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THE STATE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE MOUNTAINS OF THE BENI MELLAL-KHENIFRA REGION AND THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE IN TERRITORIAL ACTORS

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ABSTRACT

The precarious development situation faced by mountain communities in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region is indicative of the shortcomings in local planning and management, as well as the failure of the programmes and projects implemented, which did not adopt a territorial approach as the basis for shaping development. The state of development is the product and outcome of the efforts of various territorial actors responsible for designing and programming development policies; it is a clear manifestation of a lack of vision, a weak commitment to development, and a lack of the necessary competence to develop mountainous areas and fulfil aspirations. The weakness of local development in the mountains has contributed to a loss of trust among the mountain population towards territorial actors.

KEYWORDS: Territorial Development, Territorial Resources, Territorial Actors, Regional Management, Territorial Approach, Mountain Population.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. General Introduction

The development situation of mountain communities serves as a real-life laboratory for examining the development process, the approaches adopted by various actors and their development perceptions, and the ideological frameworks shaping the meanings and content of projects; thereby shaping the identity of the mountainous territorial in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

If development is the primary objective of all organisations, concepts, laws, institutions and the mobilisation of various actors, it requires the adoption of a territorial project commensurate with the scale of development concerns arising from clearly defined political and social choices, free from ambiguity, posturing or the exploitation of political interests.

The dominance of political rhetoric, stripped of its developmental content and marginalising the region and its people, completely undermines the issue of regional projects, reducing them to mere slogans and formalities; This has a negative impact on the living conditions of mountain families and poses a real problem in their relationship with various stakeholders, foremost among them decentralised authorities, elected representatives and civil society. It fosters a latent sense of hostility and strips the mountainous region of its developmental value, reducing it to a mere security and political zone aimed at territorial control and the pursuit of personal interests; for what these actors produce does not necessarily aim to achieve effective

economic and social outcomes, given the lack of reliance on the foundations of local development, its requirements, dimensions and intersections; nor do they rely on the mountain population as their backbone, instrument and objective.

Within the framework of territorial development, local territorial actors occupy a very distinct position, enabling them to shape the developmental landscape of mountainous regions and formulate effective territorial projects; these are grounded in local territorial specificities and utilise them to resolve all the challenges facing mountainous areas.

1.2. Significance of the Research Topic

This research is significant in that it examines and analyses the effectiveness of development plans, strategies and policies aimed at fostering territorial development in the mountainous territorial of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region; through their ability to mobilise and harness the various local resources available in these geographical areas, and to engage various local actors, in order to work towards meeting the diverse needs and expectations of the population.

1.3. Study area

The Beni Mellal-Khenifra Region was established following the 2015 regional reorganisation, which divided the country into 12 regions, as part of the advanced regionalisation framework introduced by the 2011 Constitution, with the aim of steering development back on track and making regionalisation a driver of development.

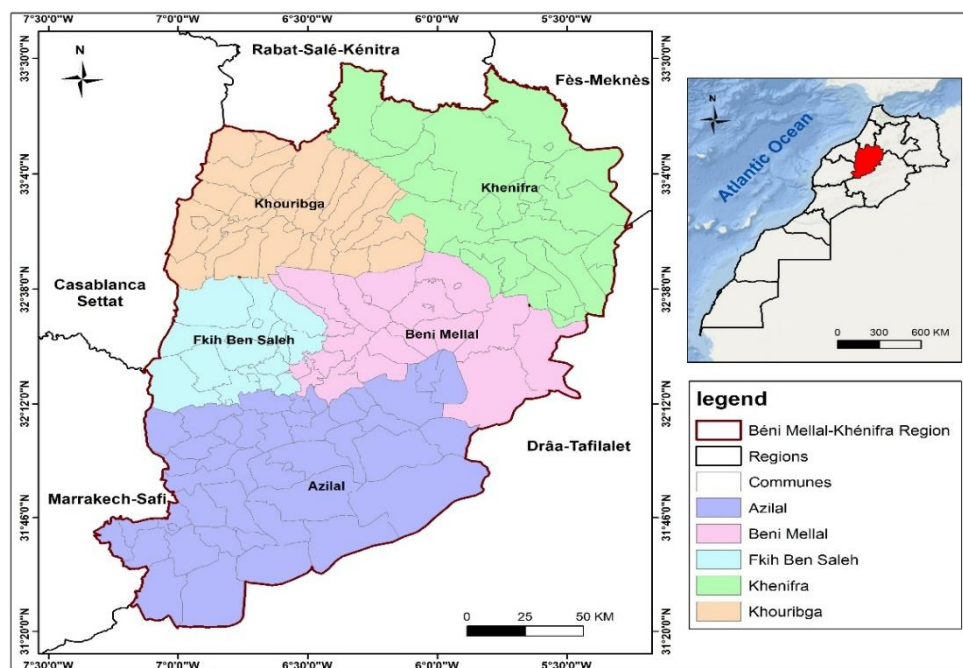


Fig. 1. Location of the study area on the regional map of Morocco

The Beni Mellal-Khenifra region comprises five provinces that previously belonged to three regions: Meknes-Tafilalet, Chaouia-Rdiga and Tadla-Azilal. This region acts as a link between regions with a rich historical and cultural heritage and those with significant economic and political influence. This location has played a strategic role as a corridor for the

movements of various Moroccan sultans, whether to the traditional capitals of Fez and Marrakesh, or towards other regions such as the oases of the Tafilalet-Sijlmasa region; this factor has contributed to endowing the region with a historical dimension that enriches the mountainous terrain, alongside its rich natural, cultural and human resources.

