

CASE STUDY

Jordanian Badia – Eastern Jordan

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Inclusive Rangeland Management in Jordan

The Badia is a region of semi-arid and steppic rangelands in eastern Jordan. Historically, the rangelands were managed by tribal institutions of local communities using traditional and cultural ecosystem management techniques. With the establishment of the Jordanian State, these lands became State property, resulting in the dissolution of traditional natural resource management institutions and systems. The disintegration of traditional systems and knowledge led to deterioration and degradation of the rangelands. In 2001 the Jordanian government published the National Rangeland Strategy, in an attempt to restore traditional ecosystem management techniques and to better involve tribal pastoralist communities in the conservation of rangelands.

PRINCIPAL ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture

LOCATION

Jordanian Badia – Eastern Jordan

TIMELINE

2001 - 2006

TARGET AUDIENCE

Civil society organisations; activists and researchers; governmental bodies.

KEYWORDS

Indigenous peoples, traditional knowledge systems, biodiversity conservation, pastureland management.

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GOOD PRACTICES

Towards making land governance more people-centred

This case study is part of the ILC's Database of Good Practices, an initiative that documents and systematises ILC members and partners' experience in promoting people-centred land governance, as defined in the Antigua Declaration of the ILC Assembly of Members.

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This case study supports people-centred land governance as it contributes to:

Commitment 3 Diverse tenure systems

Commitment 5 Secure territorial rights for Indigenous Peoples

Commitment 6 Locally managed ecosystems

Case description

Background issues

Jordan is a country with a rich history of local communities working on and living off rangelands. Many of these local communities are tribes that made use of the land they lived on for grazing and agricultural purposes. Tribal laws protected their right to ownership and use of the land, whilst the Local Community Law of 1957 gave them a usufruct over the land. However, in 2000, an Act passed by the Jordanian government resulted in the State confiscating most of the lands belonging to these tribes. The justification for the Act was that the old system was perpetuating a system that is based on and is reminiscent of the collapsed Ottoman Empire. Although the Local Community Law of 1957 gave local communities protection, they did not view it as legitimate, and claimed full and unencumbered ownership of the land.

There are five agro-ecological zones in Jordan, determined by annual rain levels. The level of rainfall is the deciding factor on land use and farming systems in each zone. There are drier zones which consist of areas of small ruminant grazing and rain-fed barley cultivation. The physiographic land regions in the country are classified according to climate, land, terrain, elevation, soil and water characteristics. Crop and livestock agriculture are practiced at various levels in these five physiographic regions.

The Bedouin landscape is typical of eastern Jordan and covers over 80% of Jordan. It receives less than 200 mm of rainfall per year. The rangelands extend from the Basalt and Rweishid deserts in the north east of the country to the central desert, south of Amman. The Badia is characterized by sparse vegetation that reduces southwards.

Natural grazing resources were continuously being degraded, resulting in them contributing less than 20% of feeds of grazing animals. Productivity of the Badia prior to 1990 was estimated at 20kg and 8kg per dunum (1,000m²) as fed and dry matter

respectively. After 1990, it was estimated at 10kg and 4kg per dunum. This was ascribed to unsustainable policies and pastureland use practices of the time, placing traditional pastoral farming systems and nomadic pastoralists' livelihoods at risk.

Pastoralism is a significant cultural and economic practice in the Badia, thus in the past, local nomads have developed and used pastureland management systems such as *Hima*. The *hima* system is a controlled pastureland use and conservation system that allows for balanced grazing. The essence of *hima* is to prevent overgrazing by seeking good forage within a tribe's territory while heavily grazed land is allowed to lie fallow and recover. *Hima* is protected by Bedouin customary tribal law. Under *hima*, Jordan's pastureland, traditional land tenure systems, and grazing rights were prescribed and upheld by tribal institutions. Such systems prevailed until the early twentieth century.

The advent of urbanisation has challenged such traditional practices. Changes in the lifestyles of local communities and the adoption of sedentary farming systems have resulted in ploughing of rangelands to establish private property and ownership rights, the uprooting of bushes for use as fuel wood, and the arbitrary movement of vehicles. Government seizure of the land has further exacerbated the situation, resulting in overgrazing, early grazing of rangeland and continued desertification of the Badia. Forced migration, ill-management of pasturelands, increased livestock herd and drought have also resulted in land degradation, further compounding the challenges faced by nomadic communities in Jordan.

