

Country Name	<b>Participatory Forest and Rangeland Management Project in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province</b>
Islamic Republic of Iran	

**I. Project Outline**

Background	<p>In Iran, natural disasters, such as soil erosion, debris-avalanches and landslides, frequently occurred, following a decline in ground cover due to illegal logging and overgrazing in the upstream area, which reduced the capacity of the land to conserve water. JICA conducted a development study entitled “The Study on the Watershed Management Plan for Karoon River” from 2000 to 2002. After formulating the Master Plan, the Iranian government took the initiative to conduct disaster prevention works. However, activities to improve the living standards of local people and to manage natural resources were not sufficiently implemented with full understanding by the local people involved; hence there was no satisfactory outcome.</p>												
Objectives of the Project	<p>Through preparation of participatory forest and rangeland management system of NRWGO*, preparation and strengthening of implementation system for sustainable participatory forest and rangeland management in the target villages, promotion of participatory forest and rangeland management activities in the target villages, and structuring of collaborative relation among concerned organization, the project aimed at enhancement of capacity of NRWGO for participatory forest and rangeland management, thereby introducing “participatory forest and rangeland management”** in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province, Iran.</p> <p>*NRWGO: Natural Resources and Watershed Management General Office of Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province **“Participatory Forest and Rangeland Management (PFRM)” is protection, utilization and regeneration of forest and rangeland through participation and support of the people living near forest and rangeland with livelihood activities for promoting participation of local people.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall Goal: Participatory forest and rangeland management is introduced in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province.</li> <li>Project Purpose: The capacity of NRWGO for participatory forest and rangeland management is enhanced.</li> </ol>												
Activities of the Project	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project Site: 1) Chaharmahal- va- Bakhtiari Province, 2) Target Villages in Bazoft Area</li> <li>Main Activities: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparation of the project baseline report, Elaboration and revision of capacity development (CD) strategy for NRWGO, Elaboration, implementation and feedback of CD training plan among NRWGO staff, Preparation of materials for dissemination of the project, etc.</li> <li>Identifying and organizing resident organization to work with government organization in target villages, Preparation, implementation, and monitoring &amp; evaluation of training for Community Facilitator (CF), etc.</li> <li>Preparation of Village Action Plan (VAP) for participatory forest and rangeland management activities, Implementation of activities based on the agreed VAP, Monitoring, evaluation and feedback on activities by VAP participants, Revision of participatory forest and rangeland management guideline based on the activities</li> <li>Analysis for structuring collaborative relations with other organizations concerned, Conducting sessions and collaboration strengthening meetings for concerned organizations, Preparation of proposal regarding collaboration strengthening among concerned organizations</li> </ol> </li> <li>Inputs (to carry out above activities) <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Japanese Side</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Iranian Side</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1) Experts: 7 persons</td> <td>1) Staff Allocated: 20 persons</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2) Trainees Received: 22 persons</td> <td>2) Office space, transportation of counterpart (C/P), expenses for meetings and workshops, and other miscellaneous cost</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3) Equipment: Computers and printers, GPS, measuring instruments, office equipment</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>4) Local expenses</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> </li> </ol>			Japanese Side	Iranian Side	1) Experts: 7 persons	1) Staff Allocated: 20 persons	2) Trainees Received: 22 persons	2) Office space, transportation of counterpart (C/P), expenses for meetings and workshops, and other miscellaneous cost	3) Equipment: Computers and printers, GPS, measuring instruments, office equipment		4) Local expenses	
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Project Period	July 2010 – December 2016 (Extension period: July 2015 –December 2016)	Project Cost	(ex-ante) 361 million yen, (actual) 660 million yen										
Implementing Agency	Natural Resources and Watershed Management General Office of Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province (NRWGO) Forest, Rangeland and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) as supervising agency												
Cooperation Agency in Japan	Japan Overseas Forestry Consultants Association, Japan Forest Technology Association, Sanyu Consultants Inc.												

