

MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Secretariat of the United Nations
Convention to Combat Desertification

CCD

Making a Difference

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Convention to Combat Desertification
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Cover Picture:

Addressing food security in the Turkana District of northern Kenya: Turkana communities of northern Kenya have realized the need to be self-reliant in food security. They are using the only river crossing through their region to divert water for micro-agricultural activities.

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FOREWORD



In the eighth year since the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted in June 1994, it is pleasing to note that the convention has reached maturity and is moving from preparation of the national action programmes to the implementation phase.

The convention has been particularly successful in securing the participation of local communities in the decision-making and implementation processes, without which enduring and effective changes in order to fight land degradation and desertification would not be possible. Unlike the traditional top-down approach in the past that more often than not

failed, the convention's emphasis on a bottom-up approach and partnership building has empowered those people who are most directly affected by desertification and who depend most on the land for their livelihood, to become the initiators and the driving force behind many successful projects that are helping rehabilitate barren lands and to fight poverty in affected regions of the world.

The stories collected here are good examples of how local communities in different parts of the world have each sought to tackle the problem of land degradation and desertification in partnership with non-governmental organizations, international organizations and other institutions. While some have just started to fight the problem, others are collecting and enjoying the fruits of their successful projects, ready and eager to replicate their experiences in other communities. It is our hope that the exchange of information on their diverse experiences in similar struggles will enable more communities affected by these problems to understand properly the issues at hand and take courage in formulating their unique solutions to the problems within their particular environmental and socio-economic conditions, for the sustainable development of their communities.

My deepest gratitude to all the non-governmental organizations and communities who have contributed, making their stories accessible to a wider public, and to Global Cooperation Council and IPS-CIC Communication Project in Germany for its support in the publication of this booklet.

HAMA ARBA DIALLO

Executive Secretary

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

COMBATING DESERTIFICATION – THE WULUGU EXPERIENCE

By George Bright Awudi

Friends of the Earth-Ghana, Ghana

In Ghana, the impacts of desertification are harshly being felt in the northern parts of the country comprising the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions, which together constitute more than 30 percent of the total land area of the country. These areas are naturally savannah. Aside from the harsh climatic conditions, a high level of human activities such as bush fires, bad farming practices, and over-grazing, have further exposed the environment to land degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and a decrease in soil fertility, leading to low crop yields and a large scale hunger among the people.

Wulugu is a small but growing farming community in the West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region of Ghana. There are about 4000 inhabitants who are subsistence farmers, mainly involved in the cultivation of cereals such as maize, millet, guinea corn, sorghum and rice. A few are raising animals like cattle, sheep, goats, as well as chicken and guinea fowls. In addition, some are harvesting wood from the savannah woodlands for sale, as firewood and charcoal constitute a major livelihood activity and a source of income for the people - mostly the poor women. Uncontrolled bush fires were rampant for fighting dangerous reptiles, for bush-meat hunting and for land preparation for farming.

Like most communities in the savannah, Wulugu was faced with the reality of a looming scourge of desertification, which ravaged the community, leaving in its trail barren land, scaled landscape and de-vegetated land. These exposed the people to hardships that they hardly dreamt of much less prepared for, such as food shortages. Longer than expected dry seasons as well as dying and withering plants and fields became their lot. Firewood, which used to be gathered from just the surroundings of settlements, became scarce. People, particularly women and children, had to travel over long distances in search of firewood. Also as a result of fuel-wood scarcity, agricultural residues like corncobs, millet stalks and other biomes like cow dung were increasingly being used as cooking fuels, thereby depriving the soils of the area of natural organic nutrients these residues provide. The fuel-wood scarcity severely affected the income generation from fuel wood by the local women.

Most of the community wells and bore holes which were dug several feet deep became dry, forcing them to trek on foot in the scorching sun for hours in search of water for both humans and animals. Some community people under these unfavourable and helpless conditions had to migrate to urban centres for survival, notwithstanding the social and economic implications that could confront migrating people.

Conscious of these hardships, the people of Wulugu readily lived up to the challenge when help came through Friends of the Earth-Ghana from the Japan Fund for Global Environment (JFGE) in the year 2000.

They marshalled forces with the leadership of the area's assemblyman. About 60 people came together - including women, men and children - to engage in a community wood lot and afforestation project. They formed two groups, one group worked in the eastern part and the other in the northwestern part of the Wulugu community.

The two groups managed to secure about 13 acres of land through the goodwill of a generous landowner in the community and cultivated over 2000 seedlings of acacia to provide an alternative source of firewood for domestic use and for income from sale as well as to reduce pressure on the rural savannah woodland in Wulugu. The groups, which are 95 percent women, were trained by Friends of the Earth-Ghana on nursery, wood lot and project establishment and management.

The determination and enthusiasm of the people is now paying off. The more than 2000 seedlings planted on both projects have grown beautifully. They have intercropped the acacia with locally known edible and medicinal plants called "Bunghun" and also with soybeans. People working on the project are hopeful that the benefits of the project will be to the entire community. They are positive that the project will help check and control desertification as well as supply their fuel-wood needs. It is also an income-generating project that will bring in some extra income to improve their standard of living. They hope to sell seedlings as well as impart the knowledge they have gained to surrounding communities in the future so that they can collectively combat desertification.

They have a long-term vision for the project. One of them puts it aptly in these words "we want to do our part now and leave something behind for the posterity". The children working alongside their mothers and grandmothers are happy and excited about working on the projects, and they seem ready to take over after the older generation is gone.

Workshops organised by Friends of the Earth-Ghana for the Wulugu community and its surrounding villages, with funding from the UNCCD secretariat and the JFGE, created the enabling environment for the participation of civil society in the implementation of the UNCCD in Ghana. The level of environmental consciousness and community participation in desertification issues has risen. Most local women involved in the project have now witnessed that indiscriminate falling of trees is bad. Bush fires are no longer common in the community. The Wulugu community made valuable inputs towards the participation of civil society in the preparation of the Ghana National Action Programme (NAP).

The Wulugu experience, when repeated in other communities, can be a sure guarantee in combating desertification in this country, Ghana. ☑



HOPE IN THE DESERT

By Emmanuel S. Seck

ENDA tiers monde, Senegal

Desertification is a difficult phenomenon by which people in Senegal must live by because of its consequences. In rural regions especially, the population is affected by a lack of water, the degradation of natural resources, the reduction of agricultural and animal production, deforestation, soil degradation, rural migration, etc. This perhaps explains the upstream decision taken by governments without implication of the concerned people downstream.

