



## Knowledge from the field

*Lessons Learned from the GEF Learning Missions*

# Burkina Faso

Integrated Ecosystem Management to Combat Natural Resources Degradation in Watersheds

The Sahel Lowland Integrated Ecosystem Management (SILEM) in Burkina Faso was designed to address natural resource degradation through the IEM approach. The baseline project for the SILEM is the Community Based Rural Development (CBRD) Program, a 15-year Government of Burkina Faso and WB funded program that works in all 302 rural communes of the country focusing on poverty alleviation. SILEM accompanies the CBRD program to mainstream environmental concerns into the poverty agenda and to

provide decentralized funding for demand-driven and community managed projects that address natural resource management issues identified at the grassroots level.



## GEF Learning Missions

Learning Missions are a key component of the GEF knowledge management initiative. They aim at producing on-ground analysis of the execution of GEF funded projects. Lessons derived from the learning missions will be used to improve focal area strategies and policies, and inform project design and implementation. In coordination with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), the GEF Secretariat has identified a list of “learning questions” relevant to each focal area strategy with the ultimate objective of enhancing the:

- a. Catalytic effect of GEF through identifying, up-scaling, and replicating best practices
- b. Global Environmental Benefits (GEBs) through improved understanding of social impacts
- c. The potential for sustainability of project outcomes across GEF focal areas.

For the Land Degradation focal area in particular, the learning missions try to determine how effectively the Integrated Ecosystem Management (IEM) approach is being applied to combat land degradation in drylands. The knowledge generated will contribute to further advance the LD focal area strategy and portfolio - integrating linkages to other focal areas such as Biodiversity, International Waters, and Climate Change. It will also increase understanding about how project assumptions and risks associated with IEM are addressed during project implementation.

## The Integrated Ecosystem Management (IEM) Approach

The IEM Approach is based on the ecosystem approach adopted by the Convention on Biological Diversity. It aims at integrating land, water and living resources management to promote conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way. The approach (a) applies scientific methodologies focused on levels of biological organization, in which humans, with their cultural diversity, are an integral component of many ecosystems; (b) requires adaptive management to deal with the complex and dynamic nature of ecosystems and the absence of complete knowledge or understanding of their functioning; and (c) does not preclude other management and conservation approaches but could rather integrate several approaches and other methodologies to deal with complex situations.

## The Learning Objectives

The GEF undertook a 10-day learning mission to the SILEM project in Burkina Faso to observe and understand the IEM Approach as implemented, holding consultations with government officials, staff of other GEF Agencies, executing partners, target beneficiaries of the project, and six villages in two of the micro-watersheds.

The consultations were guided by the following questions:

- a) What are the drivers that generate catalytic effect?
- b) How does the GEF’s catalytic role influence the choice of activities to GEBs?
- c) How is progress toward targeted IEM outcomes being tracked?
- d) What tools and indicators are being applied for monitoring the IEM approach?



*Head of Oumpougoundeni village, Kompienga Province*



*Fish from Kompienga Lake sold on the road to Fada*



## Findings and Lessons

The learning mission produced six key findings and lessons related to application of the IEM approach to combating land degradation.

### Enhancing the catalytic effect of GEF through identifying, up-scaling, and replicating best practices

**Mainstreaming of IEM Approach is possible, but identifying evidence of it as a catalytic effect is difficult.**

The target watersheds that were managed in the SILEM project were located in four different provinces to enable mainstreaming of the IEM approach within the same institutional and governance frameworks in place for the CBRD program. However, while IEM projects create opportunity for mainstreaming, evidence of GEF catalytic effect is difficult to capture. This can be attributed to difficulties with national level coordination and policy dialogue between different sectors and agencies on sustainable land management and cross-cutting environmental issues. Furthermore, adaptation of national

policies does not automatically translate into local level implementation of policy reforms beyond the areas targeted by projects where the necessary capacity is lacking and information flow is less effective. This means that efforts to link national level policy and local level actions through IEM cannot be easily replicated except by design. It is likely that contribution of IEM to mainstreaming can only be achieved if this is addressed as a priority, and the national government is more involved in the project. Burkina Faso is a GEF Country Program Partner (CPP), but the partnership was only established after the SILEM project was approved. Mainstreaming, therefore, is still a possibility although no direct link has been established between SILEM and sustainable land management projects funded under the CPP.

**The piloting of SILEM within the CBRD by the Government of Burkina Faso and the World Bank creates synergies and cost effectiveness.**

While the CBRD is a rural development and poverty alleviation project covering all 302 rural communes of the country, the SILEM pilot was further concentrated in micro-watersheds within each of the four major watersheds. The micro-watersheds covered 15 rural communes in 158 selected villages, all of which were involved in piloting a relatively new and untested approach to sustainable land management (SLM). By focusing on micro-watersheds within the larger watersheds, the SILEM project allowed for natural resource management to be more directly integrated in the bottom-up decision-making process that was embodied in CBRD. As a result, synergies and cost effectiveness are evident in the approach to implementation in the four provinces where both projects operate. The two projects also co-operate in strengthening the institutional frameworks that support community actions. While all natural resource interventions in the pilot micro-watersheds are financed by SILEM, the community level activities are jointly supported with CBRD staff. Because of the synergies in project administration and support, more than 50% of the GEF resources are directly allocated to activities annually prioritized and implemented by communities. As a result, almost 3,000 micro-projects have been financed exceeding the originally planned number and the budget earmarked, in addition to funding provided for technical support and

services to the communities.

