



Sustainable Development of Desert Communities: A Regional Symposium



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Foreword

The Asia-Pacific region offers abundant lessons on living in harmony with the desert. Much can be learned from established practices in such areas as desert control, agriculture, architecture - even social organization. At the same time, contemporary know-how can be applied to support and revitalize old ways for the sustainable development of desert communities.

It was this thinking that prompted the United Nations Development Programme to cooperate with the Government of the IR of Iran in organizing the Regional Symposium on Sustainable Development of Desert Communities. The Symposium, held in May 2000, brought together in Yazd participants from ten countries and several international agencies. Her Excellency Dr. Masoumeh Ebtekhar, Vice-President of the IR of Iran and Head of the Department of Environment, opened the proceedings.

The Symposium addressed current realities and future perspectives of desert communities. Through the deliberations and recommendations of the Symposium and its follow-up, it will be possible to re-introduce and modernize suitable methods to exploit the desert environment in a sustainable way and multiply best practices in addressing desertification, dwindling water resources and other such challenges. Desert communities will thus find a renewed commitment to their environment.

A Farsi version of the papers and viewpoints presented at the Symposium was published and distributed in the course of the event. UNDP-Iran is now pleased to issue them in English in its Technical Papers series.

From its very inception the Symposium was viewed as the first step in an ongoing process. The International Centre for Living with the Desert is now a budding reality in Yazd. The website which was established on the occasion of the Symposium (www.undp.org/rbap/yazd) has been recently handed over to the Centre to become a vehicle for sharing experiences among practitioners and for promoting cooperation.

The Yazd Symposium could not have been possible without the strong commitment and personal support of H.E. Mr. Gholamali Sefid, Governor-General of the Yazd Province. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Forest and Rangeland Organization of the then Ministry of Jihad also cooperated actively in the event.

On behalf of UNDP I would like to express sincere thanks to our partners both inside and outside the I.R. of Iran for making the Symposium possible and for their continuous support for what has become an on-going process to the benefit of desert communities throughout the region.

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Table of Contents

Final Declaration on Sustainable Development of Desert Communities	1
Statements	5
Mr. Gholamali Sefid Governor-General, Yazd Province Welcoming Address	7
Her Excellency Dr. Masumeh Ebtekar Vice-President and Head of the Department of Environment	10
Mr. Nay Htun Assistant Administrator, United Nations Development Programme and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific	13
Mr. Hamid Kalantari Deputy Minister of Jihad and Head of the Forest and Rangeland Organization	17
Mr. Bahman Mansouri Senior Advisor to the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development	20
Mr. Hamma Arba Diallo Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention To Combat Desertification	24
Papers Presented to the Symposium	29
Human Settlements and Architecture	31
Sustainable Development of Desert Communities through Natural Resources: Problems and Recommendations for the Cholistan Desert, Pakistan <i>M. Ajmal Khan, M. Akram, Altaf-ur-rehaman Rao</i>	33
Sustainable Desert Housing: From the Dwelling to the Desert Community <i>Michael E. Bonine</i>	45
Ecological Aspects of Urban and Architectural Form for Sustainable Development in Warm and Arid Deserts of Iran <i>Ali Ghaffari</i>	57
Sustainable Urban Design Within Desert-Fringe Cities <i>Koroush Golkar</i>	73
Agriculture and Livestock	87
Quantitative Assessment of Desertification in Aq Qala and Gomishan Plain: Proposing a Regional Model <i>H. Ahmadi, M.R. Abbasabadi, M. Onaq, M.R. Ekhtesasi</i>	89

Investigating the Trend of Groundwater Salinization in the North Kashan Plain <i>A.Giti, A. Farshi, N. Mashhadi, A. Torabi</i>	103
Women's Role in Combating Desertification: Shulinzhao's Experiences <i>Wang Guoxiang</i>	123
Desert Control, Natural Resources and Soil Biodiversity	129
Analysis of the Implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in the Republic of Kazakhstan <i>Yerken Azighaliyev</i>	131
India's Experience in the use of Traditional Water Harvesting in Combating Drought <i>T.Chandini</i>	135
Water and Land Management in the Desert Ecosystems of Iran <i>Hossein Heidary Sharifabad</i>	150
New Perspectives for the Control and Management of Desert Communities <i>Mohammad Jariani</i>	155
Food Security and Sustainable Development in Desert Communities <i>Parviz Koohfkan</i>	169
Economic and Industrial Development	182
Sustainability Patterns of Livestock in the Cholistan Desert, Pakistan <i>Mohammad Arshad, Altaf-ur-rehman Rao, Ghulam Akba</i>	185
Desert Economics <i>Gholam Hossein Khorshidi</i>	193
Social and Cultural Organizations of Desert Communities	203
Development of Traditional Agriculture in Saudi Arabia <i>Abdulmalik Al Alshiekh</i>	205
The Desertification Process in Mongolia <i>D. Dash, Erdene- Ochir</i>	212
Agriculture, Livestock and the Process of Desertification Control and Traditional Methods of Combating Soil Degradation in Various Natural Zones in Tajikistan <i>Akhmadov Khukmatullo Mahmudovich</i>	217
Central Asia: Tradition, Nature and the Use of Technology and Knowledge <i>Oleg Tsaruk</i>	227
Annexes	231
Annex I	
Agenda of the Symposium	233
Annex II	
Conclusions of the National Workshop on Civil Society, Youth and Sustainable Development of Desert Communities. Yazd 13-15 May 2000	237

Annex III

Oral Report by Working Group on National Requirements and Regional Agendas for the Sustainable Development of Desert Communities 241

Annex IV

Oral Report by the Working Group on the Role of Research, Civil Society and Youth in the Sustainable Development of Desert Communities 243