

<<SAI DA Kafa AKE YIN AMINAI>>
‘To have friends you have to use your feet.’
(Hausa Proverb)

**The Importance of Social Communication Systems in the Process
of Shared Management of Common Property Resources**

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Abstract

This article is a follow on from Hannu Biyu...¹ and focuses on Social Communication discussing it as being an essential process to allow local shared management of common resources to take place. It briefly describes a process by which local communities, pastoralist user groups, traditional authorities and government services have organised themselves and negotiated with the state for the exclusive rights to manage the Takiéta Forest Reserve in Niger as an association, called Kou Tayani². The article draws on the positive and negative lessons learnt by the association over the last three and a half years and shows that permanent multi-user negotiation and local peoples' capacity to manage does exist as long as an enabling environment has been created.

1. Shared Management of Common Property Resources: a Social rather than a Technical Issue.

In the field of Natural Resource Management (NRM) the Shared Management of Common Property Resources presents an alluring development challenge for governments, donors and development agencies alike; linking as it does 'people' and 'poverty-alleviation' and the 'sustainable management of the natural resources' on which they depend. However, despite the interest, the investment, the rhetoric and the general acceptance of 'participatory' development theory, concrete examples of successful shared management of common property resources remain relatively few and all too often little remains after the end of what were apparently sensational (not to mention costly) initiatives.

Why does shared management remain a major challenge?

Are the advocates of the old centralist school of resource management then right?

Are local people incapable of rationally managing natural resources? or does the answer lie elsewhere.....?

We argue that the fault lies **not** with local actors but most often with the external agencies which are there to support them, too many of whom continue to treat collaborative or shared management as a simple technical issue without recognising it for the complex social issue it actually is. We believe that a serious rethink about what NRM and sound local governance in the context of decentralisation means is required. And we are of the opinion that this has much to do with the promotion of effective **Social Communication** systems.

Why decentralised NRM is a Social Issue.

In recent history peoples' ability to manage their resource base has been hampered by centralised state management systems, which effectively divorced them from their management rights and responsibilities but failed to provide a viable alternative, thus creating a management vacuum. Now the cycle has turned again and decentralised natural resource management is in vogue. Decentralised NRM means transferring power and rights to manage from the centre outwards... **but who to? and how can this transfer be successfully achieved?**

The problem is that the 'cycle' has taken time to turn; time during which the resources, the pressures on them, actors, their behaviour, expectations and relations have changed, often drastically, all while the overall management stakes have become much higher. The concept of **transferring power** means that certain parties have to 'give up' or 'share' that power whilst others have to receive it. Furthermore, receiving power (having recognised rights and wishing to exercise them) means accepting additional responsibilities. Today, despite affirmative government policies, not all the actors are automatically enthusiastic about transferring ('losing') their power to others and not all the 'others' are entirely sure that they are ready and able to accept it. Fundamental changes of perceptions, roles and relations are required for all actors before the cycle can indeed be allowed to turn.

¹ Hannu Biyu Ke Tchuda Juna – Strength in Unity : Shared management of common property resources. A case study from Takiéta, Niger May 2000. The article describes in detail the process followed to define and set up an inclusive management system for the forest up to December 1999. The publication is available, free of charge, on the web at: www.iied.org/drylands/pubs.html.

² The name Kou Tayani was given as in Hausa this means « Help me » and this refers to the forest crying out for help as it wants to be managed!

Box 1: What happens if one doesn't take the time to invest in Social Communication?

A(n all too) typical 'participatory/shared management' scenario today:

1. The initiative (usually a project involving external partners) arrives with its pre-conceived logic, approach and activities.
2. The project 'dialogues' with the (most often) sedentary population and maybe does a (more or less) participatory analysis. Committees (of one sort or another) are established according to criteria set by the project. Sometimes the local "partners" may understand the projects' objectives and the function of the committee, but sometimes not. In any case, the 'Usual Suspects' are 'elected' and there is lots of room for political manoeuvring with per diems in prospect!
3. The Project may or may not provide training for certain community/committee members in subjects that the project has defined (more or less) independently of any needs analysis with the community. Study Tours are popular.....Whether the 'tourists' have understood what they are visiting, why and what pertinence that might have for them and what questions they would like to ask may often be debatable.....Never mind! Everyone enjoys an expenses paid trip to somewhere different!
4. Once the committee has been 'groomed' for management, the project can then present them with 'the management plan' that has been prepared (more or less exclusively) by 'the technicians', (more or less) taking into account the technician's understanding of the 'social' aspects in the local context, **if** there is a sociologist on the team. The plan will be (more or less) discussed with the new 'managers' and hopefully (more or less) understood by them. The Committee will then (maybe, try to) execute 'the Plan'.
5. The Project 'helps' the committee manage the resource according to 'the plan'. This may involve Food for Work, Cereal Banks, Wells and/or heavy machinery. However, it eventually comes to an end.....
6. The Project finally leaves.
7. The Committee may more or less struggle on for a while but is the plan really locally owned???!.....
 - Is it actually designed to meet the needs of the different users?
 - Does it recognise all the users/uses?
 - Have they discussed what their common vision and objectives are?
 - Would the committee know how to adapt the plan? Do the members know if they are allowed to?
 - Bereft of project 'support', do the 'committee' and 'the plan' have legitimacy in the eyes of the resources stakeholders?
 - Does the committee have the will, flexibility and organisational capacity to adapt the plan?
 - Does the committee have the capacity to defend itself from the negative forces/power-play present in the wider socio-political environment of the area?
8. The committee hits its first problem (often socio-organisational) and doesn't know how to react now that the real 'decision makers' have gone.
9. Now officially 'orphaned' it is open to a number of different 'informal arrangements' (old scores are settled, influence is exerted, benefits are 'shared' and sabotage is not uncommon), which become increasingly unpleasant in relation to the volume of goods and finances that the project (is thought to have) left in the committee's hands.
10. The management committee collapses or becomes defunct (though theoretically it may still exist).
11. All the partners say «Just goes to show (yet again) that people can't really manage natural resources despite all the good support and training they were given!»
12. The population becomes disillusioned about its capacity to develop itself. The experience confirms the inequity of the system and reinforces the perceptions of local incapacity to act.....the situation is worse than before.....and **the resources are far from being rationally managed!**

Rethinking roles and relationships is particularly necessary concerning 'common property' resources. In the past, such resources were convenient 'grey areas' of local management but now, due to increasing scarcity of resources and changing land tenure issues; they have become a major arena for competition for access and control among multiple user/interest groups. The very concept of 'common property' recognises that there are multiple users and uses involved, all of which are socially valid. The resource is 'shared' between these users and cannot be said to belong to one group more than another. In this context, management decision-making if it is to be equitable also has to be **inclusive**: the result of collaboration and partnership, recognising rights and sharing responsibilities between different interest groups. It should be based on **people**: their needs, their objectives, their motivation, their investment, their relations and their organisation for the sustainable management of their own resource base. Without people at the heart of the decision-making process, technical options will never be enough to make management work. Therefore, management of common property resources should be considered primarily a social rather than technical issue: a long term, flexible and evolutionary process driven by people as 'the managers', in which the inclusion of all stakeholders is assured at the level they chose. Such a process, being 'people-based', should first recognise and capitalise on existing local knowledge and skills and then build on them through a process of joint reflection, analysis and learning through experience. 'New' technical information can then come in from outside as a support to this process if required.

Effective systems of social communication are needed to enable this process to take place, not only in order to equitably and rationally manage the resource, but also to counteract the realities of social inequity, sabotage and, power-play by elements who perceive organisation and decision-making at the base as a threat to their interests.

2. The Experience at Takiéta, Niger.

The following sections describe an on-going practical experience of local stakeholders successfully working together towards shared management of a strategic 'common' resource. This experience is not intended to provide a management model but serves to illustrate the complexity of the socio-political environment in which shared management takes place and the issues that may arise. It highlights the need to create an enabling environment in which effective, decentralised and equitable local management can take place. And it shows how crucial it is to invest in the long-term viability of collaborative 'local' management through appropriate social communication strategies.

The Context: Takiéta Forest Reserve

Takiéta Forest Reserve is located in the agro-pastoral zone of the department of Zinder, Niger. The area is typically 'Sahelian' with annual rainfall between 250-400mm which is highly variable in time and space. Covering an area of 6,720ha, the Forest Reserve represents the largest non-cultivated area in the region and is regarded by both resident and non-resident users as an important sylvo-pastoral resource in a zone otherwise entirely occupied by fields.