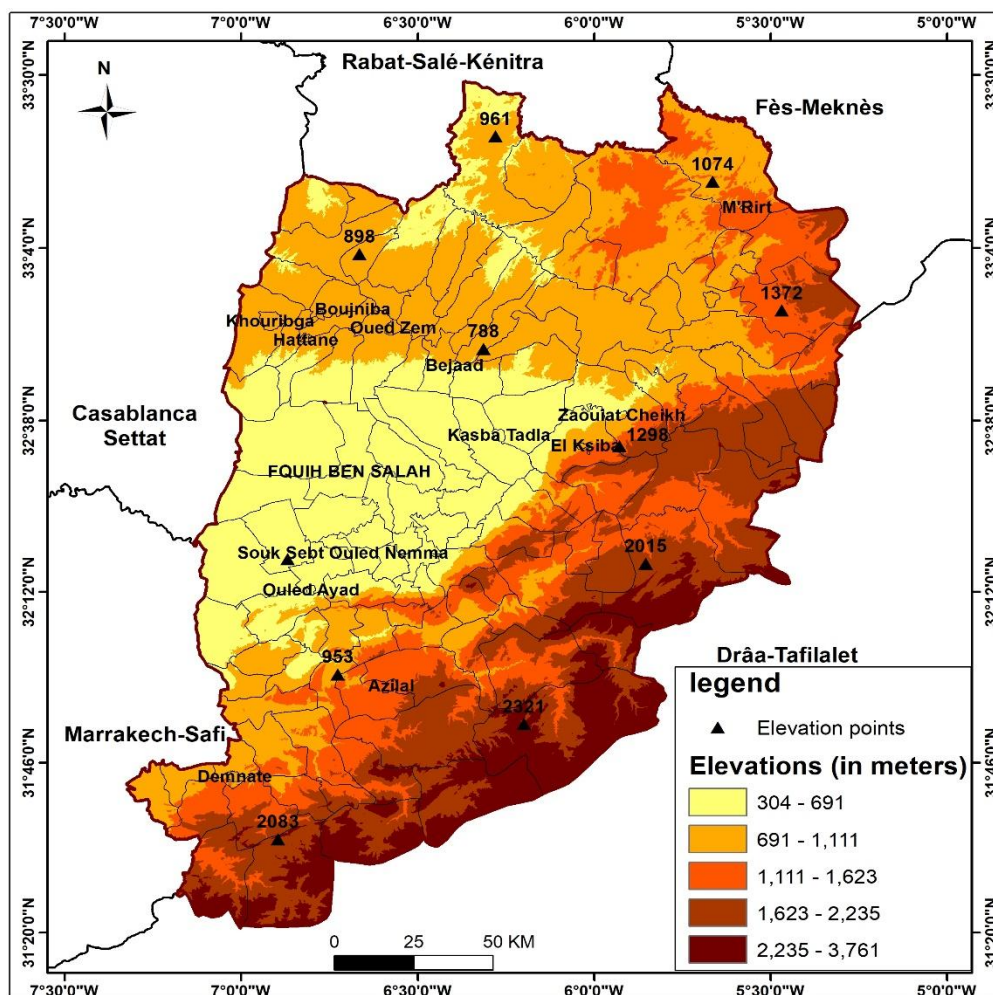


Fig. 2. Territorial division and elevations in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region

The Beni Mellal-Khenifra region boasts abundant potential and resources, situated at the heart of the High and Middle Atlas Mountains, which are renowned for their rich landscapes, natural features and scenic beauty, alongside the agricultural wealth of the Tadla Plain and the Central Plateau, and the mineral resources of the Phosphate Plateau. This region covers an area of approximately 37,428 km²; its mountainous areas occupy a significant portion of this territory (the provinces of Azilal, Beni Mellal and Khenifra). It is bordered to the north by the regions of Fez-Meknes and Rabat-Salé-Kénitra, to the east and south by the Tafilalet region, and to the west by the regions of Casablanca-Settat and Marrakech-Safi; the city of Beni Mellal is its administrative capital.

1.4. Research Problem

Despite the potential and abundance of local resources—both tangible and intangible—in the mountainous regions of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region, these areas are characterised by high levels of poverty, vulnerability, isolation and marginalisation, as well as a lack of basic services and infrastructure.

Development programmes and plans have adopted a selective approach to mountainous geographical areas, in accordance with a centralised vision, planning and policy direction, adopting a purely sectoral and technical approach. This has perpetuated the fragile development situation in these areas; these development policies have failed to

mobilise and harness the various available and latent local resources in the mountainous regions by devising and implementing ambitious local mountain projects, based on local specificities and assets with multiple dimensions, in order to utilise them effectively in building the process and trajectory of territorial development, and to create a suitable foundation for shaping this development from the bottom up, taking into account the full range of natural constraints and challenges faced by these mountainous areas.

-This raises the following question: To what extent are the mountain inhabitants of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region satisfied with the current state of development?

1.5. Research Hypotheses

Mountainous regions can be regarded as still subject to natural constraints, which are reflected in their inherent fragility—natural, economic and social—and this points to the low level of their territorial development, given the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of planning and development policies, and the weakness of the various development programmes and plans that have been adopted; Consequently, the various development plans, programmes and policies have not had a positive impact on the situation of the mountain population, as they have failed to eliminate the vulnerabilities they face.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Fieldwork in the mountainous areas

2.1.1. Visits to external agencies

Obtaining figures and statistics on specific geographical phenomena is one of the most fundamental aspects of geographical research, particularly with regard to quantitative studies. This data is obtained from external agencies and various public administrations involved in the management of mountainous areas in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

2.1.2. Field survey

The field study was conducted in accordance with a set of conditions and steps, beginning with the field survey, both in terms of observing spatial data and in terms of observing human and economic distributions and organisations. Meetings were then held with the local population,

associations, cooperatives and some elected representatives.

2.1.3. Use of the field questionnaire

The field questionnaire is one of the most important tools in geographical research, enabling the collection of a variety of data on a specific geographical phenomenon. Based on the research topic, its objectives and main themes, and in addition to the field survey, the questionnaire was formulated with a set of open-ended and closed-ended questions, designed to elicit accurate geographical information from the field and to gauge the opinions of the local population in the mountain communities of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

The field research questionnaire included multiple questions covering resource management, economic and social aspects, the level of facilities and infrastructure, and the nature of the relationship between mountain households and local actors, whilst also examining the degree and level of the mountain population's propensity to migrate.

The sample size was carefully determined to ensure scientifically valid results that could be generalised to mountainous areas, with 910 heads of households surveyed; this figure was derived from the use of optimal stratified random sampling to obtain results reflecting the reality of life for mountain households. The territorial analysis relies on field techniques with specific geographical characteristics, in order to ascertain the actual development conditions of mountain households and to highlight the manifestations and implications of development strategies, projects and policies at the level of territorial development in the mountainous areas of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

-The criteria for selecting the strata and sub-strata used in the field study in the mountains of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region

The study sample was selected on the basis of the multidimensional poverty index, according to which the mountain communities in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region were divided into categories and strata; this index is based on an assessment of a set of basic needs in the classification process, namely education, health, access to water, electricity and sanitation, means of communication, and housing conditions; According to the data presented in the following table¹:

¹¹ . High Commission for Planning., 2014, Key Findings of the Multidimensional Poverty Map: Regional and Dynamic Perspectives. p. 2.

Table 1. Components and indicators of multidimensional poverty.

The dimension	Ingredient	Deprivation Index	Weighting
Education	Teaching children	If a family has a child of school age (6-14 years) who is not attending school.	1/6
	Adult education	If there is no family member aged 15 or over who has not completed five years of schooling	1/6
Health	Disability	If a family member is unable to perform any of the following functions: sight, hearing, walking, memory (recall and concentration), personal care and communication	1/6
	Child mortality	If a child under 12 months of age dies in the family	1/6
Living conditions	Drinking water	If the family cannot reach a source of safe drinking water within a 30-minute walk from their home	1/18
	Electricity	If the household does not have electricity	1/18
	Disinfection	If the household does not have a private toilet or a sanitary means of disposing of waste water	1/18
	Floor covering	If the floor of the dwelling is in poor condition, or consists of sand or earth	1/18
	Method of preparation	If the family uses wood, charcoal or manure for cooking	1/18
	Ownership of assets	The family does not own a car, a tractor or a lorry, nor do they have at least two of the following: a telephone, a television, a radio, a motorbike, a bicycle or a fridge	1/18

The method for calculating multidimensional poverty differs between urban and rural areas; approximately 60.8% of multidimensional poverty in cities is attributed to a lack of educational services (36.8% relating to adult education and around 24% relating to children’s education). Deprivation of health services also accounts for around 24.5%. As for multidimensional poverty in rural areas, it is linked to a lack of educational services (around 54.5%), deprivation of basic infrastructure (around 21.2%), and prevailing housing conditions (15.3%)².

Based on the principle of stratified sampling, the statistical population was divided and classified into strata that are similar, closely related in

characteristics and homogeneous, where the variation within the population is greater than the variation within each stratum; this division ensures the representation of all households comprising the mountain community in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region. In order to understand the real problems within this area, with a view to identifying the mechanisms and factors governing its development status.

