

## **MedWetCoast Workshop of Socio-Economic Practitioners**

### Tour du Valat, 22-23 November 2004

#### Final Report

#### Background and context

The MedWetCoast project aims at conserving the biodiversity of global and regional importance in 6 countries/authority in the Mediterranean basin: Albania, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestinian Authority and Tunisia. Technically supported by the Biological Station of Tour du Valat, Conservatoire du Littoral and Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels, it is financed by the national contributions of these countries as well as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the French Global Environment Facility (FGEF).

Launched in 1999, the project consists of three components; at the local level, it aims at implementing sustainable and intersectoral management in 15 pilot sites (wetlands and coastal areas); at national level, it calls for developing innovative legal frameworks for removing the causes of biodiversity degradation, reinforcing the institutions involved in the management of natural resources and promoting coordinating policies; finally, at the regional level, it strives for strengthening capacities through training and technical assistance and developing and sharing experience through networking.

In August/September 2003, the project undertook a mid-term evaluation which, in its recommendation, called upon greater attention to socio-economic issues.

Remedial action is required by the regional and the national components to ensure adequate focus on **economic impacts and alternative livelihoods** in the coming year in the name of longer term sustainability of conservation actions. The RCU should provide support to the national components to help them ensure that socio-economic dynamics acting as root causes of biodiversity loss are dealt with in the management plans, as implementation of those begins.  
MWC Mid Term Review. Final Report, October 2003.

As proposed and agreed at the Regional Steering Committee meeting of October 2003, the RCU then programmed and developed an initiative focusing on socio-economic aspects, with technical support from the Tour du Valat socio-economic unit. The initiative consists of three interdependent component:

- 1) technical support to requesting MWC national components, in particular to help address socio-economic aspects in the preparation and production of the site management plans (e.g. mission to Albania in December 2003)
- 2) consolidation of lessons learned and experience in the use of a socio-economic approach in the MWC project, in the form of preparation and consolidation of a booklet that includes case studies, view points and lessons
- 3) network of socio-economic practitioners.

#### 1. Objectives of the workshop

The meeting represents a first attempt at bringing together technicians who have been/are being operationally involved with socio-economic aspects of the MWC project. It is also the opportunity to discuss the case studies and advance the drafting of the booklet.

The meeting thus had the following objectives:

- bring together socio-economic experts and community development practitioners involved in the implementation of the MWC project;
- expose practices, tools and experience, as proposed by other partners (in this meeting: a) presentation from IRAM on experience in Africa with Investment Fund and b) play with the role playing game developed by Tour du Valat ‘Butor Star’);
- exchange experience and discuss particular technical issues related to the socio economic approach of the project;
- discuss the consolidation of the booklet of MWC socio-eco case studies and lessons; and
- discuss follow up actions and review options for sustaining the network.

## 2. The socio-economic approach: what is it?

‘In Omayed, I started by going to the area and visiting each house and each family. I talked to the women and to the men, separately. The first time, I talked and talked a lot about the project, what we are trying to achieve, the activities of the project, etc. At the first meeting of the women, they did not say anything, they listened and at the end of the meeting, they asked only question : “are you married? Do you have children?” Then at the second meeting, they talked and talked a lot, explaining to me their problems, their concerns, the need to feed their children, etc. And it is after a long process that I got their trust and confidence and that, together, we identified a series of activities for the area, involving them and the communities’. Magda Ghonem, community development specialist, MWC Egypt

In the context of wetland conservation, the socio-economic approach can be appreciated from three angles:

- The relationship between the users and the use through the social and symbolic representation of what a wetland is and the kind of uses in effect in the particular wetland ⇒ situation analysis, stakeholders analysis
- the relationship between the use and the socio eco and technical contexts, i.e. the necessities ⇒ public policies, legal framework, territorial governance
- the relationship between the use and the natural systems, in terms of impacts. ⇒ Technical, harvest, impact issues related to the natural resources

It is being operationalized in the MWC project through:

- 1) Diagnosis phase and monitoring: socio-eco studies and stakeholders analysis, ongoing monitoring of socio-eco dynamic parameters
- 2) Working on the uses that exert pressures upon the resources, with the aim to address root causes of biodiversity loss and degradation, i.e. a) reduce the pressures or threats – drip irrigation, ban on hunting, etc. and b) develop alternative livelihood schemes to take communities away from uses that degrade the area.
- 3) Applying a participatory approach: local dialogue, consultation, participatory process, to accompany the management plan process and its implementation

## 3. Presentations by the individual experts/countries

Each of the national representatives presented an overview as to how the socio-economic aspects had been / is being dealt with and addressed by the respective national components and examples of some interesting socio-economic/community development activities that had been launched with the aim of contributing to the generation of conservation impacts at the site.

