



Concerted local initiative for the sustainable development of oases in Mauritania (PICODEV)

Oases, complex and unique agroecosystems in desert environments, have been patiently shaped by their inhabitants over thousands of years. They represent a valuable heritage that plays a crucial ecological role in the conservation of biodiversity and in combating desertification. Moreover, oases serve as a virtuous socio-economic model by supporting diversified family farming systems, enabling the production of a variety of food. However, since the 1980s, oases have suffered increasing degradation caused by climate change, the expansion of intensive monocultures leading to pollution and resource depletion, as well as land fragmentation, to name just a few factors.

General presentation of the project



General objective

To support the sustainable development of the Atar and Tawaz oases by preserving and enhancing their natural, economic and social resources.



Specific objectives

- To increase the technical, organisational and engagement capacities of civil society in the oases of Atar and Tawaz.
- To promote the sustainable economic and social development of the Atar and Tawaz oases by supporting concerted local initiatives.



Intervention strategy

The management of natural resources in the oases of Atar and Tawaz involves a design and implementation approach that integrates local stakeholders at all stages of the process. This participatory approach aims to enable local actors to play a key role in the development of a sustainable and coherent natural resource management strategy. It implies strong accountability of local actors, as well as territorial coherence of actions and their ownership by these actors. To ensure the sustainability of the action, it is proposed to establish a communal consultation framework at local level to influence the implementation of sustainable development policies in the Atar and Tawaz oases.



Expected results

- R1. The advocacy capacities of civil society in the oasis community of Atar and Tawaz are strengthened.
- R2. The Atar and Tawaz oasis associations are federated, trained, and join the network of associations for the sustainable development of oases (RADD0).
- R3. A communal consultation framework is established between the oasis organisations, the municipalities, and the regional technical services to promote sustainable development and better management of public affairs.
- R4. A jointly developed communal strategy, accompanied by an action plan, is produced to ensure the sustainable development of the oases of Atar and Tawaz.
- R5. A green fund is established to support productive economic activities that contribute to the implementation of the communal strategy, while promoting the emergence of a green economy.



Partners

Tenmiya¹ with the support of the international solidarity association CARI.²

Timescale

43 months (2018 – 2022).

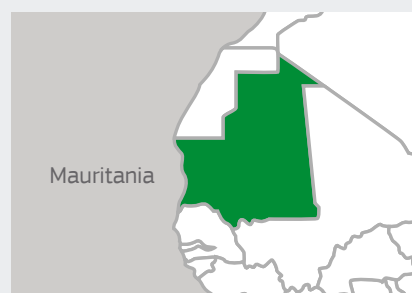


Budget

EUR 380,265 financed by the European Union (90%) and the French Development Agency (AFD) (10%).

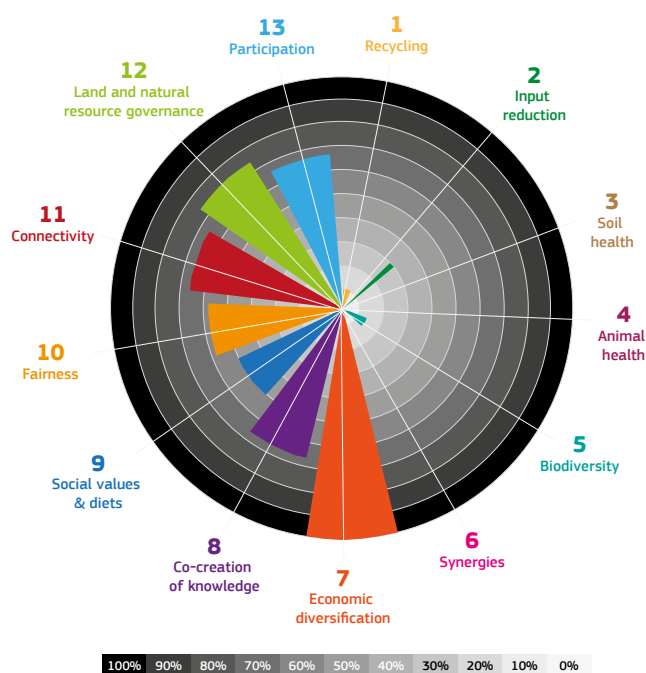


Intervention area



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Agroecological classification of the project according to the 13 principles of the HLPE



1 Recycling

No recycling activities are mentioned in the project, with the exception of a strategic document on the date palm value chain, which was drawn up as part of the project. It is therefore assumed that the recommended practices have been implemented.

2 Input reduction

The project only partially addresses the principle of input reduction. The project document does not specify the agricultural practices that will be promoted to preserve and enhance the natural resources necessary for the sustainable development of the Atar and Tawaz oases. Similarly, no mention is made of the minimum environmental conditions to which micro-project holders should commit themselves. Although not prescribed, it is likely that inputs reduction may have been a selection criterion. Market gardening activities with solar-powered irrigation pumps in place of fuel-based pumps were indeed supported, even if the economic argument (reduction of fuel costs) prevailed over the ecological justification. Reducing waste by upgrading dates to extend their shelf life is also present in some micro-activities. The strategy and action plan for the development of the Atar and Tawaz oases explicitly advocate concerted and regulated management of water resources.