Accordingly, and based on Fig No. 3, four basic strata and segments have been identified in the mountainous areas of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region (comprising multiple local communities), as follows:

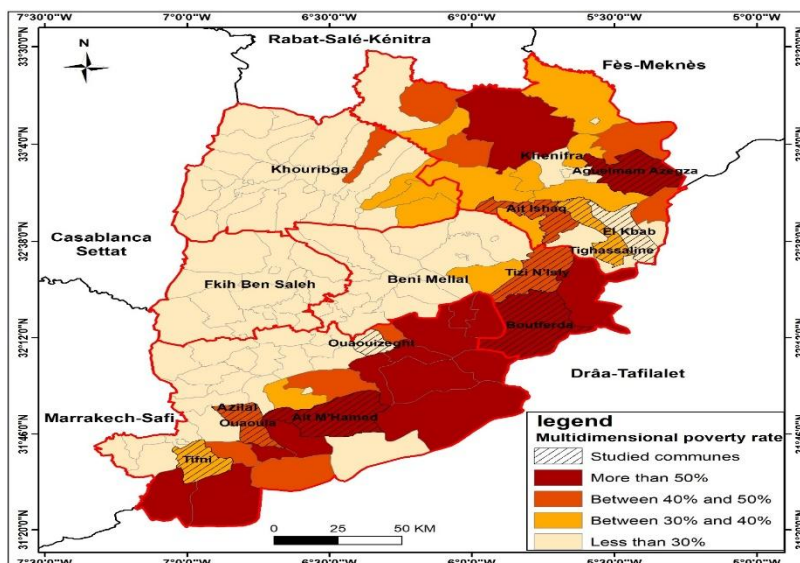


Fig. 3. Multidimensional poverty in the mountainous areas

². High Commission for Planning., 2014, op. cit.

Based on the map above, the statistical population of the mountainous region of Beni Mellal-Khenifra is divided into four main categories, the representation of which in the research sample must be taken into account in a manner consistent with their demographic weight; these categories are as follows:
 -Category 1: where the multidimensional poverty index exceeds 50%;
 -Category 2: where the multidimensional poverty rate ranges between 40% and 50%;
 -Category 3: where the multidimensional poverty rate ranges between 30% and 40%;
 -Category 4: where the multidimensional poverty rate is below 30%.

The local communities comprising each segment and stratum are as follows:

- Determining the size of the statistical sample representative of the statistical population in

mountainous areas based on the number of households

The principle of stratified sampling is based on first forming homogeneous strata within the population, and then drawing a random sample from each stratum; When representing a stratum within the total sample, significant consideration is given to its actual demographic weight within the population and the degree of dispersion within each stratum; once the sample size has been determined, the individual elements and components of the sample are drawn at random.

As regards the procedure followed to determine the total sample size, in addition to the partial size for each stratum, this is done by focusing on the number of households, according to each stratum or segment, whilst calculating the standard deviation for each stratum separately; as shown in the table below:

Table 2. Calculation of the standard deviation for all mountain households.

Class	N (number of households)	σ (Pattern deviation)	nxσ
The first class	34632	1751.39	60654138.48
The second class	23445	1362.53	31944515.85
The third class	20904	1012.92	21174079.68
The fourth class	14369	1071.81	15400837.89
Total	93350		129173571.9

In this regard, a precise calculation is used to determine the sample size, which is scientifically representative of the statistical population and allows for accurate field results that can be generalised; the calculation is based on the following principles:

- A margin of error of 5%;
- Homogeneity ratio of 50%;
- Diversity ratio of 50%;
- Equivalent to a draw in statistical normal tables 3.

The calculation is carried out according to the following formula:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &50 \times 50 \\
 &= 900 \quad \times 3^2 \quad \text{-----} \\
 &5^2 \\
 &900 \\
 &\text{-----} \\
 &1-900 \\
 &\text{-----} = \mathbf{910} \quad \text{Sample size} \\
 &-933501 \\
 &910 \\
 &0.0000070448 = \text{-----} \\
 &129173571.9
 \end{aligned}$$

The sample size used in this study is estimated at approximately 910 households, and the proportion of each category is derived from this sample size using proportional allocation as follows:

- _ The first class: $0.0000070448 \times 60,654,138.48 = 427$ households;

- _ The second class: $0.0000070448 \times 31,944,515.85 = 225$ households;
- _ The third class: $0.0000070448 \times 2,117,4079.68 = 149$ households;
- _ The fourth class: $0.0000070448 \times 1,540,0837.89 = 109$ households.

- Determining each region's share of the sample size:
- Determining the sample size for each region in the first class:

The sample is distributed across the three regions in the first class as follows:

We have a statistical sample representing the first class, comprising 427 households distributed across 17 local communities, grouped according to those with similar characteristics, based on the multidimensional poverty index.

Therefore, 423 divided by 17 equals 25.12, and consequently, the number for each region is as follows:

- 25.12 x 13 local communities in the Azilal region = 327 households in the Azilal region;
- 25.12 x 2 local communities in the Beni Mellal region = 50 households in the Beni Mellal region;
- 25.12 x 2 local communities in the Khenifra region = 50 households in the Khenifra region.

- Determining the sample size for each region in the second class:

With regard to the statistical sample for the

second class, there are 225 households across the three regions; thus, 225 divided by the 12 local communities covered by the study equals 18.75. Consequently, each region's share of the total sample is as follows:

-18.75 x 5 local communities in the Azilal region = 94 households in the Azilal region;

-18.75 x 2 local communities in the Beni Mellal region = 37 households in the Beni Mellal region;

-18.75 x 5 rural communities in the province of Khenifra = 94 households in the province of Khenifra.

• Determining the sample size for each province in the third class:

As for the statistical sample for the third class, it comprises 149 households; this number is divided by 10 local authorities, giving a quotient of 14.9. It should be noted that the mountainous areas of the Beni Mellal region do not have local communities belonging to the third class; therefore, communities in the Azilal and Khenifra regions were used. The

distribution of the sample is as follows:

-14.9 x 2 local communities in the province of Azilal = 30 households in the province of Azilal;

-14.9 x 8 local communities in the province of Khenifra = 119 households in the province of Khenifra.

• Determining the sample size for each province in the fourth class:

The sample size for the fourth class is 109 households; this number is therefore divided by 7 local communities, yielding a quotient of approximately 15.57. The distribution of the sample by region is as follows:

-15.57 x 4 rural communities in the Azilal region = 62 households in the Azilal region;

-15.57 x 3 rural communities in the Khenifra region = 47 households in the Khenifra region.