**II. Result of the Evaluation**

< Special Perspectives Considered in the Ex-Post Evaluation >

- In this Ex-Post Evaluation, an evaluation judgment was made primarily by analyzing information acquired by sending and collecting questionnaires, and through telephone and e-mail interviews with persons concerned due to the impact of COVID-19. Field survey was conducted on a limited scale, with face-to-face interviews with FRWO and NRWGO as well as survey conducted by FRWO.

**1 Relevance**

<Consistency with the Development Policy of Iran at the Time of Ex-Ante Evaluation>

In the Fourth Five-Year Economic, Social, and Cultural Plan of Iran (2005-2010), one of the priority areas was environment conservation and 14 environmental issues were specified. One of them was to demonstrate norms toward ecological and sustainable development as well as incorporation of the norms in specific plans and programs. In addition, 10 priorities were designated, including implementation of conservation projects for watershed as well as thorough implementation of forest conservation.

<Consistency with the Development Needs of Iran at the Time of Ex-Ante Evaluation>

It was urgently needed to promote planning and implementation of forest and rangeland management through participation as well as appropriate utilization of natural resources through improvement of livelihood.

<Consistency with Japan's ODA Policy at the Time of Ex-Ante Evaluation>

The project was consistent with three of the five priority areas in the Japanese cooperation policy toward Iran in 2010, namely, environmental conservation, comprehensive water resources management, and correction of inequality between urban and rural areas<sup>1</sup>.

<Evaluation Result>

In light of the above, the relevance of the project is high.

2 Effectiveness/Impact

<Status of Achievement of the Project Purpose at the time of Project Completion>

The Project Purpose was achieved by the project completion. It was confirmed by the project that the capacity of promoting the participatory forest/rangeland management was developed among the NRWGO staff, C/P as well as field staff, which means that the utilization of knowledge/experience gained from the project was enhanced. Although quantitative data on the number of participants in NRWGO utilizing knowledge/experience was not clear, actual utilization of knowledge/experience was confirmed and it was considered that the effects of the project activities were observed to some extent (indicator 1). It was reported in the terminal evaluation that all (100%) villagers interviewed (42 persons) evaluated that the capacity of NRWGO had been improved, as well as attitude such as communication and confidence building. It was considered that the Project Cycle Management (PCM)/Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) training for NRWGO staff, preparation/implementation of VAP using the knowledge from the training, and the NRWGO's efforts through the project activities contributed to such trust-building (indicator 2). According to the interviews at the terminal evaluation, 41 out of 42 (97.6%) felt that they had either benefitted or would be likely benefitted from the knowledge gained from the project (indicator 3). The benefits they mentioned included an increased income from the sales of fruits or dressmaking. The CFs in five target villages provided the same responses. It was reported that institutional coherence was formed and strengthened among relevant organizations, for example, the Planning and Budget Organization (PBO) and FRWO for the budget aspect, as well as the Integrated Natural Resources Management in the Middle East and North Africa (MENARID), Jihad-e-Agriculture Organization (JAO), Cultural Heritage and Handicrafts and Tourism Organization (CHHTO), etc. for the operational organization aspect (indicator 4).

