

A Road Map Towards More Equitable Conservation and Poverty Reduction in West Central Asia and North Africa (WESCANA) Region Using Traditional Approaches



Results of the Regional Workshop Held in Lebanon
March 24-28th, 2007



IUCN
The World Conservation Union



الجمعية الملكية
لحماية الطبيعة
ASCN



**Hanns
Seidel
Stiftung**

Conservation for Poverty Reduction; Traditional Approaches in West Asia: Hima Revival and Evolution Through the 21st Century

A. WORKSHOP RESULTS: A ROAD MAP

The major output of the workshop entitled Conservation for Poverty Reduction; Traditional Approaches in West Asia, Hima Revival into the 21st Century, which was held from March 24th-28th, 2007 was an agreement of some 50 participants from different parts of the WESCANA region on the following:

Participants agreed to use, promote, and support this “road map” as an enabling framework for creating synergies and complementarities to advance traditional approaches to conservation such as the Hima concept in the region.

This agreed upon enabling framework for understanding and strengthening the Hima management system and other proven effective traditional systems in the region included the following points:

- 1 – Working towards a vision of the Hima
- 2 – Improving understanding of Hima and other approaches discussed in the workshop such as Aflaj and other water management systems, agricultural terraces, “Awqaf,” “Harim” zones of water bodies, “Hujrah” systems in Yemen, village tenure systems, grazing systems of mobile pastoralists, etc.
- 3 – Strengthening the legal and policy framework
- 4 – Improving implementation of Hima revival projects
- 5 – Promoting the Hima concept in national, regional and global conservation policy making
- 6 – Linking and creating networks between Hima initiatives worldwide
- 7 – Awareness raising, education and communication
- 8 – Raising resources to work on advancing the Hima concept
- 9 – Identifying next steps and dividing roles and responsibilities



This road map was the result of group work accomplished during a 3-day workshop by some 50 participants, most representing governmental and non governmental conservation agencies and donors from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Europe. The first sessions of the workshop built a working knowledge for participants that materialized into the road map on the last day.

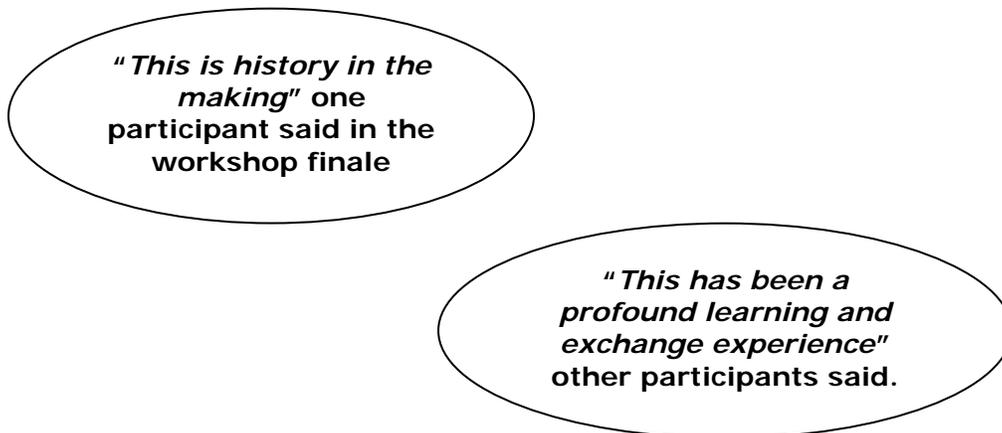
Through this workshop participants were able to express concerns and doubts about the threats as well as benefits related to the revival of such traditional approaches.

The road map is the interpretation of those expressions and includes all views along the spectrum.

It is, therefore, perceived as a well studied step forward towards applying conservation in the WESCANA region that takes into consideration traditional approaches as basis but molds them into a new equitable, sustainable and effective option that reaches the global conservation community as an adequate example.

It is important to note that the workshop and its results are a first step in the implementation of commitments of WESCANA members in Durban on the occasion of the IUCN World Parks Congress (2003) to look more deeply into traditional approaches that have a proven historical record in achieving conservation through livelihood security, equity and better participation of local communities.

Moreover, the workshop is also a way to implement relevant provisions of the Convention on Biodiversity where signatory parties, including countries of the region, have adopted the Durban recommendations.