In 1992, the governments of all the countries met in Rio to find solutions to global environmental problems. From this summit, three principal environmental conventions developed on climate change, biodiversity and desertification. The latter was adopted in Paris in June 1994 with the participatory approach as one of its original points. The convention certainly insists on the involvement of the population in the formulation and implementation of action programmes.

However, the concerns stated in the convention are not well grasped by the people. This is why awareness-raising campaigns were intensified in Senegal before and since the adoption of the convention. But awareness-raising about the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is still an objective to be pursued so that a large number of people would participate in its implementation and would grasp it better.

In 1996, in the department of Linguere, more precisely in the regions of Loumbelana, Barkedji, Djagali, Dodji et Lagar, Environnement et développement du tiers-monde (ENDA) organised information and training activities for the coordinators of the "Association des Défenseurs de l'Environnement Sahélien" (ADESAH), a group from different villages, in order to familiarize them with the convention. These communities are principally situated in the sylvopastoral region of Senegal, commonly known as Ferlo. Here, drought, overgrazing and rain erosion cause the degradation of landscapes along certain fossil valleys.

The local population, principally the ethnic group called Peule, has shown its interest in the convention as an instrument that could strengthen its activities on the management of natural resources. Furthermore, in order to respond to the people's requests and while awaiting the effective implementation of the Convention, ENDA has developed different activities related to the protection of the environment and poverty alleviation.

Soil eroded by wind and water was restored by protecting pieces of land, installing windshields around polyvalent gardens, and applying techniques to recover terraces. The interest shown by the people for local tree species, such as the gum tree and the "jujubier" (*zizyphus jujuba*) which generate important financial benefits, have encouraged the people to undertake reforestation programmes.

In the same way, the popularisation of improved cookers in the above-mentioned areas has satisfied their energy needs for cooking and consequently has reduced the demographic pressure on the vegetal cover. It is clearly stated across certain articles in the convention that it is a convention to combat poverty, as it invites the Parties to strengthen their programmes on poverty eradication and food security, which should contribute to improving the economic and social environment of the local populations. ENDA's activities are in line with this endeavour for local development based on solidarity, trust and improved status of rural women. The activities are as follows:

- Cereal banks: Cereals are initially stored with produce from a communal field and more is gathered by collecting portions provided by each of the members - 10 or 20 kg depending on their participation in the project. The banks are de-stocked during scarce seasons when cereals are sold to members. "Before the establishment of this cereal bank cereals were very expensive during scarce seasons because they are rare, and it was very difficult to obtain them. Today, thanks to it (cereal bank), cereals are available at a lower price," expressed a village chief.
- Forage bank: Established with forage collected by members during favourable seasons, these banks play the same role for livestock as the cereal banks. The most fragile cattle (lamb, for example) therefore can avoid risking a lack of forage during the dry season.
- Polyvalent gardens: They play a double role. On the one hand, they are used to identify and reproduce plants for reforestation; on the other hand, they are market-gardens to cultivate vegetables.

The impact of these activities on the lives of the local communities is visible in the improved income of women (sale of vegetables and plants for reforestation) and in the food conditions (improvement of the daily diet). Furthermore, these activities have enabled women to gain conscience of their ability to take care of things themselves and of the prominent role they can play in the development of their communities. However, the development of certain activities, such as market-gardens and reforestation, has been hampered due to a lack of water caused by the depth of the phreatic layer and the interruption of explorations.

By supporting and multiplying actions of this nature, the UNCCD, under the framework of the National Action Programme/UNCCD, represents for the populations affected by desertification and poverty, a real "hope in the desert". ☑



L'ARBRE MORT

Le temps est lourd sous le soleil brûlant,
Un vent sec souffle : l'harmattan,
Dans cette zone dépeuplée
Où vivent des êtres désespérés

Au-dessus de la terre,
Je perçois une eau fictive
Qui disparaît
A chaque fois que je me rapproche.

Dans ce panorama,
Des espaces dénudés, victimes de la désertification,
Ouvrent la voie libre aux vents
Qui viennent voler la fertilité des terres
Et former ailleurs des dunes de sable.

Voilà qu'ils s'acharnent sur des hères,
Fouettant leurs corps desséchés,
Décoiffant leurs têtes désormais chauves.

Au loin, j'aperçois une femme, seule,
Couverte d'un gris voile.
Elle ne sent plus le soleil, ni la pluie.
Elle ne porte plus de feuilles, ni de fruits
Et n'enfantera plus sur cette terre stérile.

Pourtant l'écho de sa plainte me parvint :
"vos pères ont favorisé notre disparition,
Pendant que le désert faisait son apparition.
Enfants de la terre, pensez-vous sauvegarder ?
Oui ! Sauvegarder notre vie : votre avenir".

Plus de vent,
Plus de vie dans cette voix.
Hélas ! la femme statique là-bas,
Qui semblait courber l'échine sous le vent,
Est un arbre mort.

- Emmanuel S. Seck (1996)

*NB: Ce poème est une prise de conscience des effets de la désertification.
Il nous invite au combat pour un meilleur environnement, un défi à relever
pour les générations futures.*

EXPERIENCE OF A LOCAL COMMUNITY IN KAZAKHSTAN

By Zhapar A. Zhambkin

Chief Project Executor, Zhangeldy, Kazakhstan

Desertification encroaches upon the villages and settlements of Central Asia. Paths trampled by cattle – single tracks - more and more surround Kazakhstan's settlements. In recent years, when there were kolkhozes and sovkhoses (soviet period), a considerable part of personal cattle grazed on distant pastures together with the community's cattle. In those years, part of the fodder stored up for the winter was given to the personal sector as well.

Now the situation has changed completely. There are neither community cattle, nor social production and fodder storage. The majority of the rural population now is not able either to drive their few livestock to distant pastures or produce fodder for winter for their own cattle. One should also add that in recent years, personal cattle played only a supplementary role in a family budget. Whereas now, the production of a small herd of 2-3 cows or 2-3 camel- (horse)-dams, 10-15 sheep- (goat)-dams has become the basic source of living. That's why the question: "How to feed the cattle?" has become the daily problem of every rural family.

