

SNV BRIEFING

Towards cross border Natural Resource Management and Economic Development

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Linking communities and institutions in the Onchocerciasis Freed Zone of Burkina Faso and Ghana

SNV Ghana (Tamale) and SNV Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou) jointly provided advisory support to the ECOWAS/FAO Onchocerciasis Freed Zone Project to pilot cross-border, negotiated and consensus based planning for the development of the Onchocerciasis Freed Zone in the White Volta basin across the border of Burkina Faso and Ghana. This briefing highlights the experiences in linking communities and institutions, and lessons learnt.

Main conclusions:

- An inclusive, cross border approach is required for meaningful natural resource based development in the Onchocerciasis Freed Zones.
- Negotiated and consensus based planning provides a suitable approach to effect this.
- Up-scaling of this process requires local governments to take ownership. This requires capacity and operational issues to be addressed.



Royal Tropical Institute



Background

River blindness, or Onchocerciasis, occurred widely in river valleys in the West African savanna zone and has affected large numbers of people.

It is now largely eradicated. This success is the result of the Onchocerciasis Control Programme (OCP), which was set up in the mid-nineteen seventies on the initiative of the affected countries and international agencies. The eradication of river blindness has opened up substantial areas of land along rivers for more intensive use, facilitating economic development in these areas.

Many of these so-called Onchocerciasis Freed Zones (OFZ) lie across international borders and interventions in one country could thus affect neighbouring countries.

For that reason a coordinated international development approach has been called for. The OCP countries agreed that the responsibility for this joint effort should be taken up by the national governments (rather than international agencies). The coordination and implementation of such development programmes should be placed with government agencies, allowing strong roles for communities and traditional authorities, particularly in so far as natural resources are concerned.

The Socio Economic Development Programme for the Transborder Onchocerciasis Freed Zone of Burkina Faso and Ghana was initiated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to explore the modalities to institutionalise such a cross-border planning and development approach.

The first phase of this programme, generally referred to as the 'OFZ Project', was implemented from 2003 to 2007 by FAO. Its operational area was the border zone in the Upper East Region in Ghana and the adjacent Nahouri and Boulgou provinces in Burkina Faso.

One of the activities was to test the suitability of the Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development (PNTD) approach for cross-border natural resource based planning and development in the OFZ.

PNTD has been developed by FAO and offers a structured approach to consensus building and joint planning on natural resource management (<ftp.fao.org/SD/SDA/Sdar/Bonnal/PNTD>).

This made the approach potentially useful, considering the complex institutional environment made up of communities, traditional authorities, and government agencies in two countries with partly overlapping mandates on natural resource management.

SNV provided advisory support

To the OFZ Project to pilot the PNTD approach through its teams in Tamale (Ghana) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). The Business and Development Consultancy Centre (BADECC), a Tamale-based NGO, conducted training sessions and supervised field activities.

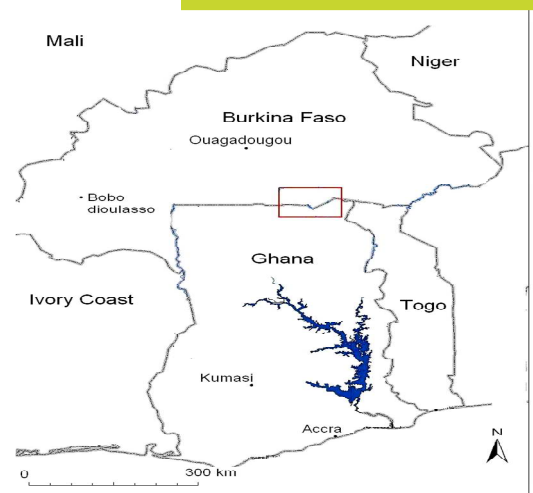
Acquiring land in the project area (Burkina Faso)

Only a man (foreigner or local) can acquire land in the Burkinabé part of the intervention zone. He has to make a request to the traditional land chief, accompanied by some symbolic gifts. He needs to explain the intended use of the land as this affects the duration of the agreement.

User rights to farm land are generally temporary and can change hands frequently, while residential land for building a home is allocated on a more permanent basis. Once the land chief has performed the traditional rituals, the land is granted to the man and he can start using it.

According to the local community members and chiefs interviewed, no further formal procedure involving governmental agencies is required after the customary process is completed.

OFZ Project Area



Existing natural resource management structures

Although both countries differ in the way land administration and management is institutionalised, there are also many similarities, particularly in the rural areas.

- Both have a dual land tenure system in which customary arrangements co-exist with a formal system. In the rural areas, the former is still the dominant force.
- Once the decentralisation process in Burkina Faso is fully completed, both will have a similar institutional environment in which the lowest administrative bodies (the District Assembly in Ghana and the Commune in Burkina Faso) are tasked to coordinate natural resource based development, but have limited control over the implementation of interventions. The latter responsibility rests with line departments which are primarily answerable to central government.

