

Most communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid (ASAL) or Sahelian parts of Africa have suffered development. This is so because many of the activities are not planned to address key issues in the development of these areas. Often knowledge is borrowed from wetter parts of the continent and applied irrationally to development problems. Expertise is usually from without. More often than not they do not listen to the communities who have operated some of the most sophisticated social institutions in human history. All these problems are compounded by short term sectoral strategies.

Increasingly, development of these areas has to be within the context of sustainable ecological resource use. This demands that communities participate in the design and implementation of activities. It also means that new ideas, technologies and techniques have to be generated to produce for the exploding populations. New natural and human resources management techniques are called for if these populations are not to lose their humanity and die off in the degrading environments. The need is urgent.

Sahelian Solutions is a foundation registered in Holland and Kenya. It was created by founder members with more than one hundred and fifty years of experience in research, teaching, management and consultancy in ASAL development. The experience spans Africa, Asia, Australia and Latin America. The individuals come from Holland, Ireland and Kenya. Their training backgrounds are as diverse as theology, social sciences, development studies, hydrogeology, ecology and construction and land use planning. The unity in this diversity is experience in ASAL development. Their different national backgrounds and experience is a strength in imaging problems and finding solutions tested by time.

The founder individuals professionally work in varied activities as consultancy, project planning and implementation and NGO and private sector management. They came together to offer services in ASAL development to clients who are serious in wanting to plan, implement and assess development activities which are primarily for the ASAL communities and not for the donors or governments. Central in SASOL is commitment to participative development, which can not be if resource conservation within the framework of time tested technologies sustained by ASAL populations are ignored. This does not mean that the scientific approach, planning and new ideas are not introduced to base communities. It simply means that the beginning point is what is

known and sustainable by the base communities as evaluated by our multidisciplinary team.