Under these conditions, lands around villages and settlements have to bear the entire burden. In short, the insufficient quantity of fodder causes overgrazing, the trampling of the grass, the degradation of lands, and the desertification of territories around the habitations, which all together lead to the poverty of the rural population.

The inhabitants of village Zhangeldy have suffered these and other negative impacts. Zhangeldy is a typical village of the arid region in Kazakhstan. It is part of a former sovkhos. It is situated on the left bank of the Syrdaria River. Its population (after migration) is 133 people. They live in 30 houses. There are 65 people in the local community who are able to work. The project "Zhanartu" that was initiated by the Non-Governmental Organization Fund "The Farmer of Kazakhstan" in 1998, helped to find a way out of the difficult situation. Now the project is being fulfilled by the local community in Zhangeldy and the farm "Zhuldyz" under the leadership of non-governmental organization experts.

During the initial phase in 1998-2001, the project was implemented with the financial support of the Small Grants Programme (SGP), and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Today the functioning of the local community in Zhangeldy is based on self-financing.

The Tasks and Goals of the pilot project "Zhanartu" meaning renovation are the restoration of biodiversity of the bush-and-motley grass ecosystem on degraded river plains around Zhangeldy and the improvement of the local population's living standards.

These are to be achieved by decreasing grazing pressure around the village, creating alfalfa plantations on irrigated areas by people in the local community, and by increasing the ecological literacy of the local population through seminars and training.

The Project's Activity

The area around the village that formerly belonged to Zhangeldy is more than 10 thousand hectares. In order to put rational pasture use measures into practice, three zones of pastures were identified by the Project:

- Pasturing zone I – within the radius of 2 km from the center of the village;
- Pasturing zone II – within the radius of 2-4 km from the center of the village;
- Pasturing zone III - within the radius of 4-6 km from the center of the village.

In pasturing zone I, 80 hectares of land were exposed to wind and water erosion. Most of the territory is covered with weeds and inedible plants. Alongside, plants that are valuable in terms of nutrition are found: alhagi, tamarisk and statice bushes, ephemers, ephemeroids, and other plants of spring-summer phenorythmo-type. Until 1999, almost 100 % of the latter within 1000 meters from the village were eaten in the spring and early summer. However, pasture fodder of the first belt did not satisfy the pasturing livestock's productive need for nutritious materials. Consequently, prolonged grazing of the village livestock in this zone led to low cattle and sheep milk production, their low prolificacy, the shortage of live weight of young animals, the production of meat below standards, and animal diseases, etc.

In spite of such negative effects the village residents preferred to keep their livestock in this restricted area within a 2 km radius of the village. This forced preference is mainly due to their concern with livestock safety. To ensure the livestock's safety, the owners must keep the livestock within his or her farm at night and under his or her control during the day. In other words, social instability and frequent livestock thefts (usual in villages nowadays) almost directly impacted Zhangeldy's environment.

Pastures in the second and third belts were recently used as spring-autumn pastures for common sheep flocks. In the 70s-80s, vegetation in these pastures degraded especially around the wells. But for the last decade, due to the absence of grazing pressure, basic vegetation has been restored. For example, the productivity of pastures in the third belt was 1000 kg/ha of eaten dry mass in the autumn of 1998. This is a very good figure for deserts in the Aral Sea region. Though the village residents clearly realized that keeping livestock in the second and third pasture belts during a pasturing period would result in larger production and higher return from livestock breeding, fear of losing their livestock (if entrusted to a hired herdsman) has long prevailed the potential benefits.

This problem was repeatedly discussed at local community workshops and meetings. Only after several exchanges of views, the majority of the local community members came to the conclusion that without the use of relatively remote pastures, not only improvement of the village environment but also poverty alleviation was impossible.

Consequently, in the summer of 1998, a decision was made to find possibilities and to start a step-by-step development of the second and third belt pastures by having the most numerous and dry livestock graze on them (250-270 days). To this end, they addressed the local akimat, who assigned five wells located in the second and third pasture belts to the local community of Zhanfeldy. Three groups were identified for common livestock keeping on remote grazing areas and for well repair and use. During 1999-2000, with the financial support of GEF/SGP and the United Nations Programme to Combat Desertification, several jurts (a kazak movable dwelling), pumps (tap water-elevator) and mini power stations were purchased.

The mentioned costs, though not large, were significant for poor villages. In connection with the peculiarity of this problem to the whole arid region it would be advisable to appropriate local budget funds for the restoration of the watering devices on pastures around villages as environmental protection activities.

One of the major objectives of the "Zhanartu" project is the facilitation of the local capacity development. Under the conditions of Zhanfeldy village, it implicates the facilitation of housekeeping development and, foremost, a higher production, fodder storing up and an increase of stock number in every farm. Calculations made together with the local community members showed that the average cost of a basket of goods for one person amounted to 60 thousand tenge per year. The basic and only commodity output in remote districts of Kazakhstan, to which the Otrar region belongs, is meat. For example, a sheep can be sold here for 4-5 thousand tenge. Consequently, the annual living wage per person amounts to the selling of 16 sheep. If we assume that there would be mostly lambs of 8-12 months, then it is necessary to have no less than 20 sheep per person.

As mentioned above, there are 133 persons in the settlement of Zhanfeldy. From the above calculations there should be 2660 sheep plus 40 rams; altogether there should be about 2700 heads of sheep per capita. Assuming that the area for one sheep grazing is 4 hectares a year, the settlement is to have in each household an area of 10 thousand hectares for grazing. Apart from that, 540 tons of hay should be stored for the period of stabling (100 days). If the harvest is 8.0 tons per hectare there should be irrigated land of 67.5 hectares. We have such land resources that are used now.

Zhanfeldy, a former division of the former state farm "Shauldersky", held 100 hectares of irrigated land. Water for irrigating the state farm field was pumped up, and the pumps worked on diesel oil and electricity. But the irrigation stopped in 1993 and has been out of service since, because electricity was cut off. Members of the local community thus began taking up measures to restore the irrigated land in early spring 2000.

They began with the cleaning and deepening of the bed of an old gravity 8.5-kilometer channel from the Syrdaria River to the settlement Zhanfeldy. The farm «Zhuлдыз», that had available relevant equipment, did most of the reclamation work. They were also financially supported by GEF/SGP for buying spare parts for the equipment as well as fuel and lubricating materials.