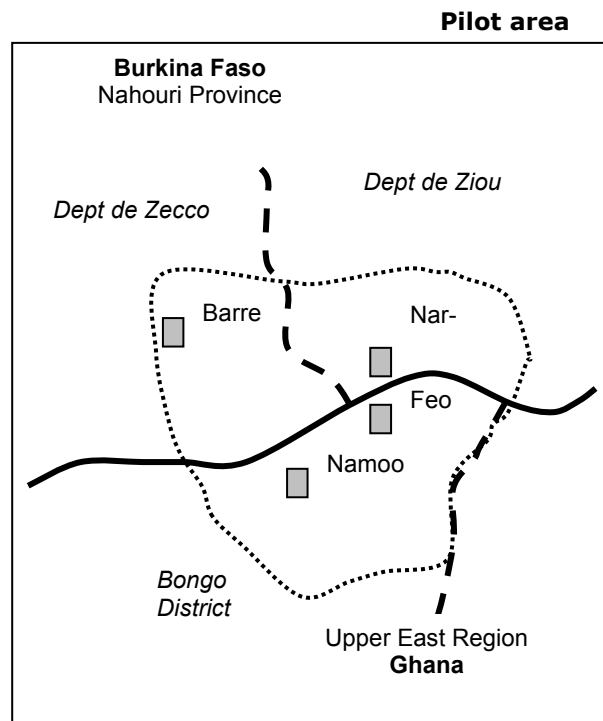
A key difference between the two countries is that in Burkina Faso, community-based natural resource management has been institutionalised through the establishment of village land management committees, the so-called Commissions Villageoise de Gestion du Terroir (CVGT) and with technical and financial support provided by a national land management programme: the Programme National de Gestion des Terroirs (PNGT). In Ghana support to community-level natural resource management has been left to ad-hoc initiatives of mainly non-governmental, organisations.

The pilot process

The purpose of the pilot was to assess the applicability of the Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development approach for planning and development in the Onchocerciasis Freed Zones. Key questions related to the actual need for cross-border negotiation and consensus building, as well as the institutional requirements with respect to the up-scaling and internalising of the approach.

The Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development process was tested in a single pilot area spanning the border. It included the communities of Barre and Narquia in Burkina Faso and Namoo and Feo in Ghana, and comprised parts of two Départements (now Communes) and one District. Most of the people in the pilot area belong to the Gruni (Frafra) ethnic group. They thus share a common language, culture and ancestry, but are divided on the basis of nationality.

A team consisting of staff members of local government and non-government organisations was established and trained to facilitate joint planning, to provide technical expertise, and to liaise with relevant institutions. An active learning approach was followed in which short workshops alternated with field level application. The workshops were intended for training purposes, as well as to share and evaluate field level experiences in order to refine the approach to the Onchocerciasis Freed Zones environment.



Main findings

Need for a cross-border multi-level planning framework.

There is a clear need to embed the community-based natural resource management structures into higher level planning and development strategies (vertical linking), as well as to create linkages between adjoining communities (horizontal linking).

Natural resource management is still firmly within the domain of the traditional authorities and by-and-large community-based, but communities often share resources.

Moreover, changes in use or management instigated by one community may well affect a much larger area. It emerged that such effects and relationships often extend across the border and increasingly create conflicts and disagreements.

PNTD provides an appropriate framework for cross-border planning.

The pilot exercise resulted in development proposals that were jointly prepared and widely supported by communities on both sides of the border. The process was characterised by a high level of active participation by community-members and their leaders.

The attention to negotiation and consensus building helped create better understanding between communities on their claims on, and use of, shared natural resources.

The traditional structure and community representatives appreciated the planning exercise for this reason in particular. The local communities and their leaders also saw the value of the process in a much wider context, i.e. beyond natural resource management. In the words of the Bongo Chief: 'it brings people with same ancestry back together'.

Sharing resources across the border

The earth dam at Feo, which was recently upgraded, is used for livestock watering and would offer some potential for irrigation. Irrigation development is complicated by the fact that the irrigable area is entirely located across the border in Narquia.

Feo Chief at the dam standing besides the border marker pointing towards the irrigable land located across the border



Lessons learnt

The main lessons learnt with respect to up-scaling and internalising the PNTD approach are:

Local governments need to Take ownership

Local Governments saw PNTD piloting essentially as another OFZ project activity, rather than an opportunity to become more involved. They were certainly supportive of the process and assigned field staff to the planning team, but the pilot process failed to ensure a more active Involvement of 'decision makers' in the planning process, and with that their commitment to follow-up on the implementation of the plans.

Capacity of local (government) organisations needs to be strengthened

The experience of local government and NGOs with planning of natural resource Based development in the OFZ lies mostly at community-level, and at a diagnostic level (PRA). The capacity to place community needs and planning into a wider perspective using negotiation and consensus building appears to be very limited and needs to be built up. Cross-border collaboration between these organisations also requires differences in mandates and work culture to be understood, appreciated and bridged.