The sample was carefully distributed and the household questionnaire completed in the following local communities and douars:

Table 3. Local communities and douars comprising the study sample in the mountains

Class	The region	Local authority	The villages	Total number of households in each neighbourhood	Proportion of villages in the sample	Number of households surveyed by village	Sample size by group and region (households)	Sample size by segment (households)
The first class	Azilal	Ait Mohamed	takost	546	100%	327	327	427
	Beni mella	botferda		154	100%	50	50	
	Khenifra	Aklmam azakza		198	100%	50	50	
The second class	azilal	wawla		303	100%	94	94	225
	beni mellal	Tizi nisli		137	100%	37	37	
	khenifra	Ait ishak		190	100%	94	94	
The third class	azilal	tifni		79	100%	30	30	149
	khenifra	tiksalin		130	100%	119	119	
The fourth class	azilal	wazaget		219	100%	62	62	109
	khenifra	lakkab		155	100%	47	47	

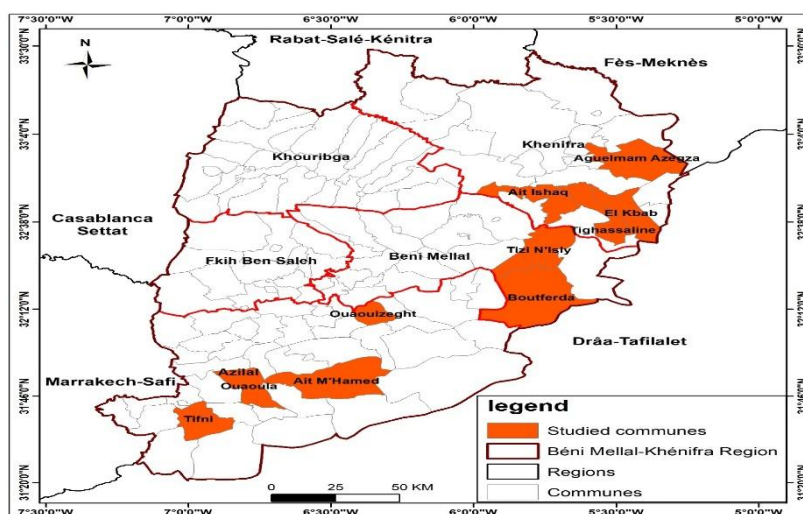


Fig. 4. Mountain communities studied in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

The field research required a focus on ten rural communities in the mountains of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region, in order to examine the realities of mountain households and to closely assess the impact of development programmes and projects on the development status of the local population. These rural communities were selected in order to study all the segments and strata comprising the mountain population, with a view to obtaining accurate results representative of the mountain statistical community in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region, so that these findings could be generalised in an accurate and scientific manner.

The douars were also selected based on household size and their mountainous nature; by highlighting the various douars that have significant demographic weight within the local community (see Appendix), and to include them in the field study sample, with a view to completing the questionnaire and utilising it to understand the developmental reality of mountain households, interpret it and forecast its future prospects.

In selecting the study sample, the Multidimensional Poverty Index was used, with a focus on the geographical location of local communities within mountainous areas, and care was taken to ensure that the lower, middle and upper mountain regions were represented in the sample, whilst also giving consideration to communities with significant demographic weight.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Trust in local actors constitutes a central pillar in local development processes*

Trust is essentially an interaction between two or more parties; this trust arises from the interactive relationships of community members, where reliance on others is required to achieve specific goals. For this trust to develop and follow its natural, positive course, the relationship between the parties must be free from confusion and anxiety, as trust is embodied in having confidence in and relying upon a person's ability or participation.

Trust in local Actors is a key factor in demonstrating a genuine commitment to addressing the concerns and aspirations of the mountain communities in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region, where economic, social, cultural and environmental realities are among the most significant manifestations of the development work undertaken by local actors in mountainous areas. This reality contributes to the mountain population's satisfaction with the performance of these actors and with the quality of development plans, programmes and projects, or to a sense of dissatisfaction if the level of

development interventions does not meet their aspirations and expectations.

The process of building trust between the mountain population and the various local actors involves a range of factors related to improving the population's conditions; these reflect the extent to which the actors are committed to fulfilling their promises, slogans and commitments to meet all basic and essential needs. This is a crucial step in building trust among mountain families in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

Consequently, the level of trust is closely linked to the actual and tangible performance of local actors, which serves as a genuine indicator of their various efforts towards the region and the mountain population; this performance-based model is used as one of the key indicators in measuring the trust of the mountain population.

Good performance by local actors undoubtedly earns the trust of the mountain population, whilst poor performance towards the mountain population and the mountainous region, which lacks effectiveness and positive impact, inevitably leads to a lack of trust.

The level of development performance of local actors makes it possible to determine the presence or absence of trust through the evaluation of development policies and programmes, and the position of the mountain population within these development policies and their economic and social performance in particular. In this regard, trust serves as an indicator of the effectiveness of the development work carried out by local actors.

3.2. *Mountain households and manifestations of a loss of trust in local actors*

The precarious development situation faced by mountain communities has eroded trust in various local stakeholders, due to their failure to address the development of mountainous regions and to meet the expectations and aspirations of the local population. This situation has a significant impact in the short, medium and long term, in terms of political participation and the concept of a localised approach to planning and management. Local development cannot be achieved without involving the mountain population, listening to their concerns and working to realise their development aspirations.

The foundations of territorial development in mountainous regions are undermined by the exclusion of the most important element in the management of this territory, namely the mountain population. This situation calls on all local actors to work hard to adopt a genuine local management

approach, in order to regain the trust of families and make the improvement of their living conditions a top development priority.

Development policies and programmes are the result of development work and efforts undertaken by various actors across the mountainous regions of

the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region. The implementation of these development projects and programmes has a range of implications for the local area and the mountain population, which may be positive or negative. Each factor has implications for the dimensions of regional development.

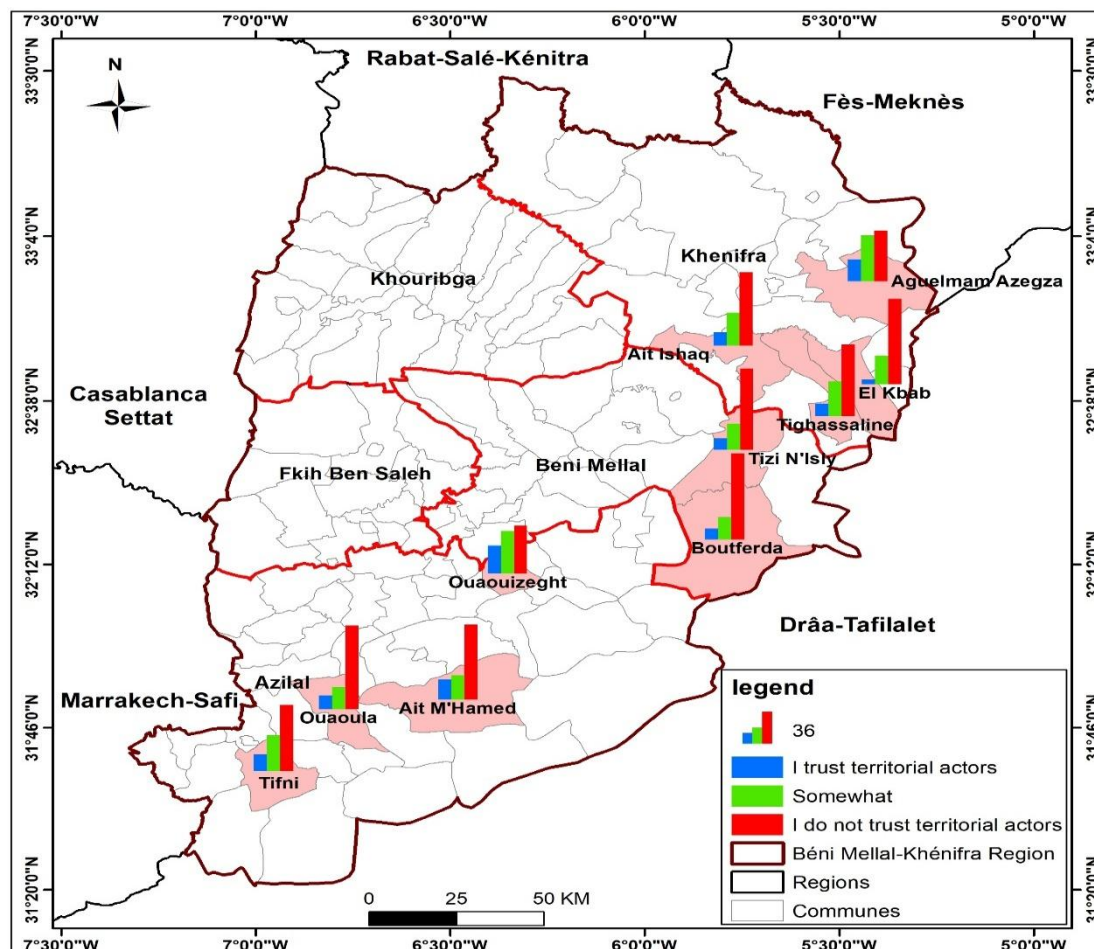


Fig. 5. Mountain households and the proportion of those who have lost trust in local actors

One cannot discuss the region without examining the link between the mountain population and the various actors, particularly elected representatives and civil society, and analysing the nature of the relationship between them and its future implications. The role of elected representatives is vital in meeting the needs of the mountain population in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region; any disconnect between the concerns of the local population and the roles and forms of intervention of these actors inevitably reflects a failure in the management of the mountainous territory.