Thanks to such cooperation, water was regularly supplied for the irrigation of fields in the local community since the spring of 2001. Nowadays, 57 hectares is under seed and forage crops and 20 hectares of that area belongs to households. Certainly, the local community people, that is, the "land proprietors", did upkeep, water and gather alfalfa for hay or green fodder. Yield stability of alfalfa plantations and the development of the households and farms in that area foremost depend on water supply which ultimately in turn depends on the water level in the Syrdaria River. The latter, as you know, is regulated. Now the Governments of the four Border States decided to admit the outflow volume. Sometimes their decisions are not in favour of Kazakhstan. That is why the Aral Sea region, which is situated down the Syrdaria River, including the settlement of Zhangel'dy, is in the risk zone.

The Project Results

1. The transferred grazing of numerous dry livestock to the distant lands allowed the introduction of spare usage of the nearest pastures. It promoted:

- The partial consolidation of lands eroded by ephemera and by annual stalwart;
- The annual appearance of rare endemic plants on the earlier eroded lands;
- The appearance of gramineous plants (though not much) and others, which are capable of stabilizing the turf process, and consequently, of rehabilitating soil-vegetable cover on the eroded land around the settlement of Zhangel'dy;
- The economic rotation of more than 8 thousand hectares of pasture with good forage, in spite of a recent drought;
- A rather high level of feeding of domestic animals;
- And, ultimately, in its turn, a surge in milk, meat and wool productivity of the local community's cattle during the grazing period.

2. The establishment of forage alfalfa plantations on irrigated areas by the members of the local community allowed:

- The growth of alfalfa for hay and green fodder in the village for the first time since the collapse of the sovkhos;
- The provision of forage, which in its turn has allowed the milking of cows and an increase in the live weight of the young animals in the winter;
- The cessation of the so called winter pasturing around the village, which decreased considerably the trampling degree of the territory near the village.

Thus, certain results have been achieved: both in the prevention of soil erosion or in the restoration of plant society as well as in improving the local community members' living standards. For example, farms of Esengeldy Mamakov, Kambara Kuntureeva and some other members of the local community began to sell lambs of 8-9 months directly from the pastures and the live weight of every lamb is 38-42 kg. No such practice existed before the project was launched. The rise in the cattle's milk production during the grazing period allowed not only the supply of milk to meet the existing needs of a family, but also the saving of some milk to make butter and kurt (dry cheese) for the winter.

On the whole, it can be emphasized that the increasing of animal production provided an evident increase in food for most of the village. Some families already are able to present the produce from their animals in the market. At present, activities carried out by village members are wholly self-financed. ☑

COMBATING DESERTIFICATION IN PERNAMBUCO

By Dr. Valdemar Rodrigues, By Douglas Machado,

President of Instituto Desert Documentarist Pernambuco, Brazil

The day has dawned in a different way in these last days: it rained all night. We are in the community of Macambira – in the county of Solidão – one of the communities that were involved in the project “Combating Desertification in Pernambuco”.

The project entailed working with families affected as part of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. We are visiting Pedro Izidório, community leader known as Tota, married to Dona Juvita with 7 children. He invites us to have coffee – as is the habit in the region – and starts talking.



“In dry Sertão, as we all know, there is practically a 90 percentage chance of a drought: rain comes only rarely. The problem is that the land gets wasted because of ploughing. In the past, the land was not ploughed. The way you drilled and planted! Then, the lands have a tendency of becoming wasted. Water goes carrying what? The best lands are eroded and become good for nothing. What is important is the land cover at the top.

Water takes it away and leaves behind just what we call “the bone of land”.

That family, which used to profit from the production of 40, 50 up to 100 sacks of corn started to profit 10, 12. So the family went through difficulties and then men and young boys left to São Paulo, even here Recife, Maceió. As a matter of fact, in my family itself, most of them are not here. The majority are all spread in the middle of the world on account of this agricultural failure”.

We asked about this project. “I believe it will improve the lives of many families – in case of our community, there are 30 families. First, one of the best things we can have is water for our survival. A well was perforated – that is going to provide water to the whole community for drinking and other human consumption. And after all this, we are also receiving in our community a toilet with a septic tank, too”. The student Marlúcia Araújo comments: “When we felt the necessity to go to the bathroom, we had no bathroom and we had to go to the outdoor bush and we polluted the soil.”

In Barra I, beside Macambira, the farmer Luiz Gonzaga emphasizes, “It was we ourselves that did the work, I mean, from the chicken-roost up to the cistern: the masons themselves are from the community and the servant is from the proper locality. We searched so as to not bring anyone from outside”.

We asked about the importance of the community's involvement. Luiz answered, "Because when I'm well, my neighbour is well, if I'm bad, my neighbour will be bad too. I'm quite sure about this... it's something concrete. I think of us as a small community".

About working together the apicultor José Guimarães says, "The bee breeding is important because the bee is there in the bee-hive is working for us. And we are taking care of other things: taking care of a little breeding of goats, taking care of the clean land, and bees are there filling the hive with honey, helping us".

Dona Juvita served us more coffee. Tota concluded, "That's why I insist to every community that in any kind of work first one should be able to face any kind of work, so that in the future nothing goes wrong".

And he reminds why he chose to raise chicken: "Because we know that in the future we are going to have a chicken to slaughter, and have the eggs to sell. For sure, I have hopes in this project. And my expectation is to work so that in six months from now, not only will we have 50 chickens - it was 50 chicks that we received - but 70, 80 or even 100 chicks."

Finalizing, Doralice said, "We need to find out if it's possible to survive right here, ain't it? The more we sell eggs laid by the chickens, the more chickens we will buy, ain't it? We should not let the project go down in the drain! Instead, we should expand the project much more, ain't it?!"

The project "Combating Desertification in Pernambuco State" is realized through the implementation of several actions to control land degradation in communities affected by desertification and severe drought conditions.