**Full project ownership by all stakeholders represents a good opportunity for consolidating and potentially up-scaling the project approach.**

The overall organization and framework of the project, including locally based staff, demonstrates full ownership of SILEM, which is promising for sustainability of results and potential up-scaling of the IEM approach to combating land degradation nationally. Village-level committees are trained to supervise and manage functions as determined by the nature of agreed interventions. These committees therefore play an important role in ensuring long-term sustainability of the IEM practices implemented by communities. The knowledge and skills gained by the committees will strengthen local level mediation of land use conflicts before there is any need to engage the commune or provincial level administration. Additionally, because the project intermediary draws entirely on technical expertise from institutions that have vested interests in supporting community-driven actions, the SILEM project influences how government institutions implement extension activities in rural communities. This has important implications for sustainability of the IEM approach and potential for up-scaling nationally.



*Livestock market in Fada N'Gourma, one of the biggest in West Africa*



## Enhancing Global Environment Benefits through improved understanding of social impacts

### **The participatory approach in a community driven development is a powerful driver of Sustainable Land Management**

A key focus of the SILEM project was to support community-level efforts to enhancing long-term sustainability of the traditional production systems (i.e. agriculture, agroforestry, livestock, wildlife, and fisheries) by integrating management at micro-watershed scale with GEF financing. Specific interventions were tailored toward improvement of the practices based on priorities identified by the communities.

The IEM approach as implemented by SILEM is primarily based on participatory planning processes to address land use priorities and specific livelihood needs at village level. The planning process starts with a participatory problem analysis and results in village land use plans and activity plans for identified 'micro-projects' for natural resource management interventions. Participatory land use planning at village level primarily delineates land resources to accommodate multiple livelihood needs. The formulation of resource management regulations, the translation of these regulations into written contracts, the establishment of

physical signs and demarcation posts, and the enforcement mechanisms through local guards and protection groups are all aimed at reducing the pressure from competing land uses and allowing for better conflict negotiations and for diversification and intensification of production systems. Local guards and protection groups are supported in their efforts to implement the agreed regulations.

The participatory project approach also entails the establishment of village committees in the project villages in order to ensure the social organization of the work and supervise management and monitoring of the activity plans. Because land degradation problems are often not restricted to village boundaries, the project also facilitates collaboration through creation of inter-village committees. Progress in these projects is evident in the indicator for land productivity (i.e. average annual crop yield), which has shown significant increase (231% - 472%) after three years of project efforts towards improved soil and water conservation techniques in three villages.



*Good vegetation cover in the agricultural landscape*

### **Monitoring of impact indicators during implementation of IEM produces variable results and is costly**

Baseline data and information on impact indicators were obtained during the first year of implementation in 2006 covering soil organic matter, number of arthropod species, diversity of herbaceous plants, aboveground vegetative biomass, and phenology of common plant species, and land productivity. The cost and logistical challenges of implementing the protocol became prohibitive after the third year of data collection. As a result, monitoring of GEBs during project implementation turned out to be impractical and unrealistic. With baseline data and protocols already established, the potential for impact assessment is still possible if factored into end-of-project activities. Furthermore, regeneration of native vegetation and improvement of soil conditions in the demarcated areas will be subject to influence by livestock, fires, droughts, etc. It is therefore certain that evidence of impacts as determined by the range of indicators used in the project will only be manifested after a long period, or at least beyond the life of the project.

### **GEF financing for piloting the IEM approach through SILEM exemplifies the GEF's catalytic role in supporting countries to generate GEBs in the context of national development**

During the signing of SILEM, there were several important national development drivers that provided the foundation for core principles embodied in the IEM approach. First, there were national strategies and action plans in place to address major environmental, rural development, poverty, and natural resource management challenges in the country. Effective implementation of these plans is based on decentralized institutions and grassroots activities that are demand-driven and managed by local communities. Second, the Government of Burkina Faso had issued a "Lettre de Politique de Développement Rural Décentralisé" that outlines the basic principles of decentralization, institutional support, and investment in community-based actions. This document established the fundamental basis for linking the IEM approach to other national planning processes for sustainable development. Third, the baseline CBRD included several triggers agreed to by the Government and its development partners to

ensure an enabling environment for implementation. These triggers presented an opportunity for the Government and World Bank to pilot an approach that was relatively untested in the context of sustainable land management, especially in Africa where land degradation and desertification are major threats to rural livelihoods. Because the CBRD was designed as a 15-year program, it was envisioned that piloting the IEM approach would allow for adaptive management of all processes involved as a means of mobilizing sustainable solutions that can be implemented nationally. It will also enable the Government to constructively implement action plans for the global conventions to which it is signatory. The GEF Operational Program on IEM (OP12) therefore presented an appropriate entry point for GEF financing because the OP was created to facilitate integrated approaches that harness synergies and manage tradeoffs in generating global environmental benefits.

*Naturally regenerating Savanna trees in the village arboretum of Bounou*





GEF Learning Mission Leader with part of the local project team in Bounou, Fada N'Gourma



## Conclusions

**“The project has raised the profile of the IEM approach in Burkina Faso”**

While the GEF pilot mission did not address impacts of the project, it is clear that SILEM has made significant progress in raising profile of the IEM approach nationally. It is unclear, however, whether there is adequate understanding and appreciation of the approach in the government for replication and

up-scaling nationally. Although the potential for up-scaling remains questionable, the legacy of successes in the pilot micro-watersheds will remain linked to the CBRD baseline project, which is still under implementation and will receive additional World Bank IDA financing for a third phase.

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