Trust is a vital building block in the relationship between local residents and local actors; it is considered an effective means of promoting local development in mountainous regions. A loss of trust contributes to a decline in a sense of belonging and an identity crisis amongst the mountain population.

3.3. Weak impact of development on mountain households: an issue exacerbated by mistrust of local actors

The bottom-up approach to building local projects is considered effective, as it involves the local population in shaping the features of mountainous areas and developing an effective vision; the territory is viewed as a social space owned by its inhabitants, regardless of its size. The territory thus becomes a space embodying a set of shared values, social and cultural expressions and organisations; based on these factors, it is possible to identify the mechanisms of mountainous territory development and its specific characteristics. Firstly, by examining the political and administrative aspects, through the actions undertaken by state bodies, elected representatives and civil society; and secondly, by

examining the concept of ownership and the sense of belonging of individuals and communities to the mountainous territory, and their perceptions and representations regarding the development and shaping of this territory.

The territorial approach encompasses all horizontal perspectives and aims to break away from anything that is purely vertical; the territorial project serves as an expression of collective perceptions regarding the resources they utilise. It is thus a process that provides mechanisms for planning and preparation, and through which the outcomes of these development interventions can also be assessed.

The development efforts undertaken by local actors are an important mechanism for the development of mountainous areas, as this strengthens the local population's trust in local actors and generates positive reactions to their development work. However, the weakness of these efforts and the lack of a sense of responsibility towards the reality of mountain development deepen mistrust and contribute to heightened tension between the actors and the mountain population, thereby undermining the specific characteristics and unique assets of these regions.

3.3.1. Development work in the mountains and households' impressions

The survey reveals that the majority of mountain households are dissatisfied with the current state of development in the mountains, with varying

percentages across the different communities: the highest percentage is found in the community of Boutfarda at around 93.4%, and the lowest in Tighsaline at around 69.9%. Consequently, the limited impact of development plans and programmes has left the mountain population dissatisfied with the current state of development.

Based on the situation of mountain households, they are seen as actors who have no developmental role so much as a duty to monitor the land and control its boundaries, with the developmental mission in this context considered absent in the eyes of some households. There is no effective effort to improve the situation in the mountains; consequently, these mountain families live in a geographical area where a sense of territorial identity is lacking.

The reality faced by mountain communities in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region demonstrates that the approach taken by development actors has run counter to its intended objectives, given the management methods adopted, the lack of necessary expertise, and the imposition of a centralised development approach from the top of the local administrative hierarchy downwards. Without consulting the various local actors, the state is regarded as the sole actor, directly or indirectly; This has led to a lack of choice in development decisions, relying instead on a sectoral approach based on a one-sided vision, which has resulted in weak policies regarding the planning and management of mountainous local resources, in the absence of good local governance.

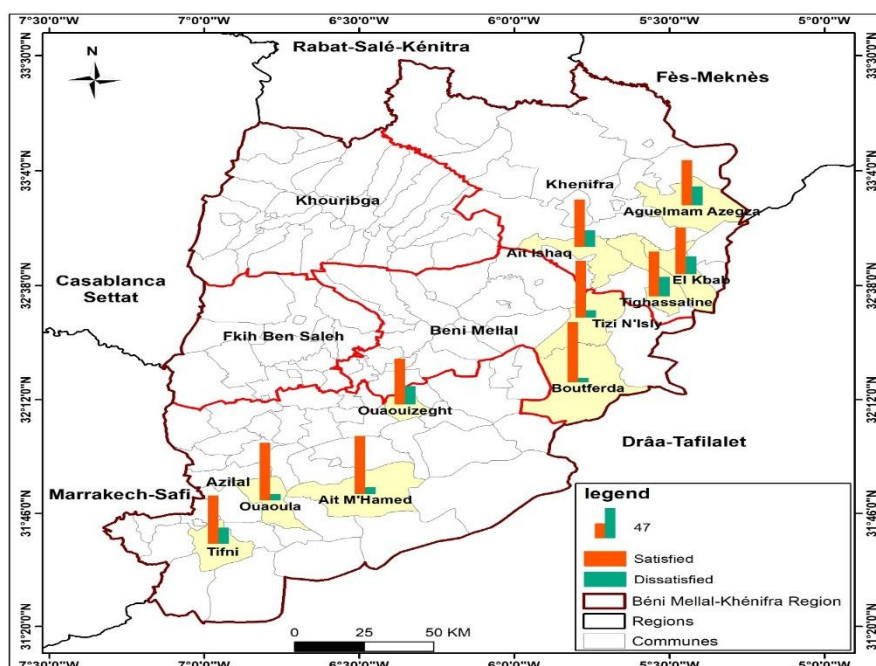


Fig. 6. Mountain households in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region and their level of satisfaction with the development situation

3.3.2. The expectations of the mountain population and the issue of mistrust in local actors

Most mountain families have expressed their dissatisfaction at being excluded from development projects, particularly economic and social ones, and

at initiatives being carried out without regard for the concerns of the local population. The local population feels marginalised and that their long-standing suffering falls on deaf ears, whilst they yearn to see their most basic and essential needs met; these are outlined in the Fig below:

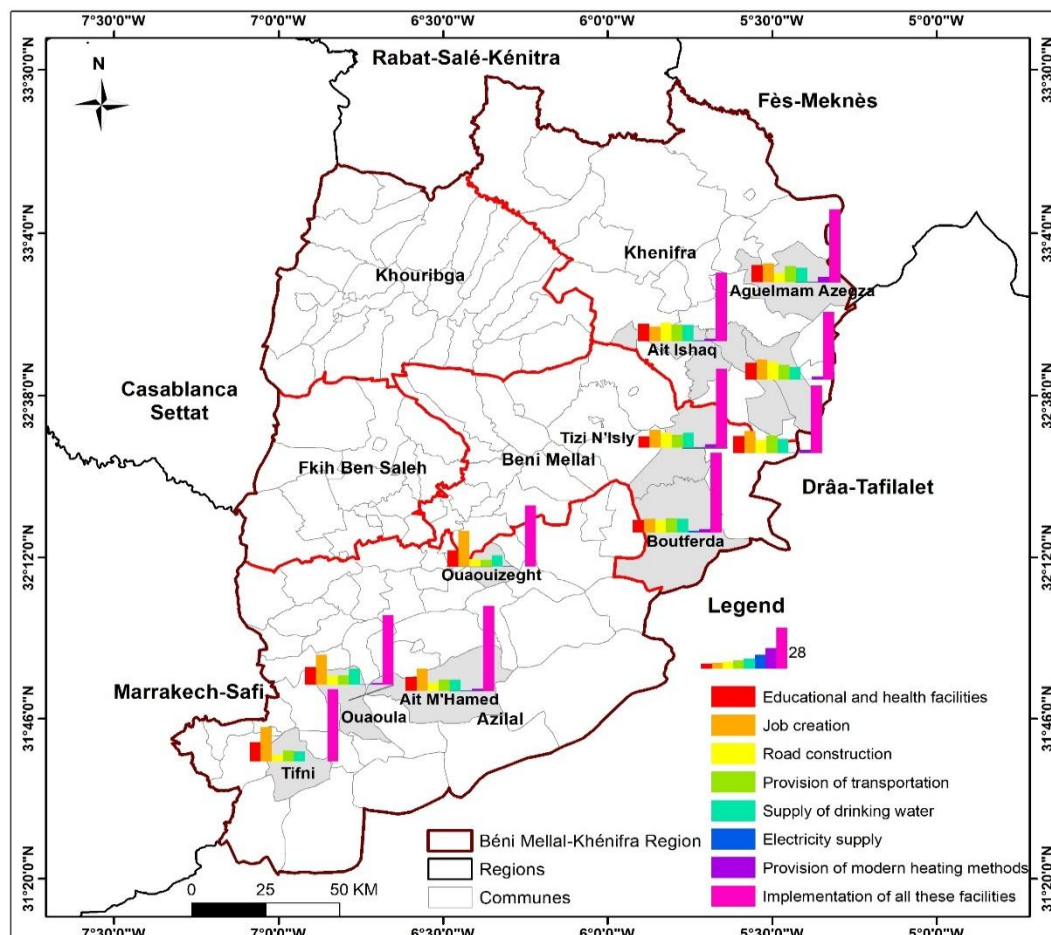


Fig. 7. Aspirations and expectations of mountain families in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region

The centrally imposed sectoral approach has fallen far short in terms of understanding the needs of the local population. This explains the structural vulnerability still faced by the majority of mountain households, a situation that is even more acute in the high mountains; consequently, development work has not strengthened the confidence of the mountain population in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region in local actors, and mountain households' doubts have grown regarding the ability of elected institutions to improve their circumstances, as well as that of other institutions.

3.3.3. Perceptions of mountain households regarding the level of development and utilisation of territorial resources

These findings reveal the gap between the concerns and aspirations of the local population and

the development efforts of various local actors, as the mountain communities under study still lack a range of basic facilities, and families need their aspirations to be met through the establishment of a range of social facilities and services, the strengthening of the mountain economy, the development of robust infrastructure, and the implementation of a sound system for the management of territorial mountain resources; We would particularly mention the establishment of schools and health centres, the creation of employment opportunities, the construction of roads and tracks, the provision of transport, as well as the establishment of systems to conserve natural resources and mobilise them effectively, particularly water resources, and make them available to mountain households.

The mountain population's aspiration for the completion of these facilities and projects is a clear

indication of the ineffectiveness of previous plans, which do not stem from a territorial approach and

are, in many cases, based on the logic of filling a void, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

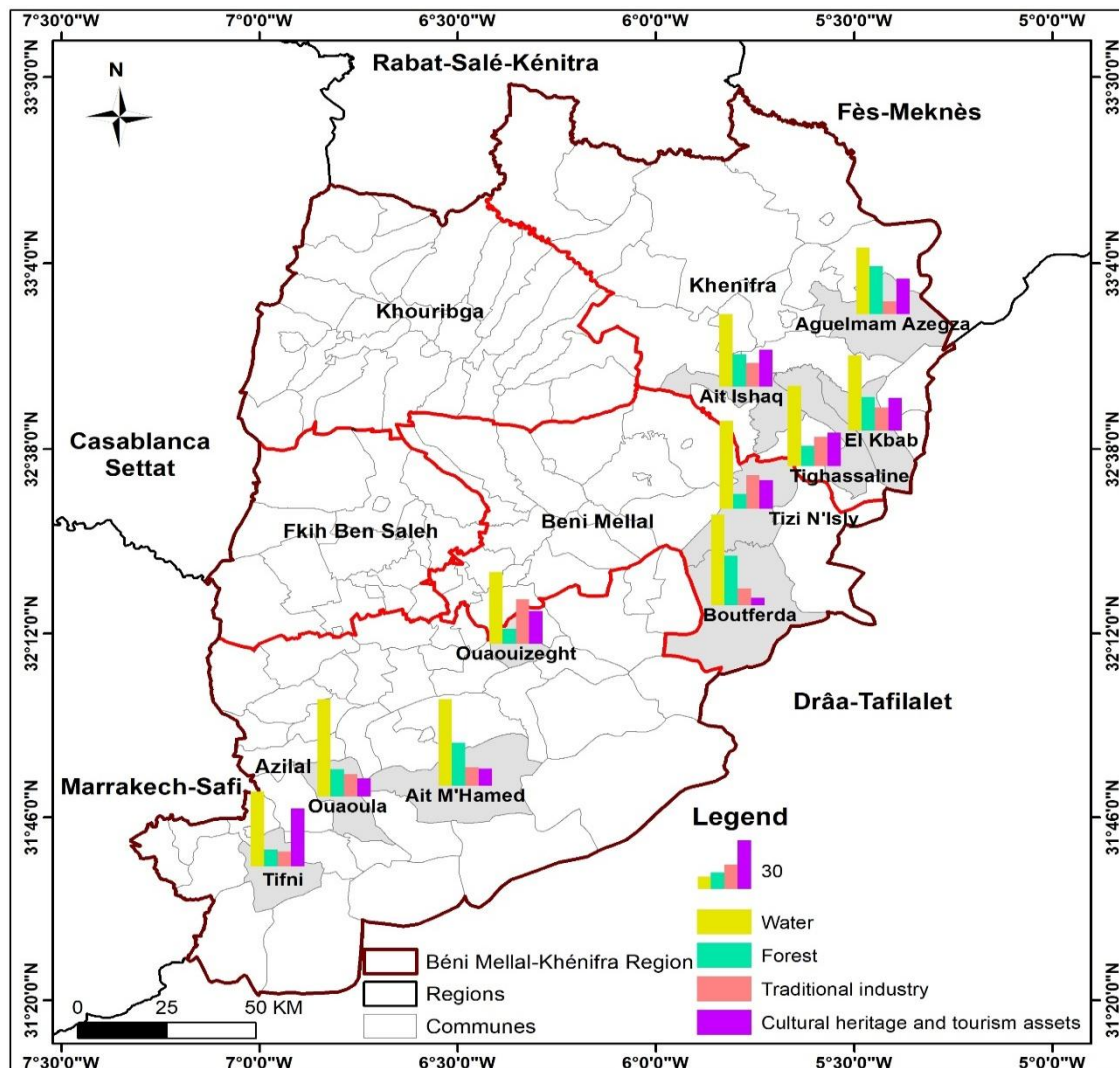


Fig. 8. Percentage of projects deemed ineffective in developing and mobilising territorial resources

Mountain communities view policies on the management and development of territorial resources as inadequate; these policies have failed to manage resources effectively and efficiently, particularly water resources, due to the absence of dams except in a handful of communities, such as the Ahmed El Hansali Dam in the commune of Ait Ishaq and the Moulay Hassan I Dam in the commune of Waoula; However, mountain communities do not benefit from these dams, either in terms of drinking water or for irrigation. The highest rate of inefficiency in water resource policies was recorded in the commune of Waoula at approximately 59.1%, whilst the lowest was 40.7% in the commune of Aklemam Azkza.