Figure 1: Location of the Takiéta Forest Reserve



Created in the 1950's and theoretically owned, managed and protected by the State, the reserve soon became subject to uncontrolled and destructive exploitation by local people and outsiders, with unchecked and rapidly expanding agricultural clearance taking place both at the boundaries of the forest and in the forest itself. In addition, pressure on the rapidly dwindling and degraded pastoral resources within the reserve was increasing as sedentary populations diversified into livestock production (which brought them into increased competition with transhumant pastoral groups). Despite its degraded state, the resource still played a strategic role in local production systems but was also being threatened by an influential local 'de-reservation lobby' that aimed to convert what was a *de facto* common property resource (through absence of management / presence of the state) into private land.

The Takiéta Joint Forest Management Project (TJFMP) and its Working Principles

The TJFMP was set up by SOS Sahel UK in 1995 at the request of the Government of Niger. Its mandate was to promote a process leading to local sustainable decentralised management of the Takiéta Forest Reserve, taking into account all the different user groups. In the definition of its intervention strategy, the project profited from a number of 'participatory' NRM experiences from Niger and elsewhere which, enabled the team to analyse how approaches taken by external agencies ultimately influence the capacity of the 'local managers' to effectively continue to manage in the 'post-project' period³.

³ Experiences included:

- Gusselbodi Wood Cooperative: Niger created by the Forest Land Use and Planning Project,
- Baban Rafi Rural Fuelwood markets : Niger created by Care,
- Gorou Bassounga Forest Management Cooperative: Funded by the Swiss
- Faira Rural Fuelwood Market Niger : Funded Through the world Bank
- El Ain Natural Forest Management Project: Sudan funded through SOS Sahel

Through a process of learning by action the project was able to formulate a number of 'Guiding Principles' that simultaneously determined the approach taken and evolved over time.

Box 2 : Summarised Guiding Principles of the TJFMP

Promote **Inclusive Processes** in which all groups have a legitimate place at the negotiation table and the weakest groups have the capacity building support necessary to better make their voices heard: making the invisible 'visible';

Recognise that management is a **long term process of evolution** in which external organisations are only temporary partners and should not be active in decision-making.

Be sincere in the **belief in and respect for peoples rights/capacities** to decide for themselves in an informed way throughout the management process;

Invest the time necessary to facilitate the emergence and establishment of strong locally driven processes: giving people time to reflect and make informed decisions.

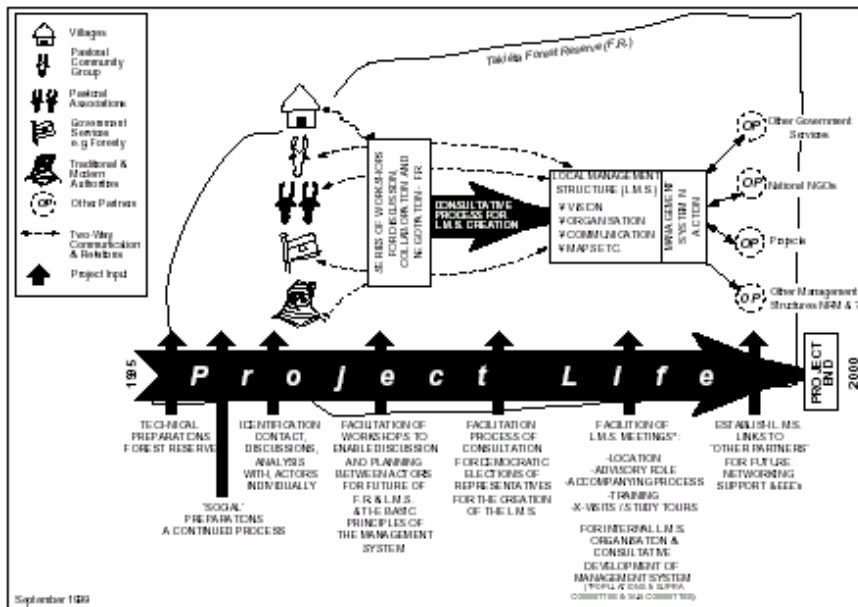
Understand that **facilitating (not 'manipulating')** means **refraining from directing** or controlling the process. It recognises the importance of being neutral and supporting the creation of a framework where actors themselves can negotiate; where nothing is preconceived and everything is discovered collectively.