Some of the fears and concerns expressed in relation to Hima revival were related to revival of inequitable tribal practices that could result in ethnic and gender discrimination, conflicts and violent sanctions. However, it was also suggested that some of these fears and concerns could be attributed to our lack of knowledge in relation to mechanisms and interactions that have governed traditional management of land and natural resources, and to how these systems have evolved in modern contexts.

Traditional approaches such as the *hima* will have to be adapted to new political, legal and socioeconomic realities in order to meet the changing needs of local communities and the requirements of modern states. This requires a deepening of the knowledge base. Generally, participants felt that the topic is inadequately understood and expressed the need to learn more about the Hima and other traditional conservation approaches. The need for research surfaced repeatedly. But at the same time, participants agreed that research should not delay implementation of the concept.

Some of the participants, who have been lobbying for the Hima since more than a decade, maintain that calls for its revival are not a matter of romantic impetuosity or nostalgia. They rather relate to the fact that Himas have proven to have scientific benefits that can profit protected areas in the region. Himas also incorporate ethical principles that are not necessarily inherent in the understanding of other forms of protected areas within the region.

In reviving Himas, care should be taken not to awaken tribal and other forms of inequities and conflict. Revival initiatives are already underway in Lebanon, Tanzania and Indonesia and have achieved a certain degree of success.

B. THEMES

Participants through workshop process of the first day, specifically through exercises implemented using “the world café” technique, reached certain operational themes.

Moreover, several themes were identified and gathered through presentations from the participating countries and other international donor organizations.

The themes were continuously collected and made visible at all times.

On the second day, participants, who were divided among six groups, chose the most important themes they had developed and elaborated them further. On the third day, the work done on these themes evolved into the road map, which is described in detail below.

The different groups presented the themes they chose to work on as follows:

- Develop a Hima vision (group 1)
- Guiding principles (group 2, group 6)
- Defining Hima concept through guiding principles (group 3)
- Hima as a tool for poverty reduction by guaranteeing sustainable use of natural resources and equitable sharing of benefits (group 2)
- Dynamic Legal Framework (group 4)
- Knowledge and understanding of the Hima concept, research to feed conservation practitioners (group 5)
- Research on Hima and other traditional systems (group 6)
- Policy and legislation in relation to Hima (group 6)

As for the group participants, they were:

Group 1; Mohammad Sulayem, Mohammad Youssef, Ibrahim Khader, Ahmad Bin Arfan, and Laith Moghrabi

Group 2; Saeed Mohammad, Dana Ajlani, Tala Hasbini, Abou Yasser, Nizar Hani

Group 3; Seif Hajari, Pascal Abdalah, Mahmoud Bdur, Arroub Al Masri, Salem Dahik Ali

Group 4; Ahmad Abdullah, Ghada Mitri, Annette Spangenberg, Rasha Kanj, Gianluca Serra

Group 5; Lamia Mansour, Magda Yousif Ghonem, Gonzalo Oviedo, Nizar Hani, Bassima Khatib

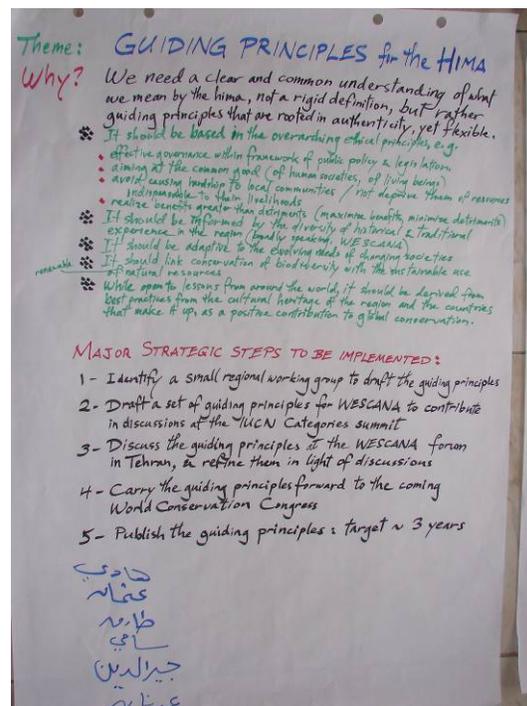
Group 6; Hadi Hikmani, Othman Llewellyn, Hala Kilani, Tarek Aboul Hawa, Sami Tarabay, Geraldine Chatelard, Adnan Budeiri.