3 Soil health

There is almost no mention of agricultural practices in the project document. Soil health is therefore not addressed.

4 Animal health

Similarly, animal health is not mentioned in the project document. Livestock farming, as well as integration with pastoralism and agricultural practices that support animal life, are not included in the project activities.

5 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is only mentioned through support for the planting of a local variety of date palms. Farming practices that promote biodiversity – such as crop diversification, crop rotation, or the integration of pollinator-friendly plants – are not addressed.

6 Synergies

The project makes no reference to agricultural practices likely to promote ecological synergies.

7 Economic diversification

Economic diversification plays a crucial role in this project aimed at stimulating local economic development, by adding value to oasis products. Particular attention is paid to building the capacities of 60 women's organisations in the areas of agricultural production and natural resource development. In addition, the project provides for the creation of a green fund dedicated to financing collective economic initiatives.





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8 Co-creation of knowledge

The project partially adheres to the principles of co-creation and knowledge sharing. Its approach is based on supporting civil society organisations working in the oases, involving them at every stage of the project. They also engage in local consultation platforms, where they share their knowledge of the challenges and their vision of oasis development with local authorities and decentralised services. The project also facilitated the participatory development of a strategy and an action plan for the development of the oases in the municipalities of Atar and Tawaz.

emergence of a specific policy for the integrated development of oases, in accordance with principle 12.

10 Fairness

The project is partially committed to the promotion of social justice. Its micro-activity support component – technical and financial support – specifically targets women's cooperatives, with the explicit aim of promoting their economic empowerment. However, the proportion of men trained by the project appears to be higher than that of women, with a ratio of 56% to 44%. In addition, the participation of women and youth in decision-making bodies – such as consultation platforms or workshops to develop the strategy and action plan – is not mentioned.

9 Social values & diets

The project partially contributes to the promotion of social values and diets, by promoting agricultural production and the emblematic know-how of the oasis environment. One of its ambitions is to influence national authorities to adopt laws recognising the specific characteristics of agricultural and artisanal production specific to oases, such as dates that are deeply rooted in oasis food culture and agricultural systems. Oases have an internationally recognised heritage value thanks to their ecological functions, such as biodiversity of flora and fauna, mitigation of the effects of climate change and water conservation. Oases also play a major social and economic role defining lifestyles and social organisation, the multifunctionality of their traditional systems, the diversity of local forage and vegetable varieties, as well as local breeds of livestock adapted to climatic and feeding resources. Finally, they are of significant cultural relevance due to their ability to preserve ancestral local know-how in irrigation practices, culinary habits, arts, crafts and habitat. The project therefore provides for concrete advocacy actions in favour of the

11 Connectivity

The project incorporates some principles related to connectivity. The multi-annual strategy for the development of oases, that has been drawn up clearly states its commitment to a «social and solidarity economy» approach. This approach aims to favour players who abide by certain principles, such as the production of goods and services with high social utility, prioritising the employment of disadvantaged groups, the development of ecologically sustainable livelihoods, and many others.

12 Land and natural resource governance

The project is particularly committed to the principles of responsible governance of natural resources. Advocacy activities with local authorities and decentralised state services

for the preservation of oasis ecosystems constitute one of the pillars of the project. These actions are carried out by five local civil society organisations, previously identified and grouped into a platform. They aim to develop a strategy for the preservation of oases and to influence national policies in order to take into account the specificities and fragilities of this environment. One of the stated ambitions of these advocacy efforts is to promote laws that ensure the promotion of oasis biodiversity, the protection of water and soil, the enhancement of architectural and cultural heritage, as well as the recognition of oasis agricultural and artisanal productions.

13 Participation

The project places the participation of local actors at the heart of its approach. It is part of a strategy to strengthen the capacities of civil society organisations in the Adrar region, supported for over 15 years by Tenmiya and CARI. The goal is to promote their empowerment, their participation in local consultation frameworks and their advocacy capacities. Thus, a local consultation framework has been created to facilitate dialogue between the municipalities and the regional technical services of civil society, thereby allowing for better consideration of the aspirations of the population and its representatives. Workshops, seminars and awareness campaigns are organised with the involvement of the oasis population. Local civil society organisations, whose capacities for policy dialogue have been strengthened thanks to the project, are integrated into a wider regional dynamic through the Oasis Sustainability Associative Network (RADD0), which works to safeguard oases and promote sustainable development in oasis environments.

SUCCESS FACTORS/CHALLENGES

- In its initial formulation, the project does not meet most of the criteria of agroecology, nor does it explicitly claim to be agroecological.
- + However, it has contributed to the development of a strategy and an action plan for the development of the oases, which promote an agroecological approach. The rehabilitation and preservation of the ecological functions of the oasis agroecosystem are one of the five strategic axes recommended in this approach. This strategy includes several actions aimed at protecting water resources, preserving plant and animal biodiversity (through a participatory inventory of local seeds and know-how related to their production and management), as well as conserving soils against climate change and desertification.
- + This strategy is also based on improving the local governance of oases, by strengthening the policy and institutional framework, supporting local authorities and civil society in drawing up oasis development plans and reinforcing their advocacy efforts for their preservation.
- + These examples partially illustrate the proposed actions that address oasis issues in an integrated manner. The project has thus managed to co-design a multi-year strategy that significantly integrates the principles of agroecology.