Aim that all actions and activities **reinforce the sense of independent local capacity to manage** by starting with what people together know, their joint analysis of a situation and options open to them. : Stress should be on **learning by experience** where mistakes as well as successes can be positive learning experiences as long as they are analysed and action taken. Only after this has taken place should other support needs be defined (should they be required).

Translating Principles into a working Approach

From the outset, the project tried to strictly limit its role to that of facilitation, which meant that it too became a 'learner' in the process and that its 'timetable' was that of the stakeholders. The 'hands-off' approach is not always the easiest option, particularly in a 'project context'. However, the team felt that if the process clearly 'belonged' to the actors, their existing capacity to negotiate, organise and manage, providing that a suitably enabling environment was created, would be better demonstrated.

Figure 2 : The role of the TJFMP in the process leading up to the local management of Takieta Forest Reserve



In practice, the activities carried out in the process towards managing can be divided into three main types. Facilitate a process where you get people to :-

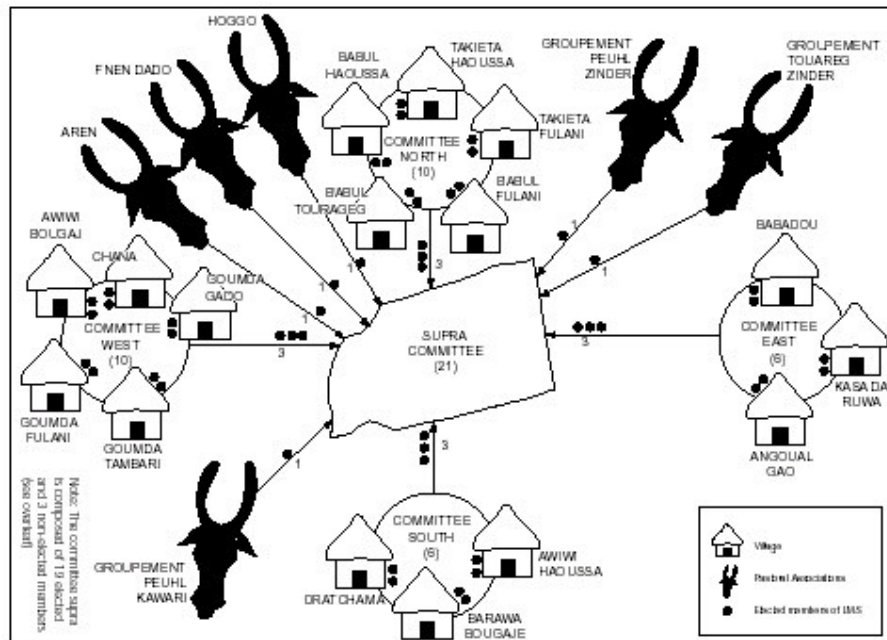
1. Challenge traditional concepts and behaviour relating to resource management and
2. Actively participate in decision-making processes;
3. Create new roles and inclusive and representative structures compatible with management objectives for the reserve;
4. Establish dynamic communication systems for information exchange, collaboration and negotiation between actors.

The major steps in the process

These are summarised below:

1. **Resource and Stakeholder Identification.** Clear identification of the natural resources at stake, and their limits and identification of all direct and indirect actors affecting and affected by management decisions.
2. **Information, Analysis and Discussion at the individual ‘Actor’ level:** This involved an analysis by each group of the natural resources and the role that they play in their system of production. It covered:
 - NRM strategies/roles from a historical point of view;
 - The current situation/problems and causes;
 - Decentralisation: discussion of the stakes and perspectives offered for local management including changing roles and relations in the decentralised context;
 - Interest in pursuing dialogue with other actors concerning the problem and future options,
 - The strategic importance of the resource, peoples needs; initial ideas (and concerns) related to what management might entail and working with the Forestry Service.
3. **Sharing Information between actors:** Information raised by all the different groups was collated without comment , selection or omission and shared among all the actors giving everyone a better idea of various opinions on the matter.
4. **Organising a series of 3 Stakeholder Workshops** where 180-200 representatives⁴ debated subjects as varied as: ‘the situation: is it worth doing anything about it and if ‘yes’ what?’..... through consensus on ‘the governing principles of future shared management’ up to the process to be followed towards the organisation of the Local Management Structure (LMS), how plans should be made, by who and through what systems of communication. Collective decisions were formalised in the form of written recommendations of the workshops and institutionalised.