C. LINKING THEME DEVELOPMENT TO THE ROAD MAP

1. Towards a Vision of the Hima

The group work already set guiding principles derived from the distinctive features of the Hima. One of the groups worded the rationale for their work in the following way: "We need a clear and common understanding of what we mean by the Hima, not a rigid definition, but rather guiding principles that are rooted in authenticity, yet flexible."

- It should be based in the overarching ethical principles, e.g.
 - Effective governance within the framework of public policy and legislation
 - Aiming at the common good (of human societies, of living beings)
 - Avoid causing hardship to local communities / not deprive them of resources indispensable to their livelihoods
 - Realize benefits greater than detriments (maximize benefits and minimize detriments)
- It should be informed by the diversity of historical and traditional experience in the region (broadly speaking, WESCANA)
- It should be adaptive to evolving needs of changing societies
- It should link conservation of biodiversity with the sustainable use of renewable natural resources
- It should ensure mutual benefit between humans and their natural environment
- It should ensure local community role in management and activities
- It should ensure equitable sharing of benefits at the local level
- It should take into consideration the social, cultural and environmental specificities of different places and their local communities
- It should include flexibility as a core element in the implementation, taking into consideration different spatial and temporal circumstances
- While open to lessons from around the world, it should be derived from best practices from the cultural heritage of the region and the countries that make it up, as a positive contribution to global conservation



Major strategic steps to be implemented:

- Identify a small regional working group to draft the guiding principles
- Draft a set of guiding principles for WESCANA to contribute to discussions at the IUCN categories summit in May 2007
- Discuss the guiding principles at the WESCANA forum in Tehran and refine them in light of discussions
- Carry the guiding principles forward to the coming World Conservation Congressing 2008
- Publish the guiding principles: target ~3 years

2. Improving Understanding of the Hima and other Traditional Conservation Practices

Groups attempted to define the Hima but those attempts only shed light on the fact that they needed to deepen knowledge to arrive to a final definition.

“Our understanding of the Hima and other traditional natural resource management systems of the region (e.g. Aflaj and other water management systems, agricultural terraces, Awqaf, ‘Harim’ zones of water bodies, village tenure, grazing systems, etc...) is incomplete. Gaps need to be filled.”

- Anthropological and sociological field research to be conducted across the region on Himas and other traditional management systems that still exist and that existed recently, through oral histories, empirical measurements, photographic documentation, case studies, etc. to understand how they work / have worked, in detail and the changes that have taken place
- Literature review including (among others) books of ‘fiqh’, histories, accounts of anthropologists and travelers, historical court records etc.
- Empirical environmental audits and assessments of Himas and other traditional resource management systems, to document levels of biodiversity, standing crop biomass, differences in species composition, value as *in situ* seed banks, etc...
- Research in economic functioning of Himas and other traditional resource management systems with regard to allocation of benefits, accountability in the use of resources, livelihoods and tangible benefits
- Relationships between the various traditional resource management systems - they should not be viewed in isolation from one another
- Research should uncover knowledge about customary practices and land tenure
- Research should reveal more information on the wider political and legal contexts during the success/failure of traditional practices, particularly Hima.

Major strategic steps to be implemented

- Identify individuals and institutions involved/interested in this research
- Initiate a network of interested individuals and institutions
- Identify universities, granting institutions, scholarships, etc..., that are interested in research on the Hima and other traditional resource management systems of the region
- Identify case studies of special relevance, e.g. existing traditional Himas in Saudi Arabia, Hujrah systems in Yemen, new approaches in Lebanon, effects of national range management policies in Syria, Falaj and Qanat systems in Eastern Arabia, Iran, and North Africa, agricultural terrace systems, etc...
- Research into traditional technologies related to the conservation and use of natural resources, e.g, agricultural terraces and rainwater harvesting systems, Aflaj and Qanats, and relevant crafts in different regions
- Research should provide basis and suggestions for field work i.e. Link or relay research to national, regional and international conservation agencies, decision makers etc.