Each action is composed of: a qualification assessment and training course; basic hygiene equipment; water catchments and storage equipment; and a productive unit identified by each family/community on the basis of its own needs. This could be apiculture, aviculture or embroidery. In 12 months, the following were built in total: 263 cisterns, 12 wells, 384 septic pits and 512 productive units benefiting 504 families. The total cost was U\$1.023.726,90. ☑



THE SHANTUMBU COMMUNITY'S EXPERIENCE

By Joseph Mbinji

Zambia Alliance of Women Shantumbu, Zambia

Shantumbu is a typical rural area that is situated about 16 km southeast of Lusaka, the Capital City of Zambia. Shantumbu is characterised by temperatures of over 200C and an average rainfall below 800mm per annum. Vegetation in the area is typically Miombo woodland. The area is characterised by seasonal streams and ephemeral streams, which are only active during the rainy season.

Shantumbu is comprised of eleven villages with a total number of 500 households with an average family size of about seven individuals. The total population is about 3500 people. This community thrives on subsistence farming and charcoal burning as the most important economic activities.

Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW) with its mandate to work for the welfare of rural communities, identified Shantumbu Community as one of its areas of intervention and has therefore, been working with this community for more than six years. Within this period ZAW has learnt a lot of lessons and experiences as regards the livelihoods of the Shantumbu Community and how desertification has affected their livelihoods.

Desertification is one of the most serious environmental problems that most rural areas of the country are experiencing, with intense impacts of this problem being felt in the five regions of the country namely Lusaka, Southern, Eastern, Central and Western Provinces, due to their being agricultural productive areas of the country and also due to semi arid conditions caused by erratic rainfall and high temperatures experienced most of the year.

The desertification problem in the Shantumbu area provides a classical example of the extent and intensity of the problem in many other rural areas in Zambia. This problem in Shantumbu has been caused mainly by unsustainable practices of resource utilization by the community. The Community has for a long time relied on the use of chemical fertilizers that have significantly destroyed their crop fields, turning them into unproductive lands.

This practice has heavily acidified their croplands making it difficult to grow crops. The community being poor could not sustain the use of chemical fertilizers and lime to fertilize their agricultural lands and neutralise the soils, respectively. Therefore, most of their croplands have been abandoned and those that are being used do not yield high crop yields as before - a situation that has greatly affected their household food security and incomes, resulting in abject poverty.

Apart from this, the abandonment of croplands in the area has resulted in the serious destruction of indigenous forests as more and more people search for virgin land for cultivation (shifting cultivation). Massive charcoal burning has also contributed to the problem of desertification in the area. This practice has been in place for ages as an important source of energy and income for the rural population. Shantumbu being nearby an urban centre, Lusaka City, it provides an important source of wood fuel that includes charcoal to the urban population in the area.

This situation has led to serious deforestation of the area, which is now characterised by large tracts of bare lands and shrub vegetation type as the dominant ground cover. This has had serious environmental and socio-economic impacts, including women moving long distances to fetch wood fuel for their families and the exposure of soils to intense temperatures and rainfall. This has subjected the soil to increased erosion and consequent reduction of soil productivity and the siltation of many seasonal streams in the catchments area.

Realising these serious problems that the community has experienced, it has turned away from unsustainable practices in resource utilization to seek sustainable methods. This has been done with the help of ZAW, which has been closely working with the rural communities to address desertification within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). As an initial stage, ZAW began to undertake awareness and training programmes in the area to sensitise the community on various environmental problems, their causes and how these can be avoided or addressed. The response from the community, especially women, has been overwhelming. They have been very cooperative to ensure that solutions to these problems are sought. It is in this wake that the Shantumbu Community Women have come together to form an association that will advance environmental and socio-economic issues in the area. The community with the support of ZAW has been exploring alternatives to sources of energy and income for their household!

This has been carried out through the promotion of energy efficient and environmentally friendly cook stoves called ZIKOs, which not only accommodates charcoal but also other energy sources such as tree twigs, saw dust and dry cow dung. This initiative is helping to conserve the available indigenous forests in the area. The community has also embarked on income generating ventures, which include piggery and chicken rearing. This initiative is two fold in that it provides the necessary income to the households and also provides them with organic manure as an indigenous agricultural practice for fertilizing crop fields.

In this project, individual households will be picking cow dung before each planting season and store it in storage sheds for use in the next planting season. In addition, the Shantumbu Community, with facilitation from ZAW, has made a step to introduce Community Based Eco-Tourism, an income generating as well as a sustainable environmental utilization and management initiative that has been learnt from other communities: Mukuni Village in Livingstone and Muwele Village in Bangweulu region, where this initiative has been very successful in empowering the local people economically.

At this stage the Shantumbu Community has realised and appreciates the need to manage their environment in a sustainable manner, for the purpose of having sustainable livelihoods - stable incomes and household food security. Through the Community Exchange and Training Programme (CETP) that will be implemented by the South African Development Community International Network on Desertification (SADC RIOD), many rural communities will learn, share experiences and exchange ideas, which will enhance their livelihoods, improve their food security and reduce poverty. This Programme has been funded by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and will be administered by ZAW as the non-governmental organizations' sub regional focal point for the implementation of the UNCCD in Southern Africa. ☑

COMBATING DESERTIFICATION IN NICO-NOORD

By Sara Bock

Nico – Noord Community, Gibeon Area, Namibia

The story starts when I met a young man called Hendrik Bock and got married in 1981. My husband was employed at a railway station on a salary of 500 Namibian dollars (US\$50) per month. He was the only one earning a salary in the family and it was not enough. That is the reason why I decided to take up farming in order to generate more income. After we both decided to take up farming, we decided to move south to Nico–Noord. We officially started farming there from April 2, 1982. We didn't have enough livestock but just a few goats (15) and sheep (7), and no large livestock such as cows.

As I mentioned earlier, only my husband was earning a salary and it was barely enough. So I decided, although we had little livestock, to go and work for other large livestock farmers in the area. I was working as a herder and was paid in kind with a bottle (1 liter) of milk per day. I could not give up the job because at least it contributed to the household income. After some time, the farmers, for whom I was working, realized that I was providing them with valuable service and decided to raise my wages in kind to one lamb per month.

Nothing but a windmill

When my husband and I arrived to Nico–Noord in 1982, there was nothing but a windmill and a one-bedroom house. Grazing areas were very bad because the previous farmers overgrazed the land with their high number of livestock. Due to the lack of grazing land we were forced to gather grass and branches from trees and bring them home for the animals to eat.

The number of livestock grew and I could send my two children to school. Rain became regular and there was enough grazing available. We did not mind looking after the grazing area because we thought that there would be enough fodder for the animals and it would remain there for good. But signs of drought showed and hit us very severely. At the beginning of 1990, we therefore started a farmers' league and I was elected as chairman of the organization. In June 1990, clear indications of a drought started to show. At that moment, as the chairman of the organization, I was willing to ask for assistance from the government.