A copy of the presentations was handed to the participants and is available from the RCU upon request.

The following elements were specifically discussed during the meeting and could be the subject of further attention. They are related below, not with a view to propose solutions, but with the aim of exchanging experience and points of view.

### Alternative livelihood Activities.

A number of initiatives were undertaken in the MWC sites to propose alternative livelihood options to the communities with the aim of either a) providing them with a form of compensation for the banning of traditional uses (eg. Fish farming in lieu of over fishing in the lagoon) or b) diverting them away from traditional overuse of the natural resources (eg. Olive tree growing in lieu of overgrazing). The objective is always to lead to a change in behaviour. It is yet too early to assess whether this kind of effort is having the positive impact that was originally expected.

The participants discussed whether the provision of alternative livelihood options really helps to decrease harmful activities, say overgrazing or hunting, or whether it acts as an additional source of revenue? This is a usual and well known challenge for conservation managers. A proposed way forward would seem to ensure that the project focuses not only on alternative livelihood but implements a number of complementary activities: alternative livelihood options, and also banning and control, dialogue, awareness raising and literacy, increased efficiency of the traditional uses, etc. In the Merja Zerga in Morocco, girls picking shell fish got interested to the profits of picking up strawberries ; this has led to a reduction in the pressure upon shellfish, but chiefly because the income raised through strawberry picking is much greater than from shellfish collecting.

‘In Omayed, Egypt, alternative activities like the growing of olive trees aim at reducing pressure from overgrazing. There is no clear evidence yet that it is working. But a number of other measures have been implemented in parallel: we have stopped the grazing of sheep coming from outside through guards’ control. The communities inside the protected areas have reduced somewhat their grazing in the site, but this is built on trust and confidence’.

Introducing other alternative could or should lead to a change in behaviour away from traditional damaging uses.

‘In Egypt, the objective of the gas oven project was to take the communities away from cutting trees and using wood for cooking. The ovens are given by the project but the recipient must purchase the gas. After a while, the women will appreciate the convenience of using gas for cooking and they will not come back to wood’.

... unless there is a rather significant change in the external conditions.

‘Gas ovens were introduced in Lebanon. But, with the recent sharp increase of oil prices and diesel, people are starting to cut trees again’.

### Issue of controlling damaging economic/resource use activities

1. Providing a system of compensation for the ‘lost’ revenues
2. Dialogue and alternative sources of revenues as a package together with control measures and monitoring.
3. Use of peer pressure in rural setting and also working with school children to raise their environmental consciousness and use them as allies to pressure the grown ups.

### Financing local initiatives: grants or credit? directly or indirectly?

The MWC national projects are exploring various options to transfer grants to local individual or associations, whether directly or indirectly. The principle of co-financing by the beneficiary was highlighted, cash or in-kind. In Egypt, the MWC grants don’t go directly to the fishermen, but through local NGOs (for nets) or through cooperatives (for engines).

No credit facility yet in operation in the MWC national components.

### Community development

Next to economic development, the project often has to target other community needs, such as health, access to potable water, etc. The participants discussed the issue of ‘compensation’ or trade offs in getting communities to adhere to conservation objectives, through attending to their basic needs and concerns. The participants also discussed and agreed that fostering community development, empowerment by the local communities and involvement in the project activities ... is a job! It needs a dedicated community development specialist and facilitator, working on a long term basis, with a continued presence on the sites

with the local partners. It also needs an appropriate budget which, though small compared to other project component, must be secured.

Poaching for elvers or eel fingerlings or glass eels (*civelles* in French)

This seems to be a prevailing problem in a number of MWC sites (at least in Egypt Burrulus, Morocco Moulouya and in the Rhone River Delta). France has imposed a strict regulation – the law interdicts the fishing of glass eels on the Mediterranean coast and authorizes its fishing some days from November to May according to Regional Governments on the Atlantic coast but it is very difficult to monitor. Illegal fishing of glass eels is a huge problem everywhere on the French coastlands.

Incentives for participation and adherence to conservation: Participants discussed the problem of incentives: how and to what extent is it necessary to compensate the users for the opportunity cost of foregone benefits when they don't fish, graze or hunt? Is it through putting increased attention to addressing their social and economic problems? Through 'mesures d'accompagnement' such as adduction of potable water, sensitisation and environmental education, land tenure, etc. How to convince, say, hunters that they will make money in the long run and that it is to their benefit to conserve the resources? The patrimonial approach and the participative approach seem to be efficient ways to make people thinking on long-term objectives, avoiding immediate conflicts that usually hinder any dialogue on natural resource management.