Figure 3: The Local Management Structure



⁴ Representatives were locally selected delegates from all known stakeholders. This included people from pastoralist groups, associations, villages, local authorities & administration and government services.

5. Election of delegates to the Local Management Structure (LMS) This was carried out internally within each stakeholder group according to criteria and the modalities agreed in the stakeholder workshops.
6. Preliminary meetings of all the delegates to the LMS These meetings served to allow delegates to get to know each other, share information about the resources to be managed, retrace the process leading to the creation of the LMS, determine internal 'roles and relationships' as well as rules and regulations, defining what 'management' means to the LMS and the people it represents, elect an Executive Committee from amongst the delegates and formally present the LMS executive committee members to the Local and Regional administrative and traditional authorities. The meetings included
 - Planning and programming activities
 - Sharing Experiences with other LMSs (inter-structure exchange)
 - Finalising 'Internal Rules and Regulations' for the structure and presenting them to the communities at the base for comments and ratification;
7. Meetings concerning the natural resources and how to manage them: At this juncture, information regarding the natural resources and their potential, including a local inventory and base maps, was collected analysed and shared. In addition a listing of all known users was made along with an analysis of all different uses. On these bases an in depth analysis of the resources was made and basic rules and regulations for good governance of the existing resources were progressively drafted. Options for improving the resource over time were also explored and a proposed management document was drafted
8. Establishing relations and communication systems: In order to reinforce its position and gain more wide-ranging recognition, formal and informal links were established by the LMS through a series of visits to the authorities, government services and other partners including pastoral associations from Nigeria.
9. Stakeholder Review Workshop: The proposed management document was presented to all stakeholders for review, discussion and final amendment
10. Official Recognition of the Status of the Association: The LMS was formally recognised by the state as the 'Kou Tayani Association'⁵ with a mandate to manage the Forest Reserve.
11. Official Submission of the Management Document The management document was presented to the local regional authorities asking for legal recognition to execute their management plan⁶ and subsequently 6 months of autonomous management took place before the closure of the project.
12. End of Project&.....continuation of the process.....

Result at the end of the project.

The consultative process amongst stakeholders concerning the shared management of the resource 'started' with the first major workshop in early 1997. By November 1998 the LMS delegates were united for the first time. Approximately 15 months later the LMS had become a functional and legally recognised 'Association' of local stakeholders sharing the collective aim of rational management of the resource for the benefit of all the users groups, with its own internal rules and regulations and a locally defined and sanctioned management plan for the resource, regarded as legitimate by both the user groups that created it and the State.

Though the preparatory work by the project and initial round of collaboration had involved a serious investment of time and effort, the resulting structure once created lost very little time in organising itself and producing encouraging results. The Association was in communication with and answerable to the base and recognised as an actor in dialogue with the local and national authorities. It was treated with curiosity by outsiders, with pride by the communities involved and was tolerated but feared⁷ by certain groups within the local socio-political environment. At the end of the project, the Forestry Service, as the Associations State partner, signed an agreement clearly outlining its support for and obligations concerning the association and the participatory management process in the form of a formal statement of roles and relations and support.

⁵ The Association obtained legal status by being recognised through a national decree signed on 14th April 2000 No 104/MI/AT/DAPJ/SA

⁶ Legal recognition to manage was obtained after the closure of the project through the signature of a regional decree (No 053/PZ) signed on 25th September 2000 which gave it the right to autonomously manage the Forest Reserve of Takiéta according to its own locally defined and agreed management plan. However, prior to this the Association was already managing with the full concordance of the local authorities. The reason that the official decree this took so long to obtain was that it was the first time that something of this nature had ever occurred

⁷ It was feared by local 'leaders' as they were unaccustomed and felt uncomfortable with large scale collaborative and therefore powerful initiatives from the base which up to this point in time had not occurred.

