**The Ninth Biennial Conference of the International Association
for the Study of Common Property (IASCP)**

Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 17-21 June 2002

Panel: Transcending barriers: The role of networks
in natural resource management

Approaches to the IASCP regionalization process at the level of the West African French-speaking sub-region [1]

Boubacar Ba [2]

As a part of the expansion of IASCP, a method of creating networks of researchers and scholars started in the West African French-speaking sub-region. This method, initiated at the IASCP Executive Council meeting in Hirtshals, Denmark, in June 2001 has seen a positive development in the West African sub-region with a new process of scientific and linguistic integration and program planning in order to appropriate common property resources under globalization. This process of network creation in the West African French-speaking sub-region contains several steps and various ways of intervening in the theoretical and practical domains.

1.   Historical information and origin of the West African process

Until the Bloomington meeting in 2000, IASCP remained less known in West African French-speaking countries. A process was adopted in Hirtshals, Denmark in June 2001 with a regionalization and decentralization program of IASCP activities. The increase of contact with various actors in the sub-region was developed towards the local networks of research-development, the civil society, local emergent organizations, representatives of the decentralized communities. To reach a large number of resource people, a preparatory team was constituted in order to expand IASCP bases and to support the process of a meeting in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso in September 2001.

The content of the document reflects IASCP approach of globalization in West Africa. We point out that it is West Africa that is concerned. Only, the exchanges are perceptible in the French-speaking part. We have well identified contacts with English speakers in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Gambia. Many of these researchers did not take part in the cooperation process set up during the Ouagadougou meeting in September 2001. This is so especially because of linguistic barriers and to the weakness of information about common property-related activities in West Africa. We have been working to make up these difficulties since last September with a sub-regional team.

---

[1] This paper can be downloaded from the *CBNRM Net* web site at: <http://www.cbnrm.net/index.html>.
[2] Coordinator IASCP - West Africa; Sévaré, Mopti, Mali. Email: <eveil@afribone.net.ml>.

1.1 Results of the Ouagadougou meeting in September 2001

The meeting of researchers, scholars and practitioners in Ouagadougou made it possible to achieve some tangible results, allowing the setting up of an informal network in the West African French-speaking sub-region. The meeting achieved the following results:

- A further development and a profitable exchange between participants around thematic and scientific proposals for the Zimbabwe 2002 conference are clarified.
- A West-African strategy is adopted and includes orientations and an action-plan for future actions preparation with other networks of the sub-region.
- The West-African IASCP network responsible for the program reinforcement and facilitating activities evolution has been set up and become operational.

The Ouagadougou meeting took place from September 24 through 25, 2001. The exchanges among the participants gave the following result:

- Ideas sharing about thematic presentations.
- Development of a West African strategy concerning the French-speaking part.
- Creation of a co-ordination supported by the participants including various researchers and scholars for a follow-up and a further development of IASCP bases.

The basic aspects led to the preparation of the participants' paper submissions for the Harare conference (interest of the presentation, identified problems, methodology, results). A strategy of organization with an interaction with local networks has been defined, notably the precision of the functioning mechanisms of IASCP - West Africa with contacts or focal points determination in the different countries. For the West African co-ordination, it is essentially a question of devoting to information dissemination, the organization of thematic workshops, exchanges with local networks intervening in natural resources management and activities of advocacy.

Participants: 15 (see list of participants of Ouagadougou conference)
Proposals of abstracts submitted for the conference: 14. These abstracts are essentially based on governance, local knowledge, and new tools for analysis of trans-boundary resources (reference synthesis report of Ouagadougou meeting).

The work is based on:

- A ten-month long action plan from September 2001 to June 2002.
- The search for co-operation with structures and institutions of research and development for a mutual capitalization of experiences (thematic exchanges, workshops, visits for exchanges, conferences and debates).
- Establishment of an e-mail listserv between partners.

The essential references of the paper are based on the synthesis documents developed by the coordinator of West Africa. These documents are shared by different participants, resource persons, local networks representatives. These references are:

- The basic document of the Zimbabwe 2002 conference.
- The synthesis report of the conference in Hirtshals, Denmark (8-10 June, 2001).
- IASCP - West Africa 2001-2002 action plan.

- Exchanges with different associates (*CBNRM Net*, Land net), and various local networks in West Africa).

The references to IASCP - West Africa in the *CBNRM Net* Newsletters (numbers 13, 14 and 15, September-November 2001) made it possible to make the participants known to the West African forum, to publish the synthesis of the results obtained and to encourage an inter-network collaboration.