Solution

Pressure grew on the Jordanian Government to find a solution to these problems. As guaranteed by the ILO Conventions¹ and their Protocols, nomadic tribes have the right to protect their land use customs and traditions, and to own and use the land that they live on and upon which their livelihoods depend. In 2000, the government suggested redistribution of land, through cooperative associations, setting up all necessary rules and regulations for implementation. The nomadic tribes objected through strike action, as they wanted unencumbered title to their land for farming and habitation purposes.

Eventually, the government yielded to their claims and adopted the Jordanian Rangeland Strategy (Strategy). The Strategy adopts a bottom-up approach, and empowers the nomadic communities to manage the rangelands. The Strategy is premised on the sustainable management of rangelands, and requires needs-based land use planning. As such, local communities have a right to participate in all decision-making processes with the private sector, neighbouring communities and the government.

Activities

The Jordanian Rangelands Strategy is a bottom-up and inclusive strategy, designed to incorporate *hima* into the reforestation and revival of pasturelands efforts in the Badia and Jordan in general. This Strategy is a tool for the restoration of the rights and livelihood of the nomadic pastoralists. Specifically, the Strategy is based on the

¹ International Labour Organisation: Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention, 1989.

understanding that effective rangeland management can only be accomplished through the inclusion of nomadic communities who use and own the land.

Rangeland management includes:

- Protection of natural resources in the rangelands through the reversal of improper grazing practices and detrimental actions such as logging;
- Improvement and development of rangelands through water harvesting, planting rangeland seedlings, reseeding rangeland species and regulating the exploitation of pastures;
- training of local communities on planned access water and fodder; and
- building long-term joint management of rangelands partnerships between pastoralist communities and the government.

The Jordanian Rangeland Strategy 2001

The Jordanian National Rangeland Strategy together with the Agricultural Strategy (2002-2010) and the Water Strategy (2009) are regulatory measures developed to address the different practices in the Badia, as well as resolve the problems resulting from the misuse of resources. The strategy takes steps to address the following main issues:

- Deterioration of rangelands as a result of over grazing, uprooting and recurrent droughts;
- Deterioration of the traditional ecosystem conservation methods and grazing regulatory mechanisms;
- Demand-driven increase in number of livestock beyond the capacity of natural vegetation;
- Increased mobility of livestock through trucks;
- Ease of delivery of water resources to the sites;
- Encroachment of crop cultivation, mining and investments in the rangelands;
- The need for breeding and flock improvement techniques to regulate stocking rates (to increase productivity per animal);
- Effects of overuse of rangeland resources; and
- Inadequate and/or lack of effective regulations for sustainable use of the rangelands.

The short and long-term objectives of the updated National Rangeland Strategy were defined as follows:

- Control deterioration of the rangelands and reverse the desertification process;
- Increase sustainable livestock production through the restoration of the productivity of rangelands;
- Sustainable range fodder production;
- Improve and conserve the rangeland environment;
- Improve the socio-economic conditions of rangeland inhabitants;
- Support and develop range institutions with financial and human resources, particularly the Directorate of Rangelands and Badia Development;
- Amend and develop legislations pertinent to rangelands;

- Encourage local communities and inhabitants to adopt animal production improvement programs, pay more attention to quality of animals and participate in rangeland development and management;
- Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women;
- Define land rights for sedentary communities and nomadic communities;
- Encourage intensive breeding; and
- To regulate stocking rates.

As part of the implementation of the Strategy, the Bani Hashem community in the Zarqa area worked with the Government to reintroduce *hima*. In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the community identified 1500 hectares of public pastureland in the rapidly industrialising Zarqa river basin area and began managing the land under the *hima* system. The Bani Hashem community and the Directorate of Rangelands and Badia Development entered into negotiations, and the community was granted the right to manage the rangelands. The community started managing 100 hectares of land, with the aim of progressively increasing it to 1500 hectares. They planted indigenous plant species such as the *Artemisia herba-alba*.

IUCN ROWA implemented the “*Securing Rights and Restoring Lands for Improved Livelihoods*” project, in partnership with the Bani Hashem community. Through the project, the community developed their local tribal law, called “*Meathak Sharaf*”. This law seeks to enforce the new and planned land management system by restricting overgrazing. *Meathak Sharaf* has been endorsed by the Zarqa Governor. Furthermore, the Ministry of Agriculture has established a community based group known as Hima Bani Hashem CBO. The group is tasked to follow up on the implementation of the *Meathak Sharaf*, *hima* and the Strategy in general.