3. Kou Tayani Association after 3 years of Autonomy.

In the following 3 years (up to the point of writing this article), members continued to hold regular meetings, make decisions, plan, budget and carry out numerous activities (such as local seedling production, planting, pasture improvement, soil and water conservation work) in the area in collaboration with the local population which regularly mobilised itself behind the association on a purely voluntary basis. Development of the resource in terms of honey production, fishing and the creation of rural fuel-wood lots also took place. In short, the local stakeholders through their association have carried out more effective and serious management activities in three years than the Forest Department has in 40!

Box 3 : A summary of some of the work carried out by Kou Tayani in three years				
	2001	2002	2003	Comments
Meetings	Over 75	Over 100	Over 80 to date	An estimate made by extrapolation
Micro-catchments	5,876	1,654	2,848	All Micro-catchments are built on a voluntary basis
Trees Planted	14,776	33,529	23,706	In 2002 and 2003 many trees were provided by the presidents' special development programme in addition to the seedlings produced
Seedlings Produced	20,000	10,000	17,000	All seedlings produced in surrounding villages for the Association
Honey Production	Training	20 litres	15 litres to date...	Most honey is used for publicity purposes
Production of fish	2,046 Kg	4,342 Kg	2,451 Kg to date..	Restocking took place in 2002
Rehabilitated Forest	50 hectares	80 hectares	60 hectares	Selected areas of degraded forest are rehabilitated on a yearly basis. This involves reseedling, planting (where necessary) of trees and selective weeding
Fuel-Wood Produced in stacked cubic metres	1,825 M ³	2,228M ³	824 M ³	Wood is cut from a selected area each year on a rotational basis and a certain number of branches of an agreed maximum diameter are selected from each tree.

Source: Direct observations, reports and discussions with members of the Association

Still, it is only the beginning and many aspects related to the **organisational challenge** of 'sharing' management between multiple stakeholders have to be worked through. Noted below are some of the positive and negative 'experiences' of the association in the past 3 years and some of the 'lessons learned' (highlighted in italics).

Positive experiences related to the internal functioning of the structure:

-) Delegates who proved to be inadequate for their role were replaced either by or in collaboration with, their communities or institutions. This improved the internal capacity of the structure and the circulation of information. The fact that association was able to carry out such a delicate exercise is very positive as *The quality and role of delegates is the foundation of good communication and management.*
-) The association has organised its own study visits within Niger and link ups with partners and negotiated training in different management techniques such as honey-production; fuel-wood lot management, conflict management and monitoring and evaluation. *It is important to know what support/skills you need and how to get them.*
-) Mechanisms for feedback and control are frequently used by outsiders. For example
 - o On one occasion local groups exercised their rights to examine the associations' accounts.
 - o On another occasion a demonstration was orchestrated concerning the proposed application of a previously agreed by-law by the association.
 - o With the last general Assembly held in April 2002 almost all recommendations have been applied even though some of them were difficult and delicate to implement⁸

⁸ Difficult things to implement included forcing people with fields in designated areas of the forest who had up to then refused to sign yearly contracts for their use, exclusion of non functional associations (Hoggo), firing of the treasurer due to bad management practices.

Feedback mechanisms and the flexibility to respond to them need to be built into the system.

-) The first General Assembly of Stakeholders was held after 18 months of autonomy. Initially the association had underestimated the importance of this forum but the experience reinforced relations between the structure and the base as well as providing quality, binding solutions to problems beyond the authority of the management structure alone. *Bringing actors together to discuss issues and make collective recommendations is an extremely powerful tool,*
-) The Forestry Service as an institution despite initial reservations now recognises the credibility of the association as a result of its proven capacity to organise physical improvement of the resource on a large scale as well as rationally controlling exploitation. *Actions speak louder than words*

Negative experiences related to the internal functioning of the structure:

- ; The original two-tiered structure involving geographical sub-committees as intermediate decision-making forums was never established (logistically and technically more cumbersome), and this has meant that decision-making has not always been able to take place at the right level or on time. *Subsidiarity in decision-making means that problems can be solved more effectively.*
- ; The members of the executive committee have tended to allocate (financially) interesting 'posts' and 'activities' to themselves rather than to ordinary 'members', which would be strategically more appropriate for reinforcing local links and relations. *While profiting from your position is generally bad practice, it needs to be recognised that there are limits to voluntary work.*
- ; In cases where communication has been too weak, information has circulated by **rumour** and has presented problems for the association. One experience laid the association open to **unsubstantiated** claims of financial irregularities, which the associations' detractors were quick to exploit. *Credibility is easily damaged even by false information; it follows that good communication systems are essential.*