3. Strengthening the Legal and Policy Framework

Groups identified the need to work on governance as a pre-requisite to advancing a new vision for traditional approaches. Discussions in the workshop revealed that

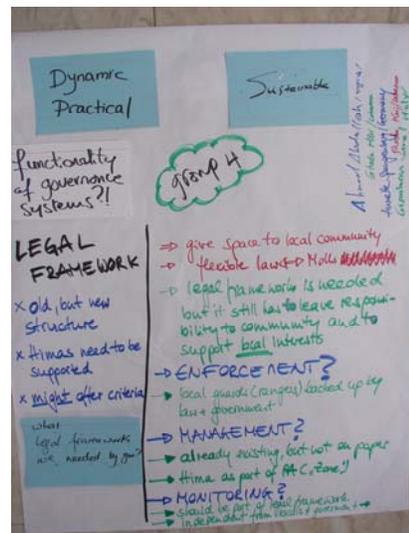
policy was at the basis of the decline of Himas in Saudi Arabia, for example when a royal decree was apparently misunderstood to mean abolishing Himas. Some discussions revealed skepticism or concerns that legal frameworks at the government level could compromise the decentralized nature of traditional approaches.

This concern should be addressed further by more involvement of environmental lawyers in the analysis of this situation. But the main counter-argument or rationale that emerged for the benefit of a legal and policy framework was that Himas needed backing to survive.

One of the groups defined their rationale in the following manner:

“While Himas have been one of the most important instruments for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the region, they have not adapted to social, economic and political changes and do not fit well in contemporary national legislation and policies. We need to bridge the wide gaps in order to:”

- Look into existing customary laws governing Himas and other traditional approaches
- Enable existing Himas that are viable to survive
- Enable Himas that are not functioning well to be revived, in cases where local communities desire to do so
- Establish new pilot Himas as examples of best practices, in cases where there is the will to do so on the part of conservation agencies and local communities
- Avoid pitfalls and negative potentials (e.g. social, tribal, sectarian, political conflicts as well as ethnic or gender discrimination) and develop treatment modalities to address them before and as they emerge
- Develop flexible governance mechanisms and empower local communities
- Enable the Hima to adapt to meet the needs of changing societies
- Enable the positive ethical principles and the progressive elements of traditional practices embedded in the Hima to inform planning and management of contemporary protected area systems
- Develop governance mechanisms that protect simultaneously biodiversity and local livelihood
- Develop clear enforcement mechanisms for Himas that are linked to laws and government institutions especially in pilot projects
- Himas should be declared and legally recognized in at least one government institution



Major strategic steps to be implemented

- Identify, national, regional and international structures and mechanisms (e.g. IUCN’s Environmental Law Center in Bonn) that can contribute to policy advice and legislation related to Himas
- Involve IUCN commissions: CEESP, CEL, WCPA
- Encourage conservation agencies and organizations in the region to take stock of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints pertaining to the

- continuity and revival of the Hima (and equivalent or similar institutions) in the countries of the region, on a national basis
- Engage conservation agencies and organizations in countries outside the region that are establishing Himas or applying Hima principles, e.g. Tanzania & Indonesia to learn from their experiences and share the regions' knowledge and experience.

4. Improving Implementation of Hima Revival Projects

- Build on positive elements associated with Himas, e.g. links with existing local livelihoods, low economic and social costs and strengthening traditional knowledge, practices and institutions
- Support / initiate pilot projects to revive and / or create Himas, in order to ensure that they are informed by available knowledge and experience, and to help them set examples of best practice and to ensure monitoring and evaluation of management success
- Work according to clear criteria or guiding principles
- Hima implementation should stress the principles of equity, gender and participation of all constituencies of the local community.

Major Strategic steps to be implemented

- Establish a Hima fund to ensure sustainability in management, return of benefits equitably to members of the direct community and for revival of the local cultural heritage
- Build capacity of local communities in conservation, management of natural resources, sustainability based on ethical principles
- Identify appropriate policy and institutional set up required to establish Hima
- Identify mechanisms for maximizing livelihood benefits in the Himas
- Establish a monitoring mechanisms that is independent form local and government groups
- Introduce effective modern tools whenever possible and applicable in the process of establishing Hima revival initiatives (e.g. situation analysis, stakeholder analysis, ecological surveys etc.)
- Implement pilot projects of Hima Revival in at least three different countries
- Document successful initiatives of Hima revival and share knowledge with interested groups or national parties to replicate the process
- Involve multidisciplinary teams in the implementation of Hima revival (including anthropologists, technical people etc.)