Additionally, I organized an auction whereby we requested the farmers to sell at least three-quarters of their livestock. I also organized a food-for-work program which entailed repairing roads, fences and many other small things. In 1992, as part of the Sardep program, I started to measure the farm's area, to install rain meters, to take pictures of the grazing land and to manage the grazing areas. In 1993, the drought got worse and the livestock began to die at a fast rate and none of us could help each other. There was no grazing land and trees were cut to feed animals.

I think that the drought affected women the most because they could no longer send their children to school and the men had to go and work for the railway or very far from home.

In 1995, we started a campsite project and other small projects. The campsite, of 28 members at the beginning and now 14, could not generate income at the beginning, so we used funds from other projects to build it up.

I also started a nature protection fund with the money that I received from the NNF (Namibia Nature Foundation) with the aim of combating desertification. The campsite and its sub-projects depend on me because we have little financial resources to help the project. The farmers I started with in the 80s are now very old and young people tend to leave for bigger cities.

Right now we are preparing a practical farm management project at Nico-Noord and DRFN (Desert Research Foundation of Namibia), which is one of the agencies implementing Namibia's UNCCD national action programme, is a big help.

I just pray the Lord grant my wishes to restore communal areas/land and make life easier. I want to help improve the land because only that can help us. We need to use natural resources properly so they will be there for our future generations to come. ☑



GREENING OF THE BARELANDS

By Relief Society of Tigray

Tigray, North Ethiopia

Alasa is located in Degua-Tembien district, some 50 kms north-west of Mekelle, the capital city of Tigray, northern Ethiopia. The altitude ranges from 220-2300 meters above sea level, and as in much of the Tigray central highlands, the area suffers from severe environmental degradation, characterized by massive deforestation, gully formation and soil erosion. The people are predominantly dependent on rainfed, subsistence farming, scraping a marginal living from the bare soil in a good year, dependent on external assistance in the form of food for work when drought hits. The Relief Society of Tigray (REST), an indigenous non governmental organisation, has been working with the people of Tigray since 1978. It emphasizes community participation, one of the main principles by which the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification engages in its fight against desertification.

Among the many activities implemented by REST aimed at reversing environmental degradation and improving the people's livelihoods, area enclosure has proved to be one particularly low cost and effective mechanism for environmental rehabilitation. Bare, eroded areas of land are selected in collaboration with the local communities and enclosed, protected from grazing and other usage for a period of years to allow for the natural regeneration of the original vegetation and wildlife. Soil and water conservation measures, including terracing and planting of trees and grasses, are increasingly used to assist the process.



A sharp contrast between unenclosed and recently enclosed areas in Dengua Tembien

In Alasa for example, an area of about 35 hectares, which had degenerated into wasteland because of overgrazing and lack of proper environmental management, was enclosed in 1998 to enhance natural regeneration, supported by the construction of stone bunds and the planting of *Acacia saligna* and *Dodenaea* species.

Community participation and ownership of the process is the key to its success. The communities are involved in the selection of the land to be enclosed. They draw up the laws and regulations on which piece of land is to be enclosed and protected, and on when and how usage will be permitted. They also decide on and implement sanctions, usually fines, when regulations are broken.

Guards are appointed from the communities to watch over the area. After some time, when vegetation growth has progressed sufficiently, some controlled gathering of grasses and wood is permitted, known as a cut and carry system. The benefits are shared out among the community members through discussion and agreement, after the production capacity and needs of the various households are assessed. Priority is normally given to those having a critical shortage of grass for roofing, and for fodder. First they establish small groups (3-4 households per group) who take turns on an annual basis.

Three to four years later, the results in Alasa are clearly visible, as can be seen in the accompanying photographs. The benefits as observed by local community members include:

- the pleasure and satisfaction of seeing the rebirth of the land reverted to how they had seen it during their childhood and as described by their parents.
- Increased availability of livestock feed: All households have access to the available fodder through a cut and carry system. The hay conserved is also of high quality because of the quality of the grass grown there. This helps them improve milk production and the overall livestock health. The cost incurred for livestock feed is also reduced. During a good season, one household can get 30 head loads/ stacks of grass hay, which would cost about 150 Ethiopian Birr (approx \$20) to buy.
- Grasses for roofing houses is now available from the enclosed area instead of having to travel an entire day in search of grasses as before or having to pay some 200 Ethiopian Birr for one small four by four metre house.
- Enclosed areas serve as reserves for grass seed: REST buys local grass seed to be sown in new areas, and the cost for one kilogram of grass seeds is about five kilograms of grain. At present, the cost incurred for grass seeds is diminishing because guards of the enclosed area are collecting seeds. Nursery sites are also now getting enough grass for mulching and shed cover.
- Siltation and erosion problems in cultivable lands are also significantly reduced
- Area enclosures are attracting bees, and honey production has improved both in quality and quantity.
- The enclosures are now becoming reserves for plant bio-diversity: Some 25 plant species (including fodder, shrubs, herbs, trees) have been counted.
- Habitat for wildlife: wild animals are increasing in number, including some endangered species (including wild poultry), and in range, at present some 15 species have been counted.
- Source of community finance: the communities are generating income from selling dried wood (fire wood) and from the fines imposed for illegal animal grazing, grass collection and other related misdemeanours. ☑

THE TESTIMONY OF ESTELVINA DEL CARMEN GONZALEZ

Born in Pichasca, Rio Hurtado Community, Department of Limari, IV region, Chile, member of the Neighbours Association "Caracoles" of Pichasca, and participant in the project "Community Based Organisations against Desertification."

"Every afternoon I sit in my ranch porch to take a rest after my daily duties - duties that these days, I am accomplishing with the help of my daughters and my numerous grandchildren. They go to school, something that I could not do myself. I could not even imagine. My parents could never send me to school. I can only rather remember my eternal walks behind goats all along these never-ending hills, burnt as a caldron, hot and most of the times dry. Sometimes hundreds of goats and every day the same: separate the males from the females, milk them and make cheese before coming back to the plateau, the hills, the mountains and the pastures. Our farmyard was one hour away from the river. There, as far as I can remember, every winter we suffered from cold. It was a stone hut sheltered by a cave, a hole in the stone. It was there that each night, we used to cook tortillas and prepare mate tea, looking at the infinity of the night. We were young, kids scared of the taitas' (parents or respectable people) voices.