1.2 Development of an action-plan for following IASCP activities

The elaborated action-plan is trying to be a work tool for coordination and control-analysis of the whole IASCP program in the West-African French-speaking sub-region. The objective that is looked for is to use in an optimal available human competences (researchers, scholars, practitioners, civil society) in order to conceive an intervention method in consistency with IASCP concerns. On the practical plan, this action plan is seen through the following actions:

- Information dissemination on a large regional scale about IASCP activities and more specifically the organization of the Zimbabwe 2002 conference.
- Information gathering about existing local and regional networks in order to create a synergy of partnership and experiences exchanges.
- Collection of bibliographical references of French-speaking researchers and practitioners and publications in scientific productions (journal, Digest, Graf info).
- Organization of thematic workshops about common property resources evolution facing the stakes of democratic governance, emergent local powers and the mechanisms of social conflicts mediation.

2. Creation of a network between IASCP - West Africa and emergent organizations

The practice of creating a network beyond partnership seems to be not only a school of 'consultation', but also a means of expression able to influence the deep structures of emergent organizations. Through the creation of a network, it can also expand and conquer a space marked by linguistic barriers. The dynamics is in sharing ideas and permanent exchanges in a dialectical prospect of actions and reactions that constitute the functional elements. Information and communication technology plays a predominant role because very often it is this network creation that supports the informal and institutional organization meant to establish a partnership between actors from the North and those from the South. So, it is important to think about the various forms of exchanges as well as the universality of the phenomenon.

Since 2000, the process of creating the network has been in the center of a deep concern of IASCP scientific domains. The creation of the network is considered to be an important factor that can promote the study and research about common property resources and consequently, it has become an essential component of IASCP strategy.

2.1 Revival of the network creation process and the requirement of the globalization context

The analysis of the network creation phenomenon does not amount to a simple technique of exchanges or consultation. It is a question of a plural action underlain by different logics in

mutation linked to the evolution of scientific or local development organizations. In this context, the network creation aims at establishing this partnership favourable to all the contributors on the theoretical and practical fields.

The illustration of a variety of situations or experiences in progress shows the dynamics of local emergent organizations.

2.2   Partnership with Land Net West Africa based in Burkina Faso

Profitable exchanges have been developed with Land net, West Africa since the meeting of September 2001. The goal of Land net is to contribute to the creation of an environment favorable to the implementation of land policies in Africa. The process with IASCP will consist in sharing experiences and good practices of land management in the sub-region. The production of GRAF info will be a positive contribution for the improvement of information about IASCP activities.

2.3   Partnership with the GDRN5 network in Mopti

The IASCP West African network developed a process of partnership with the natural resources decentralized management network in the 5th region in Mali, that includes various NGOs intervening for development. The GDRN5 network is actually experimenting a research about a co-joint management of natural resources with two NGOs (Near East Foundation and S.O.S. Sahel, Great Britain). It's an original experience of research – development implying the pastoral dynamics and new land cohabitations in the areas of common property resources exploitation. The partnership between IASCP West Africa and GDRN5 favors a dynamics of networks integration, the capitalization of the results in the pastoral sector, data publication and the sharing of thematic experiences.

2.4   Partnership with AREN in Niger

AREN has been a national structure of pastoralists group in Niger for about ten years. AREN has capitalized a big experience (organization of pastoralists, management of pastoral areas and conflicts mediation) that it wishes to share with IASCP by participating to the different conferences and/or thematic workshops. AREN has also developed with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) an experience of co-joint management of natural resources.

2.5   Partnership with local internal structures

Various local internal structures among which UPS in Mopti and NAM in Ouahigouya, Burkina Faso have planned experiences exchanges that they capitalized for some years. These different experiences deal with the capacity reinforcement of farmers' organizations and their insertion to the process of democratization and decentralization.

2.6   Partnership with *CBNRM Net*

CBNRM Net with its emphasis on Information and Communication Technologies (ITCs) plays the role of an interlocutor of local networks. In this context, the partnership with IASCP West Africa represents a new dynamic for spreading necessary information, as produced and expressed by these local networks. The values and views that govern the operation *CBNRM*

Net, such as the management and sharing of knowledge, will aid IASCP in developing the competences of local emergent organizations.

Annex

Synthesis report and participants list of the Ouagadougou meeting in September 2001, the action plan 2001-2002, bibliographical references constitution, proposals of thematic workshops.

Bibliography

Ba, Boubacar. 2001. Presentation de la demarche du reseau IASCP - rencontre de Ouagadougou au Burkina Faso en Septembre 2001.

Ba, Boubacar. 2001. Mediation et societe : modele de dialogue et de regulation sociale. Juillet 2001.

Ba, Boubacar. n.d. Education civique et gouvernance : transformation des modes de pensee et de pratique dans la region de Mopti au Mali.

CBNRM Net. 2001. Newsletter nos. 13 (September 2001), 14 (October 2001), 15 (November 2001). URL: <http://www.cbnrm.net/library/newsletters/>.

Le point de vue du Sud. 1997. Pouvoirs locaux et decentralisation. L'Harmattan.