

NATURAL RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN THE ISLAMIC COUNTRIES an overview

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Water, soil, air and sunlight are the fundamentals of the life and are interdependent with flora and fauna which are considered as 'renewable natural resources'. Composition of air and sunlight (as climatic factors) are abundant and practically constant all over the world. Within limits the soil mantle is also constant. Water alone, therefore, is the limiting factor for flora and fauna on earth. Three fourths of the earth surface is water, but the bulk of it is unfit for sustaining life.

Civilizations have flourished mainly in arable regions along banks of rivers as is Mesopotamia, Egypt and Central Asia. In our day, civilizations are even more dependant on water. In many parts of the world it is seen that failing to understand the interrelationships of life giving water with other natural resources, particularly with soil and vegetation, may result in a change of the role of water and lead to destructive effects. On the contrary through proper management and control of water and other natural resources, civilizations flourish.

Man has been slow to recognize the strong interrelationships that exist between climate, water, soil and plant versus destructive cutting, burning, over grazing of forests and Range Land. For example cultivation of steep slopes, severe hunting of wildlife have upset the delicate natural balances between the natural resources. The excessive burden of these interventions, resulted in destructive Floods, Erosion and desertification in many parts of the world, especially in the Islamic Countries, where ecological conditions are on the borderline or even critical.

In the developed countries, the interrelationships between the natural resources have been studied and measures have been taken for the last couple of centuries. In the developing Islamic Countries the situation is different, misuse of Land and other natural resources is obvious very where.

These are preliminary considerations on natural resources in the Islamic Countries, detailed studies sur-

veys and researches are necessary the resulting evaluations of which would lead to desperately needed measures of treatment.

The Islamic Countries cover an area of more than 26 million square kilometers, they are located in Asia and Africa (Table 1). The prevailing ecological conditions are unstable or critical, considered very arid, Arid and Semiarid. Few countries are Located in Temperate or tropical regions (Figure 1). The total population of the Islamic Countries is about (874) millions, few have high density reaching above 700 persons per square kilometer, as in Bangladesh, most of the others however have low density.

Renewable natural resources are, Climatic factors, water, soil, vegetation (Forest-Range) and wildlife, which form the bases of sustaining wealth in the world. Misuse of proper management of these resources is responsible for richness of poverty of any country. To know the behavior of natural resources in the Islamic Countries, quantitative and qualitative information about each of them is needed. Available data shows; the sum of arable land is about (226) million hectares, having the highest percentage in Bangladesh as 66% and the lowest in United Arab Emirates as 0.1% (Table 1). The arable land and especially the irrigated land area is considerably low in most countries. This means low food production with unstable nutritional security for man and animals in most Islamic Countries.

Unfortunately the situation of forest and range cover in the Islamic Countries is very unsatisfactory, due to climatic, topographical and especially to misuse of land through centuries.

Forest and range land on the other hand are considered the most important Resources for production of wood, fodder, wildlife and by products. They are vital also for the control of erosion, desertification and pollution (Table 1). The highest percentage of forests are located in Malaysia as 60.9% and the lowest is in Kuwait and Egypt 0.1%.

Scientific evaluation of renewable natural resources

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Table 1: Land use in the Islamic Countries, as 1000 Ha (FAO 1986, SESRTC 1987).

Country	Total Area 1000 Km ²	Arable Land			Forest Land		Range Land	Population (Millions)
		Total	%	Irrigated	Total	%		
Afghanistan	647.50	8054	12.2	2660	1900	2.9	30000	18.61
Algeria	2381.74	7440	2.9	348	4384	1.8	32000	21.90
Bahrain	0.62	2	1.6	1	-	-	-	0.46
Bangladesh	133.91	9111	66.0	1848	2106	16.0	600	100.62
Benin	110.62	1818	12.6	22	3770	33.6	442	3.97
Brunei	5.27	7	0.6	1	285	52.2	6	0.22
Burkina Faso	273.80	2633	9.6	2	6960	25.2	10000	6.95
Cameron	469.44	6965	12.6	10	25200	53.4	8300	10.23
Chad	1259.20	3150	2.5	1	13210	10.4	45000	5.11
Comoros	2.17	94	34.6	-	35	16.1	15	0.45
Djibouti	21.98	1	-	-	6	0.3	200	0.45
Egypt	995.45	2471	2.3	2474	2	-	166	49.88
Gabon	257.67	452	1.1	-	20000	77.6	4700	1.18
Gambia	10.00	165	16.5	33	192	19.2	186	0.73
Guinea	245.86	1576	6.1	13	10260	41.3	3000	5.53
Guinea Bissau	28.00	290	10.4	-	1070	38.2	1080	0.97
Indonesia	1811.57	20850	8.1	5418	121800	63.3	11850	168.66
Iran	1636.00	14830	8.6	4000	18020	11.0	44000	46.09
Iraq	433.97	5450	12.1	1750	1900	4.4	4000	16.22
Libya	1759.54	2115	1.0	225	640	0.4	13300	3.85
Jordan	97.18	415	3.9	38	41	0.7	791	4.00
Kuwait	17.82	2	0.2	1	2	0.1	134	2.04
Lebanon	10.23	298	20.5	85	82	7.8	90	2.58
Malaysia	328.55	4350	3.2	380	20300	60.9	27	16.11
Maldives	0.30	3	10.0	-	1	3.3	-	0.19
Mali	122.00	2053	1.7	115	8640	7.0	30000	8.44
Mauritania	1050.40	195	0.2	9	15000	14.6	39250	1.94
Morocco	710.85	8331	11.0	520	5200	7.3	20900	24.19
Niger	1266.70	3760	3.0	36	2660	2.1	9200	6.30
Nigeria	910.77	31035	31.3	15	15200	16.4	20960	98.38
Oman	300.00	43	0.1	38	-	-	32	1.31
Pakistan	796.10	20280	25.0	14320	3050	3.8	5000	99.16
Palestine	6.13	-	-	-	8	-	-	-
Qatar	11.43	3	0.3	-	-	-	4	0.31
Saudi Arabia	2240.00	1156	0.5	395	1200	0.5	85000	12.01
Senegal	192.00	5225	27.2	180	5942	30.9	5700	6.92
Sierraleone	71.62	1771	22.8	7	2090	29.2	2204	3.67
Somalia	638.00	1066	1.7	165	8950	13.9	28850	6.53
Sudan	2376.00	12418	5.2	1850	47700	19.9	56000	22.18
Syria	184.05	5654	27.4	567	498	2.8	8328	10.69
Tunisia	155.36	4687	21.9	163	557	3.6	3030	7.46
Turkey	779.45	27411	30.5	2080	20199	25.9	8900	51.55
Uganda	199.71	6500	24.5	5	5860	29.9	5000	16.02
UAE	83.60	15	0.1	5	3	-	200	1.38
Yemen A.R.	195.00	1351	6.5	245	1600	8.2	7000	6.61
Yemen P.D.R.	332.97	167	0.4	70	1560	-	9065	2.37
TOTAL	26152.84	225692		40080	398073		553510	874.42

Figure 1: Member states of organization of the Islamic conference.



in the Islamic Countries, need detailed knowledge and data of the following:

- Climatic factors, as sunlight, temperature, humidity, precipitation and winds.
- Land and soil survey and classification.
- Hydrological data as overland flow, underground water, rivers, lakes, reservoirs.
- Vegetation cover, as forests, ranges and agricultural plants.
- Wildlife as mammals, reptiles, birds and water life.

To improve the situation of natural resources in the Islamic Countries good planning for their development is necessary. This requires proper education and training of the needed man power for wise management and use of all renewable natural resources.

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