<Continuation Status of Project Effects at the time of Ex-post Evaluation>

The project effects have continued to the time of ex-post evaluation. According to the FRWO's survey<sup>2</sup>, almost all NRWGO's staff who participated in the project (170 staff members) utilize their knowledge well for participatory forest and rangeland management (indicator 1). For example, the ex-project participants of NRWGO implement participatory conservation and remediation of forests and pastures in target villages of the project, as well as in newly introduced areas. In addition, planting medicinal plants at the level of 2,500 hectares was initiated in newly introduced areas and target villages of the project by the ex-project participants of NRWGO. According to the FRWO's survey, it was found out through the comments of the representatives of each village that the project participants in target villages evaluated that the capacity and attitude of NRWGO has been improved although there was no quantitative data (indicator 2). Local people are satisfied with NRWGO's performance, as NRWGO has been assisting them with capacity development among local communities on forest and rangeland management through training programs and workshops, among others. Those interviewed by FRWO's survey also confirmed that their benefits by the project have been continued in terms of income generation, forest management, women's empowerment, rural development (indicator 3). For example, the activities of rural women's micro-credit box (livelihood improvement) have been continued in various cities and villages and benefiting local women. Since project completion, a total of 67 micro-credit boxes have been introduced in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province in addition to 36 micro-credit boxes established during the project period. As to the implementation system for participatory forest and rangeland management (indicator 4), collaboration with concerned organizations has not been well implemented due to lack of coherent plan among relevant government organizations such as the Ministry of Agriculture Jihad (MOJA) and Department of Environment (DOE).

<Status of Achievement for Overall Goal at the time of Ex-post Evaluation>

The Overall Goal has been achieved. Participatory forest and rangeland management activities have been maintained, including livelihood activities such as beekeeping activities, activities of rural women micro-credit box, and horticulture activities, (indicator 1). Since project completion, in addition to the target areas of the project, participatory forest and rangeland management have been newly introduced to more than five sites<sup>3</sup>, including Hosein Abad, Dehnash, Kharaji, Vanan, Vardanja (indicator 2). In the newly introduced sites, activities are not always being smoothly implemented as there is lack of social structure as well as lack of follow-up and support by NRWGO, and thus local people still tend to solve problems in a traditional way. However, benefits from the activities have been observed to some extent in terms of motivation and participation of local farmers.

<Other Impacts at the time of Ex-post Evaluation>

Women were benefitted through capacity development activities introduced by the project, such as rural women micro-credit fund and sewing. No negative impact has been observed.

<Evaluation Result>

Therefore, the effectiveness/impact of the project is high.

<sup>1</sup> Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "ODA Country Data Book in 2010"

<sup>2</sup> Because of the national emergency order of gathering and travel restriction due to COVID-19, FRWO could not conduct the survey covering all the 170 ex-participants of the project. Instead, they conducted the interviews with 12 key C/Ps of NRWGO and had a meeting with the key representatives of each village.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of project completion, as the Participatory Protection Project (PPP) was implemented by the land affairs department and MENARID was being expanded in the Province, it was considered that the indicator 2 was already virtually achieved in collaboration with these initiatives. At the ex-post evaluation, the connection with PPP and MENARID was not clearly confirmed. However, participatory forest and rangeland management activities have been newly introduced in more than five sites, therefore, it is considered that the indicator has been achieved.