Land tenure in the sites: in all MWC sites, land tenure is a critical issue. Examples and various accounts of experience and lessons were discussed (eg in Lebanon, if you exploit the land more than 16 years, it is yours; the distinction of owners by legal rights and titles, and owners by usage, as in Burrulus, etc.). A good assessment of the land tenure prevailing on the site seems to be a bare necessity. Securing land tenure in one form or another (rather than uncertainty) may lead to increased commitment from the owners. However, the literature described several cases where clarifying who owns the property rights resulted to overexploitation. Redistribution of access rights should be done within the management plan process and following a stakeholders analysis.

Institutional management of protected areas.

The participants discussed some of the various options available to set up an appropriate institutional structure for the management of protected areas. Some are managed directly by NGOs, but only in few countries (eg. Jordan, UK). The trend seems to be now to move to mixed committees. In Egypt, the establishment of a council to implement the management plan was written in the management plan itself; once the plan is cleared by the Government, the council becomes legal. The Lebanese experience with the GAC which in turns can subcontract the management of the site to an NGO was discussed. The French experience with 'comite mixte' was also reviewed. How to create and make this committee responsible, accountable and multi representative of the stakeholders is the challenge. It must also be carried out in accordance with the various institutional and legal conditions of the countries.

The MWC project overall proposes that the local steering committees that were set up to prepare for the production of the management plan be turned into local management boards or units for the management of the sites, through confirming their legitimacy by government decision and building their capacity, in order that they become full operational managers of the sites. This is a guarantee of sustainability. The example of Lebanon was given where provision for the appointment of a GAC for the protected areas is enshrined in the law. The GAC is at an operational management level.

Participatory approach: the participants discussed the principles and the practicality of the participatory approach. A number of examples were given and reviewed.

Issue of community self control of the resource use activities: peer pressures can work effectively in rural setting to ensure that individuals do not infringe the community common goal and decision. In the case of a decrease in overgrazing activities from the communities, once an agreement has been reached with the community on decreasing overgrazing in the protected area to level x, it is unlikely that individuals from that community would go against the decision.

Issues of monitoring and evaluation of community development initiatives and participatory approach: there is no useful framework to evaluate the participatory approach. There is the problem that a conventional

evaluation does not give due credit to the benefit of participation. It is difficult to get quantitative data. How does one evaluate the sustainability in the field? Often the assessor has a short term view of the results, whereas the participatory approach generates results in the long term. There is a dichotomy between short term result oriented project and long term participation conditions. Also, the costs/benefit analysis that is often used to assess return and results of a project is not so appropriate.

#### 4. Partners' tool and experience: community development in Africa: the initiatives of IRAM (presentation by B. Bonnet and D. Pierret, IRAM) and discussion

In the framework of extending the network and 'closing the circle', MWC RCU invited the specialists from IRAM to present to the meeting their experience and activities. IRAM is the 'Institut de Recherches et d'Applications des Méthodes de Développement'. A team of 40 people based in Montpellier and Paris, it works mainly in southern countries, principally North Africa and Sahel region of Africa. Its activities center around 4 main components:

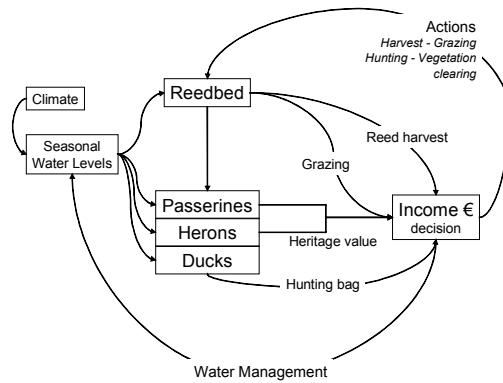
- agricultural public policies and food security
- local development and local natural resources management
- financing local development and micro-credit
- rural institutional organisations and micro-enterprises

They first referred to the issue of reconciling environment and development and its translation into policies ranging from strict conservation policies (preservationist approach excluding development) to integrated approach of conservation and development (compensating for protection activities or else through a full integration and participatory process). They then presented some principles and recommendations for developing a large 'area project / projet de territoire', not just focusing on the protected area itself but considering as well the adjacent land, communities and uses. In a third part, they reviewed the financial tools available for the financing of sustainable development initiatives - grants and credit – and later presented the example of the Local Investment Fund in Sikasso, Mali.