I can barely remember my youth - it passed by so quickly. I became a mother in the twinkling of an eye and if pasturing was difficult in the past, it started to get worse. Each time, we had to go farther away with our little goats, each time a bit farther looking for branches and brushwood - something to light a fire to cook our food.

Well, at that time, I began to realise that we were leaving the hut behind us, each time more behind, each time farther away from the river. It was not like it was before. And my taita, who never smiled, and myself with the kids were walking for hours through the hills, searching for small branches. But there were worse periods. I can remember for example 1969. It was one of those worse years. Nearly everything was dry and our goats became skeletal... A lot of people left, not because they wanted to but because of the imminent hunger. At that time, I lost one of my family members. It was the hunger... Everything became sand, including the weakest people.

I could never wear good clothes, not even shoes. I cannot do it even now and my daughters laugh at me about that. I now cook in the solar cooker. It was so strange before and now I cannot live without it. There, I cook my stew, my soups, marmalade, and sweets. I do everything we need for the house and I do not need to walk in the fields to look for branches and wood for fire. Now, it is a lot better and I can sit here and look at how the hill is getting greener again. Now I realise the importance of respecting greenery and the fight against desertification. I know that each dish I cook, it is prepared with sunrays. It is like I am milking the sun and I leave the grass for the trees, for the all the birds that are coming... In this way, one day, we will see the river get closer to us again." ☑

SAHELIANS IN DAILY STRUGGLE AGAINST DESERTIFICATION

By Tahirou Diao

Sahel Defis, Djomba, Burkina Faso

(Extract from the report Djomga 2001: <http://www.sahel-defis.org>)

Today the village is inhabited by 3,000 people, women and men, who are experts in rain fed agriculture, but also in market gardening, tree planting, and weaving of straw mats. They supply the neighbouring town of Dori with products and hand labour.



This first year of the third Millennium was particularly hard for the people. Two early warning signs of desertification threatened the area: the pond of Dori, already dry in February, has not allowed vegetable growers to work. Cereals have become scarce, and cattle breeders have already started to sell their animals. The Government is providing occasional food aid, but despite the presence of nearly some thirty governmental and non-governmental projects and the contribution of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the future seems to be at stake. It remains to be built and safeguarded.

Swarms of young people, who constitute the majority of the population, are unemployed and disoriented. Some of them try their luck in wild gold mining under very perilous conditions. In the city, where people gather in front of the cinema house and the local bars, dangers is lurking that many of the youth may get addicted to tobacco, alcohol and hard drugs, and suffer from their very serious consequences.

Two principal players are working in the oasis

The government is one of the players, with yet a non-operational tourist centre and a regional tree nursery that was renewed recently with the help of Japanese cooperation. It is important to note that on the other side of the road, there is a rural training centre with market-gardens that ensures accommodation and food for students and teachers of CEPAJ (a partner association of Sahel DEFIS from Lyon, France, specialising in professional training of young people). Over the last three years, CEPAJ has been actively involved with Sahel DEFIS' activities in Djomga, and also in Djibo, another small town, some 200 kilometres west of Dori.

Since 1995, Sahel DEFIS, with the assistance of French and international partners, including the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), has been providing support to a women's organisation in Dori and to the local population in Djomga in their tree-nursery work (supplying hand tools, seeds, and insecticides, restoring an old water pump, repairing the water supply system, supplying basic medicine and food, and providing paid jobs for the construction of an environmental education centre on the two hectares allocated by the Mayor).

Since 2001, the centre in Djomga has had a solar-powered light system. This year, a training workshop for the construction and use of solar cookers is planned for the month of July, along with a workshop on handicrafts, with the purpose of producing high quality Sahelian crafts to be sold during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa.



In the framework of the programme “Women and Youth of the Sahel,” a multifunctional platform, managed by a group of women (1,000 members), has been officially established in the village in February 2001. This platform allows for the moment the grinding of cereals, thus relieving women of the long distance walks to the city. The benefits are equally

divided among the group of women, the platform and the centre. Other tools are going to be added to the platform so that men can fix donkey cart and bicycle wheels, using electricity for welding.

Conclusions

The financial support provided by governments and international institutions is often occasional, limited and unreliable. This is the main obstacle to sustainability. The only alternative seems once again to be the reliance on local income generation, while taking into consideration macro-economic constraints, climatic risks, and valuable contributions of civil society organisations. ☑



Images courtesy of: <http://www.sahel-defis.org>

INVOLVING OR NOT INVOLVING COMMUNITIES IN KENYA?

By Frank Msafiri

Chairman, National NGOs Coordinating Committee on Desertification in Kenya

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification calls for a bottom-up and participatory approach in identifying, implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects that combat desertification and mitigate the effect of drought. Projects should be initiated and managed with maximum participation of local communities, including women, youth, poor farmers and pastoralists. Projects should include measures to reduce poverty, increase income and employment opportunities, improve food security and use technologies that alleviate pressure on natural resources through the use of diverse, alternative and renewable sources of energy that are appropriate and efficient.

The UNCCD offers local communities a very wide range of opportunities based on local circumstances, traditions, culture, norms, knowledge, aspirations and priorities. There are many invisible, marginalized communities in the dry lands of Kenya that use their traditional knowledge in managing drought and exploiting natural resources. Some of the following community traditional methods for coping with drought and desertification are still practiced among the pastoralists of the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya.

Communities of the Samburu, Turkana, Kajiado and Marsabit districts in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands, have exclusive user rights to territory within a five kilometres radius of their homesteads. This has the effect of limiting resource use, and thus promoting sustainable use. They also take the main herd away to a far grazing area with most of the young people accompanying them. This is called *Fora* among the Rendille and Gabra of Marsabit, *Lale* among the Samburu and *Endukuya Oinkishu* among the Maasai of Masailand.

The Rendille and Gabra communities also eliminate younger livestock, especially lambs, by killing them whenever faced by drought. This helps save the dwindling water sources and pastures.

Communities have many experiences of drought and desertification. Some of these stories can be narrated and then used to start discussions on their implications on the fight against desertification and the effects of drought.