Furthermore, the projects implemented in the forestry sector have had a limited impact and have been ineffective in managing these resources,

particularly in the commune of Boutferda (around 30.1%), the commune of Aklemam Azkza (around 29.4%), and Ait Mohamed (around 26.1%), with the lowest rate recorded in Tizi N'Isli (around 9%).

Weaknesses are evident in the policies pursued in the field of traditional industry, with the highest rate recorded in the municipality of Tafni at around 35.1%, followed by Aklemam Azkza at around 21.9%, and Tagsaline and Lqabab at around 20.5%, whilst the lowest rate is found in the municipality of Boutferda at around 4.5%.

The development of tourism infrastructure is also significantly underdeveloped, with varying degrees of underdevelopment across the mountain communities. Households have deemed the overall development projects aimed at developing tourist attractions and landmarks to be ineffective. There is a lack of tourism projects, and those that do exist

have not contributed to the enhancement of local tourism resources in a manner that serves the level of rural mountain development.

The planning and development process must harness the local knowledge of mountain households, refine it and develop it, in line with the objectives and principles of territorial development in the enhancement of mountain resources, assets and potential; by placing the local population at the heart of development concerns, building on their experiences and making the management of territorial resources a collective endeavour.

3.4. The lack of knowledge among elected representatives and a lack of trust

Examining the elected representatives' attitudes towards tourism and their knowledge and managerial capabilities allows us to understand the existing relationships between development achievements, politics and the democratic process; there is a strong link between prevailing political systems and geography, as demonstrated by the sample of actors who are selected and control the elements of the territory.

The elite in the mountainous areas as a whole cannot succeed in carrying out their duties and functions unless they demonstrate integrity and creativity, and make the public interest their primary developmental role, prioritising it over personal interests. The elites can only earn their social standing by working to serve and meet all the needs of the mountain population in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region, by committing to achieving the objectives set out in their development programmes, and by adhering to the economic, social, cultural and environmental principles they have championed... and by working diligently to put them into practice on the ground, through the adoption and development of effective and practical local projects. This can only be achieved through the emergence of an educated elite with a high level of education, enabling them to understand the mechanisms of local development and its variables, inputs and outputs.

The low level of education among certain elites is one of the difficulties and constraints facing local governance in mountainous regions. This is because the legislator has not addressed educational attainment as a criterion of competence upon which the selection of elites responsible for managing local affairs should be based. It should be noted that the formulation of a regional development policy requires a high level of knowledge to devise and implement economic and social solutions and to ensure a decent standard of living for the local population.

Competence is greatly influenced by scientific knowledge, which is essential for the production and preparation of effective local and regional plans that contribute to solving the development problems that have afflicted and continue to afflict the mountains of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

The limited knowledge of local actors (elected representatives) places us before councils that suffer from a breakdown in local governance; this situation may allow supervisory and monitoring authorities to intervene, take their place and carry out the functions of the elected councils. This would undermine the principle of local democracy, which is a cornerstone of local governance and territorial development.

Consequently, achieving regional development requires a political class that has risen to become a well-managed elite in local affairs through its competence, rather than on the basis of its origins or socio-economic status. Since effective local governance is the driving force behind regional development and the means of achieving a decent standard of living for the mountain population, this governance remains dependent on the calibre of the political elite capable of shaping it and modelling it in a democratic manner, by employing these democratic mechanisms appropriately and effectively.

A high level of knowledge makes elected representatives better equipped to address the requirements of local development, to work towards introducing modern management methods, and to utilise communication and outreach techniques that ensure the needs and expectations of the local population are met, in a manner that is closely attuned to their genuine concerns.

This necessitates that political parties provide guidance and training to the elected representatives they put forward, and that they commit themselves wholeheartedly to making the concerns of the local population their primary focus and constant motto, whilst eliminating all forms of self-interest that prevent the consolidation of the foundations of local democracy in the mountains.

3.5. Mountain families and manifestations of the crisis of confidence in civil society

Civil society is considered one of the key actors at the local level, given its important role in contributing to local development through the implementation of a range of initiatives that improve living standards and provide a variety of services.

Cooperatives have provided an effective framework for achieving significant development synergies, contributing to the regional development

of mountain communities, particularly in the fields of traditional crafts and agriculture. Similarly, certain associations have contributed to the implementation of a range of important initiatives in mountainous areas; however, their impact on development remains limited due to their limited capacity and scarce funding.

From this perspective, it must be recognised that the work of civil society complements that of various other actors in the mountainous regions of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region.

The independence of civil society is a fundamental prerequisite for territorial development processes and the achievement of their objectives, which serve the public interest of the local population, without serving or relying on political

objectives and ideological slogans.

3.5.1. The impact of civil society’s development work on mountain households

A number of associations have sought to contribute to development work in the mountain communities under study, particularly in the area of well-digging in Aït Ishaq, and in the management of other wells, notably in Aït Mohamed and ouaoula. Other associations have also contributed to the repair of some unpaved roads in Aït Ishaq. Consequently, these associations have played an important role in fostering local development in certain communities, particularly in the provinces of Khenifra and Azilal, whilst the absence of civil society activity is noted in the province of Beni Mellal.