#### 5. ButorStar : a Role-playing game of reedbed conservation

R. Mathevet presented the background and characteristics of the game, highlighting that the game was designed to serve as educational tool for students and wetland managers and to be used as a participatory tool in local stakeholders' consultation process and dialogue.

Reedbeds are multi-uses wetlands. Grazing, reed harvesting, waterfowl hunting, and nature conservation projects are each associated with specific management practices that interact at several scales, with potentially long-term consequences on human uses and conservation issues. In France, six wetlands are currently involved into a LIFE-Nature European Programme (2001-2005) to improve reedbed management for the conservation of a vulnerable heron, the Great Bittern (*Botaurus stellaris*). Several educational tools are being developed, including a role-playing game called *ButorStar*. This agent-based model, built with the CORMAS software, permits to simulate the mid- and long-term impacts of reedbed management resulting from the decisions made by farmers, reed harvesters, hunters, and naturalists. The model relies on an archetypal wetland made of a virtual landscape divided in two estates hydrologically inter-dependent, one private, the other collective. Each estate is divided into height hydro-functional units. These units can be embanked by the players if they wish hydrological independence. Different water regimes are proposed, each one being adapted to a particular wetland use. Land-use and water management decisions are made by the players at the level of both the estate and the hydro-functional unit. These decisions are inputted in the model each year as the results of the negotiation process among the players. Their impact on wetland health and biodiversity (reed condition, density and diversity of birds) is simulated for different periods of time to assess the compatibility and sustainability of various practices over time. This role-playing game is designed to promote public and student awareness about the conservation value of the reedbed habitat and its fauna, as well as to provide a companion modelling approach to support collective decision-making among stakeholders.



Relationships amongst the main variables in the ButorStar ecological frame

The participants ran 5 rounds of the game, equivalent to 5 years.

R. Mathevet then led a debriefing on negotiation process and game results, pointing out how the players modified their strategy over the years. The test of ButorStar RPG showed that this tool permit to assess the compatibility and sustainability of various practices over time. These tests also showed that the players were able to share a common representation of the ecological processes to improve the collective awareness of reedbed wise use. Participants could discuss the game results and compared them to other parties. The review of the results and behaviors allowed the players to explore the co-viability problem of human-dominated ecosystems, the issues related to access rights to natural resources, the management of the dynamics of the interactions resources – uses.

## 6. Review of the booklet outline and production

The booklet is being developed as a document to illustrate the work of the MWC project in the socio-economic approach. It is viewed as an illustrative report, not as an assessment or a guideline.

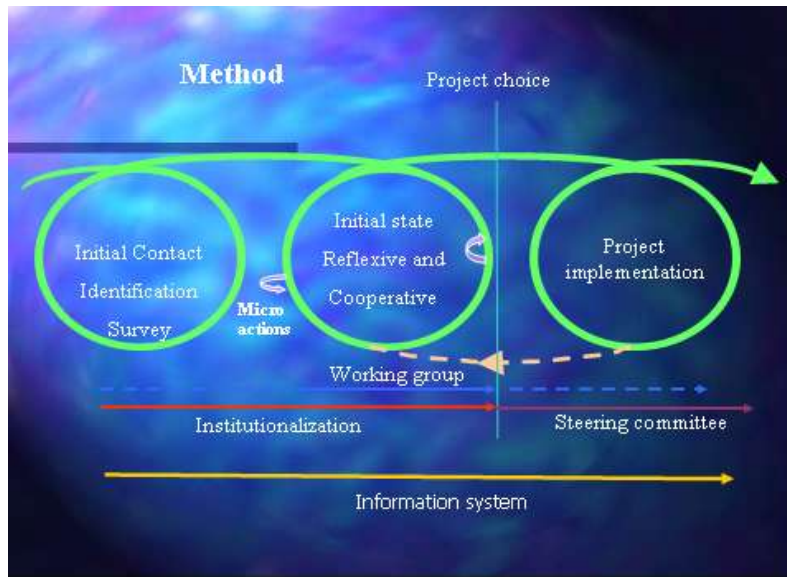
6.1. R. Mathevet presented the outline of the booklet in preparation. Referring to the concepts and methods (part 2 of the booklet), he spelled out a number of socio-economic factors such as access rights, spatial competition, multiple regulations, lack of political for integration that must be taken into account in the management of a protected area site. The objective is to have these and other issues illustrated by the MWC case studies.