Achievement of Project Purpose and Overall Goal

Aim	Indicators	Results
<p>(Project Purpose)</p> <p>The capacity of NRWGO for participatory forest and rangeland management is enhanced.</p>	<p>(Indicator 1) More than 70% of project participants in NRWGO will utilize knowledge/experience gained from the Project.</p>	<p>Status of the Achievement: Partially Achieved (continued) (Project Completion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was confirmed by the project that the capacity of NRWGO staff, C/P as well and field staff was developed, which means that the utilization of knowledge/experience gained from the project was enhanced, although no quantitative data was available.</li> </ul> <p>(Ex-post Evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the FRWO's survey, almost all NRWGO's staff who participated in the project (170 staff members) utilize their knowledge well for participatory forest and rangeland management.</li> </ul>
	<p>(Indicator 2) More than 70% of project participants in target villages will value that NRWGO's capacity of forest &amp; rangeland management was enhanced and NRWGO attitudes was improved.</p>	<p>Status of the Achievement: achieved (continued) (Project Completion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At terminal evaluation, all villagers interviewed (100%/42 persons) evaluated that the capacity of NRWGO had been improved, as well as attitude such as communication and confidence building.</li> </ul> <p>(Ex-post Evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the FRWO's survey, the project participants in target villages evaluated that the capacity and attitude of NRWGO has been improved (interview from the representatives from each villages).</li> </ul>
	<p>(Indicator 3) 70% of project participants in target villages will be benefitted by the Project by December, 2014.</p>	<p>Status of the Achievement: achieved (continued) (Project Completion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At terminal evaluation, according to the project's interviews with 42 villagers, 41 out of 42 (97.6%) felt they had either benefitted or would be likely benefitted from the knowledge gained from the project. The CFs in 5 target villages provided the same responses.</li> </ul> <p>(Ex-post Evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>According to the FRWO's survey, the benefits by the project in target villages have been continued in terms of income generation, forest management, women's empowerment, rural development. A total of 67 micro-credit boxes have been introduced in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province in addition to 36 micro-credit boxes established during the project period.</li> </ul>
	<p>(Indicator 4) Implementation system for participatory forest and rangeland management collaborated with concerned organizations is formulated by NRWGO.</p>	<p>Status of the Achievement: achieved (not continued) (Project Completion)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Institutional coherence was formed and strengthened.</li> </ul> <p>(Ex-post Evaluation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration with concerned organizations has not been well implemented due to lack of coherent plan among relevant government organizations.</li> </ul>
<p>(Overall Goal)</p> <p>Participatory forest and rangeland management is introduced in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province.</p>	<p>(Indicator 1) Participatory forest and rangeland management activities in the target area are maintained, by using knowledge and experience gained from the project.</p>	<p>(Ex-post Evaluation) achieved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participatory forest and rangeland management activities have been maintained including livelihood activities such as beekeeping activities, activities of rural women micro-credit box, horticulture activities.</li> </ul>
	<p>(Indicator 2) Participatory forest and rangeland management activities are newly introduced at least in 5 sites in district level.</p>	<p>(Ex-post Evaluation) achieved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In addition to the target areas of the project, more than 5 sites have been newly introduced with participatory forest and rangeland activities since project completion, including Hosein Abad, Dehnash, Kharaji, Vanan, Vardanjan.</li> </ul>

Source: Terminal Evaluation Report, Project Completion Report, Questionnaire and interview to FRWO and NRWGO, Survey conducted by FRWO

### 3 Efficiency

Both the project cost and the project period exceeded the plan (ratio against the plan: 183% and 130%, respectively). The project cost exceeded the plan due to the increase in the price of services and materials caused by inflation during the project period and some activities were additionally implemented including additional training activities during the extended period, while the project period was extended because it took time to obtain legal permits from relevant organizations. The outputs of the project were produced as planned. Therefore, the efficiency of the project is low.

### 4 Sustainability

#### <Policy Aspect>

In the Sixth Five-Year Economic, Cultural and Social Development Plan (2016-2021), the priorities in agriculture and environment & natural resources include achieving comprehensive watershed management and organizational cohesion, planting economic forest species,

and the transfer and use of national lands.

<Institutional/Organizational Aspect>

The organizational structure for promoting participatory forest and watershed management is quite well established at FRWO and NRWGO as well as at MOJA as they are implementing their daily duties without major problems. However, there are some organizational difficulties due to lack of the staff of each organization as well as lack of the structure and mechanism for the efficient collaboration with concerned organizations, including DOE and the Ministry of Energy. Consequently, the organizational performance is not fully effective. As countermeasure, FRWO is currently drawing target organization's attention and promote their collaboration through the "Integrated Watershed Management Model"<sup>4</sup>.

<Technical Aspect>

All those involved in the project are still assigned to their organization and have been utilizing the experiences gained through the project. They have technical capacity necessary for their duties such as planning, facilitation, and marketing although some skills need to be further improved, for example, map reading, which is essential for recognizing suitable land. After the completion of the project, technical trainings have not been implemented to the extent of the quality provided during the project period due to lack of budget and planning. At community level, technical assistance has been offered by specialized departments of implementing agencies inside MOJA, FRWO and NRWGO.

