimant is not satisfied with the response provided by project leaders, the grievance will be submitted to the CEPF Executive Director ([cepfexecutive@conservation.org](mailto:cepfexecutive@conservation.org) or by mail to Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Conservation International, Attn: Executive Director, 2011 Crystal Drive, Suite 500, Arlington, VA 22202, USA). If the claimant does not have internet access or easy postal access, the project leaders will provide support in sending the claim to the CEPF Executive Director. CEPF will respond within 15 calendar days of receipt, and claims will be filed and included in project monitoring.

### **Budget elements relating to indigenous peoples**

The project as a whole is implemented in the two indigenous communities mentioned; therefore the entire budget is oriented towards activities pertaining to indigenous peoples. However, there are specific budget elements that relate directly to the participating indigenous communities: the 'Furniture and equipment' budget lines, which represent the purchases the project will make for the implementation of the community plant nurseries and enrichment planting, and materials for plant collecting for the community researchers. Furthermore, we are employing Abderrahim Ouarghidi of HAF specifically as the community liaison through the budget line 'Non-US consultants' (Please note that initially this community liaison person was going to be Malika Kassi, who has now been replaced by Abderrahim Ouarghidi; Malika is still employed by HAF and is collaborating in general on the project. Both are Amazigh speakers).