He reminded of the definition of co-management, adaptive management and social communication. He illustrated, drawing from the presentation of Egypt, that the participatory approach is an iterative, recursive process, whereas decision makers are more in tune with a linear process, and the production of a plan.

**Adaptive management:** an approach based on the recognition that the management of natural resource is always experimental, that we can learn from implemented activities and that NRM can be improved on the basis of what has been learned.

Finally he pointed out that when working with the socio-economic approach, one is looking for equity and social justice, plurality of points of view, wise use of natural resources, and based-community initiative.

6.2 Referring to the IOC-UNESCO framework, he identified 3 iterative phases of the socio-economic approach: a) identification and survey, b) reflexion and cooperation [e.g. for the production of management plan] and c) project implementation. He stressed also the importance of the institutionalization process (from unformal groups of leaders to steering committee via working groups) to be confident that the implementation of the MP will be efficient and well-recognized by the involved community.



### 6.3 Discussion

The MWC project provided for the implementation of some micro actions (or ‘urgent measures’) to involve communities and local authorities, to prepare the process of collecting ideas, mobilizing people, and also, at times, to attend to urgent conservation measures. This alone would not lead to the production of a management plan. It was pointed out that a lot of projects stop at the diagnosis phase and management plans are then developed without the involvement of the stakeholders. It can then lead to frustration from the local people.

It was reminded that people in the MWC project sites are very dependent on the exploitation of natural resources to meet their basic needs.

“People come in with management plan ideas but without trying to address the issue of compensation for the lost opportunity cost. You cannot make people (local people) pay for conservation and let others (outsiders) benefit. There must be ways to compensate the users (often the poorest) for the opportunity costs lost as they change their behaviour to guarantee greater conservation”.

The participants related further examples of ‘the loop’ and how the process of management planning and implementation that was actually carried out was more iterative and adaptive than originally programmed. In Egypt, the community development work started as a parallel effort to the management planning process. But the initial objectives set forth for community development in the plan were broad enough and allowed for more specific work to be carried out, thereafter further fuelling the definition of the plan. In Albania, during the process of consultation to produce the management plan, it was realized that additional studies and assessments would be needed. These were carried out and contributed to the preparation of the plan. In Morocco, the institutional implementation arrangements are being re-examined in order to focus more on ways to associate the local stakeholders in the management plan process.

With regards to the institutionalisation process, each MWC component is exploring various options, in line with the legal and policy process in effect in the country. In Albania with the new gazettement of Narta as a protected area, the project will help establish a management unit reporting to the protected area service (under the Directorate of Forestry - DGFP) but also staffed with experts from the MoE, thereby then also making the link with the MoE. The management unit will be partly financed by the DGFP and partly by MoE and MWC for the first two years. In most MWC sites, the objective is to bring the local steering committees that were set up to accompany the process of management plan preparation and community mobilization into becoming fully accountable local management units.

The participants discussed of the rights and opportunity for the management unit to generate profitable projects and incomes. In Lebanon, the MoE is now operating hunting license (previously with the ministry of agriculture). Whether the protected area, in the form of the management units, can actually receive funds?

## 6.4 Way forward

1. The booklet will tentatively be structured as follows: a) introduction – S. Goyet, b) lessons learned structured around a number of thematic points and illustrated by examples from the countries – R. Mathevet and c) a small number of full case studies, as appropriate.
2. The national contributions (point of view / case studies) will be reviewed in order to a) focus more on the analysis of experience and the lessons, b) also quantifying and qualifying further the impacts of the initiative– by 20 December 2004. The TdV expert will send further comments and questions to assist the national expert in revising the documents.
3. In addition, the TdV expert may request some specific feedback from the national experts to help further clarify, document, and/or develop certain aspects that were either presented in the case studies or discussed at the meeting (to illustrate points or lessons).