<Financial Aspect>

The implementing agencies have sufficient funds to implement their daily duties although there is not sufficient budget for training. At FRWO and NRWGO as well as the Natural Resources and Watershed Office at district level, financial source has been secured by the National Development Fund and it is planned to be maintained according to the agreement between NRWGO and the Provincial Planning and Budget Organization. At community level, the government agencies allocate funds to local communities according to the annual policies and needs. In addition, funds are secured through labor and activities by local people.

<Evaluation Result>

In light of the above, some problems have been observed in terms of the institutional/organizational, technical and financial aspects of the implementing agency. Therefore, the sustainability of the project effects is fair.

5 Summary of the Evaluation

The project achieved the Project Purpose of enhancement of NRWGO's capacity for participatory forest and rangeland management, as NRWGO staff, C/P and field staff were utilizing knowledge/experience gained from the project and local people were satisfied with NRWGO's performance. At the time of the ex-post evaluation, the NRWGO's staff involved in the project implement participatory conservation and remediation of forests and pastures in target villages, assisting the local people. Therefore, the project effects have been continued. The Overall Goal of introduction of participatory forest and rangeland management in Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province has been achieved, as participatory forest and rangeland activities have been expanded to more than five sites. Sustainability is high in the policy and financial aspects but some problems have been observed in the institutional/organizational and technical aspects, because collaboration among relevant organizations has not been smoothly implemented and the quality training programs are not sufficiently provided. In the efficiency, both the project cost and the project period exceeded the plan.

Considering all of the above points, this project is evaluated to be partially satisfactory.

### III. Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations for Implementing Agency:

- According to the comments of the questionnaire from FRWO, it was observed that contribution (collaboration) between concerned organizations has not been effectively implemented. It seemed due to lack of legal obligation, coherent plan, proper organizational structures and efficient collaboration among concerned organizations such as NRWGO, MOJA, DoE, MoE, some activities of the project, particularly at local level as community development activities as well as the training programs faced some obstacle to be promoted. It was also pointed out as a bottleneck in terms of the sustainability. FRWO should strengthen collaboration between stakeholder organizations, so that participatory forest and rangeland management could be disseminated to wider areas.
- It is recommended that follow-up by NRWGO to disseminate project activities to wider areas should be strengthened, by utilizing the experiences gained from the project and promoting its organizational capacity. Periodical human resource development should also be implemented for the technical staff of NRWGO by MOJA or FRWO to make those activities in a more sustainable and effective way.

Lessons learned for JICA:

- In Iran, it is difficult to maintain the coordination among different organizations unless stipulated legally through their systems and regulations, therefore, collaboration at higher level among concerned organizations is essential. Regarding that, necessary approach should be taken by a project to ensure the sustainable self-reliance livelihood improvement. Organizational commitments of all stakeholders can be promoted at the beginning steps of a project through determination of comprehensive implementation management as well as consideration of the legislation structure and strategic policies and regulation related to the management of upstream organizations and ministries which project activities may be addressed to in future.

<sup>4</sup> The Integrated Watershed Management as national project (approach) was inspired by MENARID, consisting of Land and Water Recourses Sustainable Management Project (Hablehroud), Carbon Sequestration Project (CSP), Multiple-Use Forest Management to Conserve Biodiversity in the Caspian Forest, Rehabilitation of Forest Landscapes and Degraded Land Project (RFLDL), and was initiated in January 2015 in collaboration with concerned Iranian governmental organizations of all over the country. Additional info.: <http://www.frw.ir/02/En/StaticPages/Page.aspx?tid=15086>



Planting economic forest species in 2,200 ha of Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province (Dec. 2020). About 700 locals will benefit. A small part of this activity will be financially supported by government's fund and the rest of the required budget will be allocated by locals themselves.



Training workshop for planting seeds and seedlings in Shahrekord, Chaharmahal-va-Bakhtiari Province (Aug. 2020). Workshops are held in various sectors of forest, rangeland and watershed management for the staff in the field of missions, instructions, circulars and laws and regulations related to the technical sector.