As part of the implementation process, the Ministry of Agriculture held 100 training sessions and public awareness raising programs, benefitting 1,800 people. The Ministry of Agriculture has also established 34 reserves to protect and manage the rangeland plant species and conserve the ecosystem.

Importance of the case for people-centred land governance

The importance of this case study for people centred land governance is rooted in its inclusive approach to rangeland management. The Government and IUCN engaged local communities on sustainable rangeland management. The nomadic communities were involved in planning and implementing activities in their local areas.

Furthermore, the Strategy caters for the needs of nomadic communities and includes them in the planned management of pastureland resources. Most importantly, it recognises the importance of inhabitants of rangelands and protects their land rights based on their cultural and traditional tenure systems. The government also recognises the importance of the traditional knowledge of nomadic communities in the management of pasturelands, and thus seeks to reintroduce traditional pastureland management techniques into their planned management strategy.

Changes

Baseline

Traditional pasturelands were being categorised as State property, leaving the nomadic communities with usufructs over their ancestral lands. Under State management, the pasturelands suffered unmitigated degradation. Furthermore, inter-community conflicts over land increased, with nomadic tribes losing their land to sedentary farmers.

Achievements

Implementation of the Strategy has helped in the resolution of land conflicts. The revival of *hima* in the Zarqa community has resulted in the development and implementation of local tribal laws, improved incomes for nomadic families and community ownership of the project. The community-led projects have created incentives for communities, thus preventing inter-community land conflicts. Other positive changes include a fivefold increase in vegetation and sustainable livelihoods for local communities. These positive changes led to the adoption of *hima* in other regions in Jordan.

Evidence

Following the implementation of the Strategy, benefits of the reinstatement of *hima* among the Bani Hashem community are apparent. Indigenous plant species such as *Artemisia herba-alba* have been replanted. Within a year, increased vegetation and biomass were observed, and new shrubs and grasses regenerated. A total of 36 native plant species were recorded on site.

Lessons learned

Lessons for civil society

Civil society must focus on the benefits of using traditional and cultural land management techniques as bases for leveraging full recognition of their land rights. Their interventions should focus on using the traditional knowledge of local communities and their traditional ownership of the land as bases for legal recognition of their land rights.

Lessons for policy makers

Government employed pastureland managers are the contemporary substitutes for the traditional tribal authorities that used to regulate certain aspects of rangeland life in the past. Their duties involve the designing, implementing and overseeing planned pastureland use and management strategies.

However, government agencies are often not as effective as the tribal authorities. As such, governments should defer pastureland management to the local communities. Without effective local control over rangeland resources, there is little incentive for nomadic tribes and local communities to accept assistance from the government, management recommendations or technological interventions that increase resource productivity.

Policy makers should take into account different possible methods of resource management:

- (1) Establishment of pastoral cooperatives;
- (2) Definition of pastoral rights;
- (3) Reintroduction of traditional pastureland management systems such as *hima*; and
- (4) Community capacity development.

Challenges

While unwritten traditional land tenure systems provide shelter and serve the communities that live on the land, their unwritten nature causes them to be viewed as legally non-binding. Based on International Conventions, many affirm that the land belongs to the tribal communities that live and depend on it, while others view the lands as government land as the local communities have no registered title. Furthermore, lifestyle changes and the adoption of more sedentary lifestyles has resulted in the loss of and non-recognition of nomadic culture. The deliberate attempt to encourage and enforce sedentary lifestyles and crop-farming methods has resulted in local nomadic communities increasingly being deprived of land, and tribal land conflicts.

Follow-up

The National Rangeland Strategy was developed in 2001. Initially, there was no national consensus and integrated plans, rendering the Strategy and related legislations ineffective. The Ministry of Agriculture worked with nomadic pastoralist communities to revise the Strategy. Consensus among the different stakeholders has been achieved with the update of the rangeland strategy. The revised Strategy aims to achieve increased productivity of pasturelands, improved participation of local communities in natural resource management and sustainable livelihoods for nomadic tribes in the Badia. The Strategy also incorporates aspects of capacity building, gender justice in land rights and monitoring and evaluation of the rangelands. The government has also aligned all policies, strategies, laws, recognised land uses, livestock regulations, water resources regulations, environmental protection and biodiversity regulations.

Supporting material

References and further reading

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