Positive experiences related to the external environment:

-) Over and above meeting management costs, a percentage of revenue gained from the exploitation of the resource is reinvested in local development initiatives. This encourages people to support continued management by the association. *Direct and indirect benefit sharing by stakeholders should be an integral component of the management system*
-) Through visits received and visits made by the association, it has learned how to present itself and its work, profited from exchanges with others and made friends and allies. *Institutions need to build up and maintain their own support network*
-) The association has learnt how to deal with difficult authorities and politicians and has become increasingly capable of defending itself against local power-play. *Local organisations need to be strong and confident enough to defend their rights as well as the interests of those they represent.*
-) The association successfully refused to submit to a national level project that tried to graft itself onto this shared management initiative in order 'support it' by being able to defend its own principles and ways of doing things. The projects' idea had been to ignore the association and replace it with its own 'top-down', formulaic model of forest management. Negotiations took place and the project agreed to the association's conditions of partnership and quietly incorporated the 'new strategy' learned into its work elsewhere. *Knowing who you are, what your role is and that you have popular support gives the strength and confidence necessary to defend yourself from being bullied.*

Negative experiences related to the external environment:

- ; The association was subject to abuse of power and trust when Forestry Service agents (supposed allies)

extorted money on the pretext of paying for fictive services⁹ carried out apparently in the forest departments' name. This experience was also negative internally as it meant that the Association had let itself be pushed into not respecting its own financial and decision-making procedures just because the matter concerned 'a figure of influence'. Still, in the end it was a positive learning experience because, in resolving the situation the association used its partners for moral support/advice and subsequently resolved the issue with the Regional Director of Forests. ***Local institutions need to have mechanisms that help them avoid abuse by influential people. These include having good procedures and using them and always asking for second opinions.***

- ; The Forest Service failed (initially) to provide technical and monitoring support when solicited due to lack of interest by individual agents, compounded by the institutional weakness of the service. ***It is important for organisations to know their partners and recognise that they too have weaknesses.***
- ; Projects with 'too much money' have been attracted to the association and in trying to provide 'support' have in fact tended to distract it from its real function. Easy money encourages 'donor chasing' which distracts from the real issues and is completely negative in terms of real local development. ***Money can be useful but it can also very easily distract from real objectives.***

4. General Lessons learnt.

This concluding section draws out some of the lessons learnt from the experience at Takiéta that might serve as aspects to be considered or points for debate. The points have been regrouped under different thematic headings.

Social Communication

- Effective social communication is the foundation/framework for good governance and the 'oil' that lubricates the workings of the shared management 'machine'. Inclusive processes and effective social communication are prerequisites to facilitating the resolution of potentially conflictual situations inherent in shared management. Social communication helps ensure :-
 - the circulation of information and transparency
 - the creation/reinforcing of constructive relations between actors
 - inclusion rather than exclusion (consensual decisions and choices)
 - that the decisions and choices made are more appropriate
 - that learning from experience is valued (risk taking and mistakes are positive as long as you learn from them)
 - that flexibility and capacity to adapt are inherent in the management system
 - that socio-political realities are taken into account and can be dealt with.
 - that people take control of their own development.

⁹ The fictive service was supposedly restocking the lake with fingerlings although this had never been asked for at this point in time and it is very doubtful as to whether it took place at all!

Facilitation

- An outside agencies understanding of and approach towards 'Shared Management Initiatives' contributes strongly to the subsequent success or failure of that initiative. Facilitation without piloting /driving / manipulating means:
 - believing in and respecting the capacity of people to develop themselves and bring about constructive change together.
 - having strong principles, respecting them¹⁰ and having 'sang-froid'
 - being open, frank and sincere,
 - being ready to pose the necessary questions and promote analysis/reflection
 - making time for informed discussion and decision-making and allowing time for people to reflect.
 - creating the conditions in which actors themselves decide what the stakes are and their level of commitment to a common process. : creating ownership

What the project knows or understands is not as important as what people know and the quality of the analysis they are capable of carrying out. It is important not distance the management institution from the local reality: too much money and 'support' can be a distraction rather than a facilitating agent: a little support/money well placed is more effective than 'throwing the package' all at once!