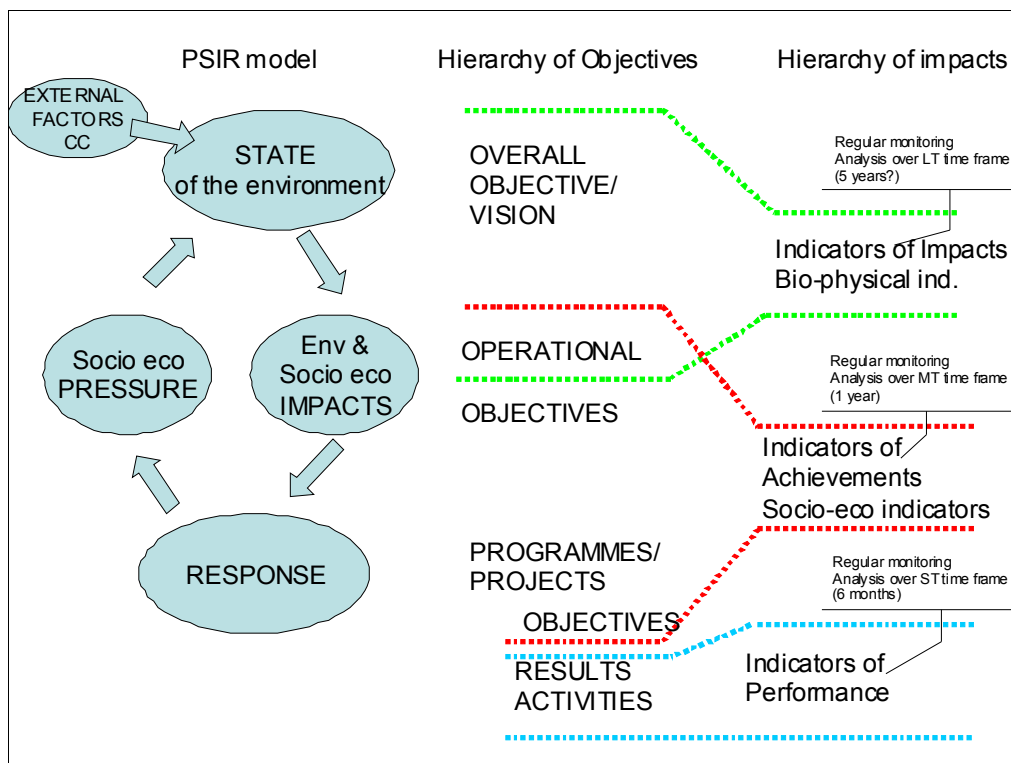
## 7. Discussion on impacts and how to relate the socio-economic activities to the objective of the MWC project to conserve biodiversity.

S. Goyet presented some elements to identify impacts and select indicators at the level of socio-economic and community development initiatives. It was pointed out that, for community development activities aiming at a change of behaviour in the natural resource use, indicators are difficult to identify and measurement difficult to do.

She reminded that the approach must keep targeting the conservation goal of the MWC project, i.e. help address the pressures that negatively impact upon the natural environment of the sites.

Referring to the Pressure-State-Response, she suggested that the schema below could be used to appreciate the hierarchy of objectives, indicators and how work on the socio-economic issues contribute to generating environmental goods and improving the state of the environment.

The participants suggested that the issue of ‘impact assessment of and indicators for socio-economic issues’ would be a useful subject for a next meeting.



## 8. Discussion of follow up activities and interest in sustaining a MWC socio-eco network



Participants pointed out that this meeting had been interesting for exchange of experience. There is general interest for some continuity and dynamic process in the future for a fruitful exchange.

“This seems to be the first time that we have this at the technical level and it is very interesting to discuss the actual technical implementation and sharing our lessons, constraints, etc. I hope that we can have more of this”.

Some remarked that there had been little “scientific and technical learning” in the project up to now, and that they were not aware who was working in the same area in the different countries. A thematic network of technicians involved in socio-economic issues is desirable and useful, in particular if it leads to concrete results: reports, guidelines, visiting experts, etc. As such, the idea of developing a booklet documenting the experience and the learning is a concrete and useful result that is most welcomed. On the other hand, the project has devoted much effort and resources to building up national capacities; the experts and the socio-economic experts in particular have learned a lot in this project and it would be desirable to not lose this expertise and the cooperation that has been ensured among the countries.

There is a general agreement that a network would be useful to:

- Exchange ideas, comments, technical reference
- Exchange expertise and experts across the network, if any of the national components has it (eg. Community development expert in Egypt, business partnership in Lebanon, etc.)

Translate into:

- an email informal group network
- Opportunities for the experts to meet regionally

Requires:

- a facilitator to entertain and guide the network
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The objective should not be to try and harmonize the processes and activities so as to compare results, but rather to illustrate, inspire and enlarge the approach & perspective. This is also the objective of the booklet, i.e. not to compare the situation in the national components, but to illustrate various lessons and points of view.

Also it was observed that all of the experts are working in relative new areas. “We developed the work during the last years and change as we go. Hence it is important to exchange and learn”.

**Annex 1**  
**List of Participants**

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