Community members of Barre and Namoo planning for joint action

Operational challenges need to be addressed

The establishment of a joint support structure by both countries for cross-border planning and development would need to take into account the following issues:

- **High operational costs for government institutions**
This is because of the International travel allowances that apply to activities undertaken across the border, the reduced efficiency due to the language gap, and time consuming border crossings;
- **Administrative complications**
Civil servants require authorisation from central government to cross the border on official duty. Obtaining such permission may be time consuming, particularly in Burkina Faso;
- **Restricted areas of operation Of NGOs**
NGOs are licensed to operate within specific countries and administrative areas only. This does not allow local NGOs to operate across the border.

Difference between Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development and other Natural resource management planning approaches

"You need to lift the pot to your knee before you call someone else to help you carry it. Participatory and Negotiated Territorial Development has helped us lift the pot to our knee ourselves (diagnosed our problems) and we are now looking for someone to help us carry (implement our proposals).

Other approaches simply carried the pot without allowing us to position it on our knee" A community member's view.



Initial conclusions and way forward

Experiences in pilot area confirm that x-border agreement and cooperation would be required for development of the larger OFZ. An approach along the lines of PNTD, would create the level of consensus on natural resource use and management that would be required for further development.

To enable significant up-scaling of this process, governments will need to take a more prominent role in the coordination, facilitation, funding and implementation of development programmes in the OFZ. Similarly, local NGOs and traditional authorities have to become actively involved, particularly at field level. Building on the structure developed in the pilot process, the following is proposed:

Government involvement would shift from full engagement in integrated cross-border planning processes, as was the case in the pilot area, to cross-border coordination. There is no need for government staff to continue to work jointly at field level, provided the activities on both sides of the border are well coordinated, and the traditional structures are properly engaged and supported. This would significantly reduce operational costs and logistical complications.

X-border coordination should be conducted at the appropriate administrative levels. That is Regional Governorate / Province level to ensure agreement on overall development objectives for the OFZ, and District - Commune level to align planning processes and implementation of development projects.

Local government, together with NGOs, should facilitate negotiated planning processes between communities, and provide the traditional structures and communities with the technical and administrative support required.

Governments would require technical and financial assistance to build up specific capacities at the various administrative levels. Operational budget support can probably not entirely be avoided at this stage, but should be limited as much as possible, and phased out within a realistic period of time.

The traditional authorities should take a prominent role in local level Planning, as they are best positioned to effect (cross-border) collaboration between communities on natural resource management. They will require support to build up their technical capacity, as well to strengthen their position to ensure adequate service delivery from government and NGOs.

Local NGOs should be engaged in this process to strengthen field level support. This will include technical support as well as proposal development for resource mobilisation. Moreover, the NGOs could play an important role as 'watch dogs' to ensure that governments are delivering the services required. Local NGOs in the OFZ generally have a limited technical capacity and depend by-and-large on project funding for their operations, and will require technical and financial support to play these roles, particularly in the short term.

From the above it is clear that **external financial and technical support** will continue to be required, but its focus would shift. More emphasis will have to be placed on building institutional capacity, rather than on direct project-based implementation as has been the case so far. Indications are that this approach of transferring ownership to (local) government and NGOs could well be less effective than direct project implementation in the short term. However, given the difficulties encountered in the OFZ with sustaining external funding and executing implementation, it may well be worth investing in the transfer of ownership approach to enable more effective involvement of national governments, local NGOs and traditional authorities in the longer term.

Contact

SNV Ghana is organised in portfolio teams located in the Greater Accra, Volta, Western, and Northern regions, with a new office soon to be opened in the Upper West Region. Each team consist of a team coordinator and a mix of international and country professionals.

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To be opened early 2009 . For information contact the Country Office

Colophon

This briefing was jointly prepared by SNV Ghana (Northern Portfolio) and SNV Burkina Faso (Equipe de Renforcement des Capacités Ouagadougou 1).

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This Briefing is complementary to our advisory services, and capitalises our practical experiences. We share this knowledge in order to improve our effectiveness, that of our client organisations and other relevant actors.

Connecting people's capacities

Connecting people's capacities is our contribution to the development of Ghana. SNV has been in Ghana for over 15 years, and we have witnessed rapid and profound changes. The private sector has been developing rapidly, civil society organisations play an increasingly important role, and government has taken audacious initiatives such as the country wide introduction of Health Insurance Schemes. More and more, there is an agreement that government, civil society and the private sector need to work together. This is far from easy though. SNV Ghana is eminently placed to play an important role, as we work equally well with all these types of organisations. We aim to provide state of the art advice to our clients that allows them to deal effectively with the challenges they are facing.

Our advisory services

Providing high quality advisory services is only possible if you know the context of your client. As one cannot be an expert in all sectors, we have chosen to limit ourselves to a number of important activities. In the area of basic service delivery, we focus on Primary Health Care and Basic Education. Our activities in economic development are geared towards tourism and a number of agricultural sub-sectors.