Time

- If one is not willing or able to invest the time necessary to allow people to control the decision-making process: DON'T START!!
- The process will take the time it takes: but time invested at the beginning will facilitate the process later on.

Actors And Partners

If the inclusion of actors is real and sincerely done, even the most negative or reluctant will nearly always voluntarily go with the process, even if it is against some of their immediate to long term personal interests (persuasion by inclusion and popular demand). The local legitimacy of decision-making processes, management structures and rules and regulations are more important than their legality. It must be understood that people are only human! Therefore :

- The behaviour and attitude of actors change with their perception of the stakes at a given time.
- Contradictory behaviour by certain actors is to be expected given the complexity of the socio-political environment and the multiple spheres of influence in which they operate.
- Institutions ('stakeholder' or 'partner') taking part in shared management processes and the people who represent them, often have their own weaknesses which can impact negatively on the process.

Capitalising and institutionalising the results of collective decision-making is important in linking the 'Words to

¹⁰ Our principles for the time being are

- Interventions must be the result of initiatives coming from the base.
- The project has the role of facilitator in accompanying an autonomous process led by the population;
- All Projects have a 'process approach' where nothing is preconceived and the steps and activities are discovered with the partners;
- The process followed must be based on **learning by doing** and needs to be built on valorisation (recognition, systematisation, and analysis) of existing local practices. Moreover, the responsabilisation and the reinforcement of capacities of individuals, communities and institutions is a precondition;
- Permanent dialogue (dialogue and negotiation) and questioning should characterise the process between actors;
- The project has an obligation to persuade the participation of all actors during the processes followed ('persuasion by the inclusion');
- Equitable, legitimate and responsible representation of the various groups (in particular marginalised groups) must be a precondition;
- Enable individuals, communities and institutions to know what their rights are concerning natural resource management and how these rights can be exercised;
- All actions must aim at being sustainable (evolutionary, autonomous);
- One must aim at the possibility of replication of activities;
- Conditions need to be created which institutionalise local internal monitoring and auto-evaluation of any process
- Capitalise on experiences (positive and negative) with a view to influencing various actions in the definition of the policies and strategies.

the Act' with certain actors. Indicators of 'progress' and 'success' need to be particularly subtle and subtle when analysing process approaches (i.e. behaviour changes; adoption of an idea/approach, mechanisms being used and working etc...).

Management Structures/Organisations

- Given the importance of the wider socio-political environment in which shared management takes place, it is important that 'outside agencies' DON'T:-
 - Impose preconceived structures/forms of organisation: Outsiders are very badly placed to understand the subtle power relations that exist between actors and the safe guards that need to be built into the system.
 - Promote either 'old existing' or 'new' structures: Existing, modified or new institutions are all possible: the actors themselves are best placed to collectively decide which option is most appropriate for the shared management context.
 - Set up a 'structure' as the 'starting point' of the process: It is important that the definition of the shared management structure/institution is the result of an inclusive, informed and collective reflection and discussion process, not the starting point.

Box 4 : Some Essential elements within a process towards decentralised natural resource management

The process

- Clear identification of the resource and its limits.
- Identification of all the different actors, communities and/or users of the resource.
- Analysis by each group of the resource and the role it plays in their system of production.
- Exposure of each actor to the analysis made by the others.
- Build-up and discuss the holistic vision of the dynamics of the resource and prevailing trends.
- Analyse and start to deal with latent, actual and potential conflicts.
- Bring the real representatives of each group of actors together to discuss the future.
- Identify a common vision of what the resource would ideally look like in the future.
- Agree on the principles and first steps in the process of how to achieve this vision.
- Respect the steps identified.
- Focus on the organisational aspects of the management structure.
- Focus on local knowledge and understanding of the resource as the starting point and guiding principal for the management.
- Develop a flexible, representative and evolving structure and system of management with negotiation between users as an implicit part of the process.
- Network and link up with others for moral, technical and/or financial support.

Providing an enabling environment

- All the interested parties involved from the beginning of the negotiation process have the same level of information and analysis.
- Local authorities and Government services are well informed and follow developments from close by.
- People respect each other and an environment of equality is created where everyone has the right to speak, all opinions carry equal weight and decision-making is by consensus.
- Allow people time to think, reason and make their own informed decisions from the very beginning.