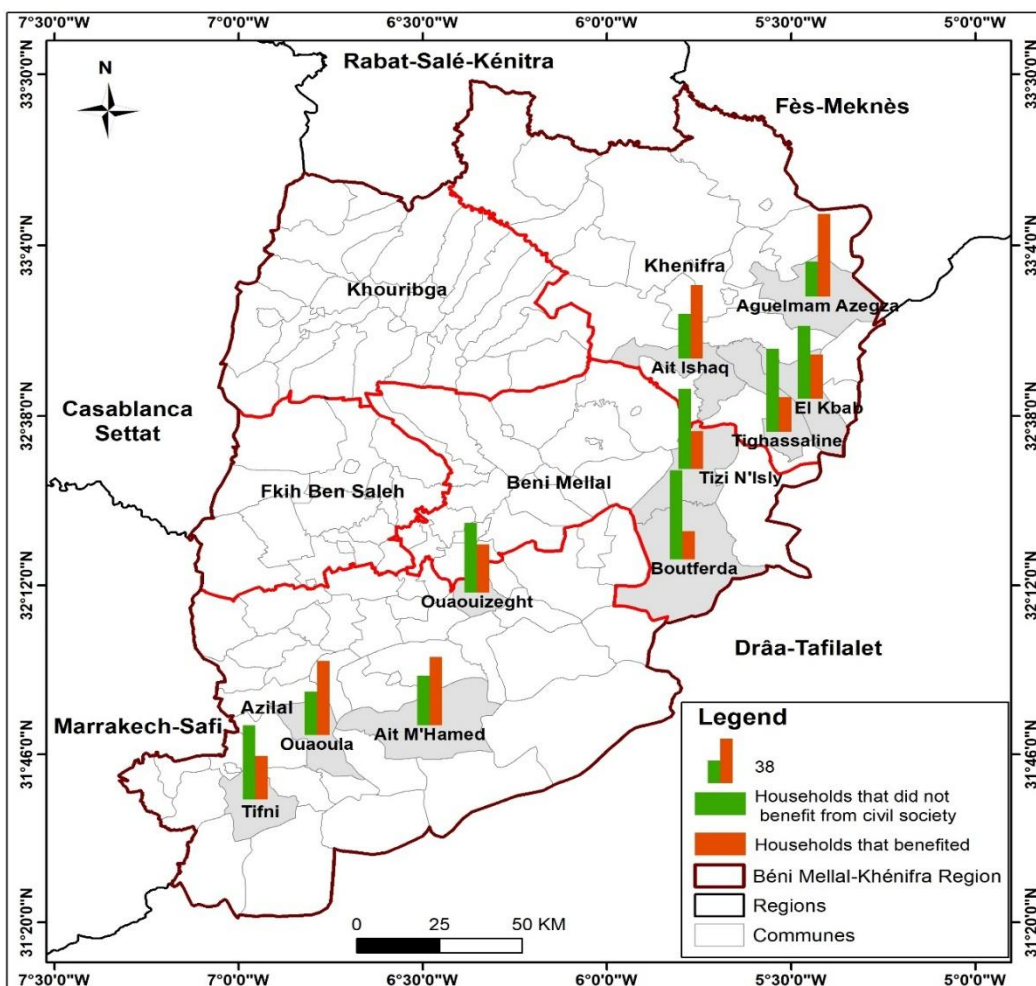


Fig. 8. Civil society's development interventions

There are a number of challenges facing community work in mountain communities, the foremost of which are personal conflicts. For instance, there is a collection of sewing equipment and machines in Tizi N'Isli (Tihouna Ait Wedir) that has not been put to use due to petty squabbles and personal conflicts.

Civil society work remains weak, particularly due to a lack of knowledge and organisation, and a lack of clear understanding of available funding sources; as community work is primarily voluntary, it utilises and seeks multiple sources of funding in order to advance the region and contribute to its development, and the association has no profit-

making objective.

The problem in this regard is the transformation of the association's role into that of a cooperative through the pursuit of personal gain; this has led to the failure of the vision and the community work, and some associations have retained the name only without any notable achievements.

Due to a lack of knowledge, the absence of the necessary dynamism, and limited funding sources, these factors stand as a stumbling block to the development of civil society's work; There are also a number of associations with ambitious development programmes that are hampered by a lack of funding; this factor is one of the main challenges facing these associations and the development of their initiatives.

Consequently, civil society's development work in the mountainous regions of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region remains modest and has not reached the level of strength that would enable it to play a pivotal role alongside other local actors; nor does it allow it to engage effectively within the framework of the local approach to mountainous areas.

3.5.2. Civil society development work and the views of mountain households

Given its limited capacity, civil society is unable to contribute effectively to local development in the mountainous regions of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra

region, where its impact on development is minimal; consequently, the majority of mountain households in the communities studied consider civil society's work to be ineffective in addressing the spatial challenges at hand; The highest percentage is recorded in the commune of Boutfarda at approximately 73.1%, and the lowest in the commune of Aït Ishaq at 46.1%. These figures are influenced by the extent to which mountain communities benefit from the services provided by civil society.

Most households believe that civil society has not contributed to improving their economic and social conditions; further efforts are needed to ensure an effective contribution to improving the living conditions of mountain households. Consequently, its role remains limited as one of the actors alongside state interests and elected representatives.

Regional development in the mountainous areas of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region is the result of strategies pursued by local actors within a traditional management model that lacks innovation and local governance, in the absence of developed mechanisms for development work; this approach has failed to bring about the desired development for mountain communities, nor has it provided them with a suitable framework for economic development and social and territorial stability.

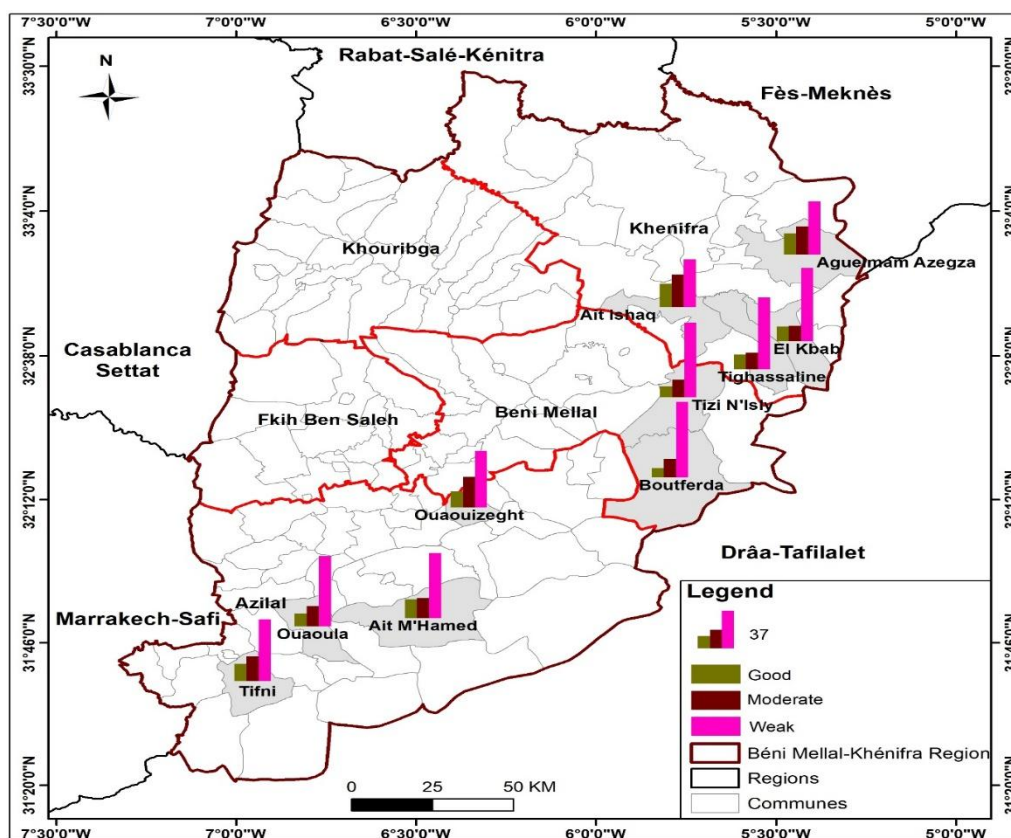


Fig. 9. Views of mountain households on civil society development work

4. CONCLUSION

The developmental repercussions resulting from the entirety of programmes and plans have contributed to fostering a sense of mistrust towards local actors, given their failure to find solutions to the issues facing mountain communities and their territories. Indicators of poverty and manifestations of economic and social fragility have plagued mountain communities for decades and persist to this day; the various approved plans, programmes and projects have failed to resolve them. This is due to a lack of vision for development, a lack of genuine desire to improve the development situation in the mountains, and a lack of real understanding of the mechanisms, specificities and characteristics of the mountainous region, which require a specific development policy rooted in the concerns of the mountain community. The negative repercussions of these plans have led to

a significant rift between the mountain communities of the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region and local actors; under these circumstances, to speak of the effectiveness of the spatial planning and development policy, given that the projects and programmes produced are far removed from the concerns, aspirations and expectations of the local population.

This situation is contributing to the depopulation of the mountains in the Beni Mellal-Khenifra region due to the rising number of migrants, causing the area to lose its sources of strength and development. This can only be curbed by placing the mountain population at the heart of all development policies, as this is a key factor for development and a genuine driver of the success of all development interventions within the framework of territorial planning; given that human capital is the primary objective of development policies and the main means of achieving the desired developmental transformation.

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