



## **Improving governance of access to water resources and their sustainable use in Hodh el Chargui communities (South East Mauritania)**

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Mauritania, a country located between the Sahelian and the Saharan zones, presents hard environmental and climatic conditions and a low coverage of cereal needs (on average 30% of needs) and considerable imports of rice, oil, wheat flour and other commodities that affect the country's balance of payments and expose it to risks of external crisis.

A significant proportion of Mauritanian households are food insecure: in general, food insecurity in urban areas is around 17% whereas in rural areas it is around 28 - 30%.

Among the poorer areas, Hodh el Chargui region, located around 1.000 km to the East of Nouakchott, the capital city, is one of the most remote areas. This condition is reflected in the weakness of public investments and therefore of basic social services (schools, health centres), transport and communications, and inadequate supervision and assistance to farmers and agro-pastoralists, which are the majority of local economic actors.

In addition, the rural exodus deprives the countryside of manpower and prevents the execution of the traditional mechanisms of development, maintenance and conservation of these fragile ecosystems, threatening the livelihoods of rural populations in these areas and undermining their resilience and exacerbating conflicts for natural resources in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas.

To strengthen the resilience of Hodh el Chargui actors and communities and reduce their vulnerability to crisis risks and to improve governance of access to natural resources (water in particular) and their sustainable use, the project "Reducing Agro-pastoral Vulnerability and Improving Resilience in Hodh el Chargui", funded by EU, has been implemented in the Program "Institutional Strengthening in Mauritania towards Agricultural and Pastoral Resilience (RIMRAP)".

This project, executed by a network formed by Italian (Terre Solidali Onlus, CISP) and Mauritanian (Terre Solidaires Mauritanie, Mauritanie 2000) NGOs and by the CISAO - University of Turin (Italy), aims to: i) establish a participatory and inclusive planning system through the realization of a screening in the region; ii) strengthen the resilience capacity of all institutional and local actors and communities; iii) reinforce the management of natural resources and the development of promising economic sectors; iv) strengthen the capacities of all local actors and communities as well as prevention, reduction and crisis response mechanisms.

The participatory screening permitted to collect environmental and socio-economic data such as: physical environment, climate and rainfall, water resources (surface and groundwater), soils and vegetal resources, human environment and population (size and spatial representation, social composition), access to basic education and health services, infrastructure and community amenities, such as water infrastructure, roads, energy, communications, economic activities (livestock, agriculture, forestry, commerce), status of women and gender issues.

These data will be crossed with field investigation campaign to specify the axes of intervention and priority activities to be carried out to improve the sustainable management and use of natural resources, to develop promising economic sectors and activities and to prepare a plan for prevention, reduction and response to possible crises.