5. Promoting the Hima concept in regional and global conservation policy making

Participants spoke of the need to promote and advocate the Hima paradigm among conservation agencies and organizations in the region and internationally. They stressed that the aim is not to replicate historical Himas but to reinvigorate an

authentic culture-based conservation paradigm from the region that bridges traditional and contemporary approaches and responds to the cultural needs, contexts, and value systems of the Arab and Islamic countries.

Take the Hima to discussions and workshop results to:

- the categories summit in Spain in May 2007
- IUCN WESCANAs Regional Conservation Forum – May 2007
- IUCN Congress in Barcelona – Spain in 2008
- BirdLife Global Council Meeting April 2007-04-16
- BirdLife Global Meeting in Argentina in 2008
- NCWCD November 2007 workshop for Islamic conservationists

6. Linking and creating networks between Hima initiatives worldwide

- Link with the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES), the organization that, together with WWF, Conservation International, and local communities, is behind new Hima revival initiatives in Tanzania and Indonesia
- Link the three Hima Revival Initiatives of Lebanon together and with other regional initiatives
- Establish information and technical know-how exchange between the Hima initiatives in the region
- Link with emerging Hima initiatives in Saudi Arabia
- Create a network for all Hima projects
- Derive lessons learned from Himas / publish, record case studies



7. Awareness raising, education and communication

- Use the process of information gathering and its products to build awareness of the Hima and other traditional resource management systems
- Issue publications on the traditional approaches to conservation in the region and their link to poverty, gender issues
- Issue newsletter for traditional approaches/Hima
- Develop targeted communication tools: Newsletter, Website or blog, Booklet / brochure
- Establish a knowledge bank on the Hima and other traditional conservation practices of the region

8. Raising resources to work on advancing the Hima concept

- Establish a Hima Fund
- Develop project proposals for national and regional pilot projects
- Lobby for government subsidies or budget allocations that take into consideration conservation or revival of effective and equitable traditional approaches

9. Identifying next steps and dividing roles and responsibilities

Most of the follow-up steps were included under each of the above discussed headline of the roadmap. But there are key follow-up steps that are useful to reiterate under this heading. One of the key follow-up steps would be to establish a **people network composed of interested individuals / organizations that participated in the Lebanon workshop** to work on advancing the meetings' results. This is why it is important to establish an **E-group** for these organizations/individuals to establish a continuous process of communication and planning.

Another major follow-up is a reconvening meeting, or e-communication in case the meeting is not possible, to decide on different roles and responsibilities that each participant or participating organization is willing to take on after this document reaches stakeholders and they had the chance to assess capacities on capabilities to work on certain issues.

Another long-term step would be to establish a regular annual meeting in follow-up of the 1st workshop in Lebanon.

Commitments Pledged during the Workshop, more specifically in the task force meeting that followed the last plenary session of the workshop.

Since as mentioned in the road map statement at the beginning of this report, this is an enabling framework, ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE INVITED TO ADD to the list below any possible contributions that can help advance the road map and report this back to the group.



- The IUCN WESCANA office is committed to initiate networking and information sharing through email list and website;
- The IUCN WESCANA office is committed to integrate elements of the road map into its Programmes namely the Poverty, Equity and Gender Programme
- SPNL is committed to pursuing the Hima Fund
- Othman Llewlyn who was representing the NCWCD offered

- feedback from the discussion with Islamic scholars on conservation approaches (a very important element for advancing points 1,2,3 of the roadmap);
- Tarek Aboul Hawa from IUCN WESCANA and Gonzalo Oviedo Policy Advisor from IUCN Headquarters, who are attending the IUCN Protected Areas Category Summit in Saudi Arabia volunteered to help on point 5;
 - Furthermore, Gonzalo Oviedo pledged to be an active promoter and supporter of the entire roadmap internationally
 - Mirey Atallah from UNDP-GEF offered to explore opportunities to link into the GEF portfolio;
 - Mohammad Sulayem, also representing the NCWCD, offered to encourage participants into joining WCPA membership;

- Geraldine Chatelard volunteered to initiate a research network with the aims of collating existing literature on recent attempts at reintroducing a Hima system (particularly in Syria), and eventually to develop an agenda for field-based research on various social aspects of existing and planned Hima initiatives.