Experience from two communities of northern Kenya shows that dry land communities do not need to be led. As opportunities emerge, they will produce their own leaders and set their own directives. One of the provisions of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification requires the affected governments to provide those opportunities. During the Kenyan National Action Programme Consultative Processes, it was established by NGOs and the government that there was a sense of apathy on the part of the communities who have had many interviews, workshops, awareness raising sessions and community plans but have never seen any implementation.

There are two key proverbs from two communities - one from western Africa and the other from northern Kenya to illustrate this.

From western Africa: "...You (God) have the yam and the knife and only you know how much to cut for us". The people of the dry lands need to be empowered. Give them the knife and let them cut the yam for themselves, don't play a small god for them. The principle here is to empower the communities to enable them to own their own projects. This involves designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating.

From Kenya: "...The owner knows where to cut off his walking stick". The people of the dry lands know more than anyone else about their fragile ecosystem from which they have wrestled a living for a long time. They know what can work and what cannot work.

The two proverbs are quite comparable to the two community stories from the northern Kenya: A community in Baragoi division of Samburu district gives one successful story of community involvement in project formulation, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This community lost a lot of livestock to cattle rustlers followed by a severe drought, which killed many of their remaining stock. As a result, the community became very poor and ended up receiving food relief from the government. After the drought, the community members met and resolved to approach an NGO to assist them in restocking. The community, in collaboration with the NGO designed the restocking programme. They used their existing traditional poverty indicators to identify the poorer members who lost virtually all the animals and needed more assistance. Using their traditional restocking system referred to as "*paran*", the community contributed 50% of the small stock while the NGO provided some funds to purchase the remaining 50%. The animals were purchased from within the community. This was viewed necessary so as to redistribute small stock within the community without increasing the livestock population.

In this way, 326 families received between 15 and 40 head of small stock. One year later, an evaluation indicated an increase in livestock numbers by 20 percent. This is in line with the traditional percentage increase of the herds. This intervention was successful because:

- The affected community was fully involved in making the decision;
- An accepted traditional re-stocking system (*paran*) was used;
- The community members contributed 50% of the stock required. They therefore owned the project and saw to it that it succeeded;
- Over-stocking was avoided by redistributing small stocks owned by the community.

Another contrasting story demonstrates the negative impact on environment caused by a lack of community involvement in projects. This was in a Rendille community of the Marsabit district in northern Kenya. It came to pass that a priest went to work and live among the community in the Kaisut desert. It was the first time the priest visited this driest part of the country. After arrival in the area, he had no apparent idea of any project he would initiate with the communities.

The first thing he did was an extensive visit to the community “*manyatas*” (tradition homesteads). After the visits, the extent and degree of poverty in the area shocked him. There were no roads, women walked for two days in search of water and there was a high level of illiteracy due to a lack of schools. There were also high incidences of diseases as there were no health care services. The community also kept on moving from one place to another in search of pasture and water for their livestock.

All these disturbed him and he became so much concerned. He sat down to strategize measures to overcome these problems. The initial projects he thought of were to construct road systems, to install over thirty hand pumps, and to build schools, a hospital and of course, a church. This fascinated the Korr community so much so that they happily settled down. Soon people living far and wide heard of the Korr community and the generosity of the priest. They came with their livestock to join the Korr community and enjoy the benefits. They abandoned their traditional land use systems for a sedentary one.

There was a negative impact of this to the environment in that:

- A micro desert was created by the sudden increase and concentration of population around Korr;
- Dependency was created as the community abandoned their traditional system which worked and started “waiting for the father” to provide for their needs;
- The high moral standards enjoyed by the pastoralists declined as prostitution and drug abuse became common;
- Poverty increased as the traditional economic structure (dependency on livestock) was disrupted.

The above two stories illustrates the effects of involving or not involving the communities in identifying, designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects.

Communities in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid lands have become demotivated because of dependency on handouts from projects, donors and governments. There is need therefore, to demonstrate to them that there is dignity in self-reliance and pride in personal contribution. This can be achieved by recalling the communities’ past glory, strength, self-respect and pride. It is therefore necessary to show the communities that all is not lost and that they can change their environment and living conditions. They should also be reminded that their future and that of their children lie in their hands, and that the governments and donors only complement their efforts.

Communities should therefore be encouraged to implement the CCD by identifying and using their decision-making processes and structures. For example, among pastoralists, group decisions are made by consensus at specific venues like “the elder tree” and “*Naabo*” among the Rendille in northern Kenya. ☑



BACKGROUND

THE PROBLEM OF LAND DEGRADATION

Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations. Desertification does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. It occurs because dry land ecosystems, which cover over one third of the world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to over-exploitation and inappropriate land use. Poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing, and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the land's productivity. Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification. In addition, some one billion people in over one hundred countries are at risk. These people include many of the world's poorest, most marginalized, and politically weak citizens.

"...desertification' means land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities;

'combating desertification' includes activities which are part of the integrated development of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas for sustainable development..." - UNCCD, Article 1

AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION

Combating desertification is essential to ensuring the long-term productivity of inhabited dry lands. Unfortunately, past efforts have too often failed, and around the world the problem of land degradation continues to worsen. Recognizing the need for a fresh approach, 179 governments have joined as of March 2002, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. This Convention aims to promote effective action through innovative local programmes and supportive international partnerships. The treaty acknowledges that the struggle to protect dry lands will be a long one - there will be no quick fix. This is because the causes of desertification are many and complex, ranging from international trade patterns to unsustainable land management practices. Real and difficult changes will have to be made, both at the international and the local levels.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Convention opens an important new phase in the battle against desertification, but it is just a beginning. In particular, governments are regularly reviewing the action programmes. They also focus on awareness-raising, education, and training, both in developing and developed countries. Desertification can only be reversed through profound changes in local and international behaviour. Step by step, these changes will ultimately lead to sustainable land use and food security for a growing world population. Combating desertification, then, is really just part of a much broader objective: the sustainable development of countries affected by drought and desertification.

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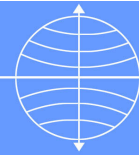
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Sand storm in China – Photo: Courtesy of CCICCD

"Drought and desertification threaten the livelihood of over 1 billion people in more than 110 countries around the world." - Kofi Annan



North-South cooperation: Youth from France and members of Sahel DEFIS Burkina putting accaia Senegal (gum arabic) seeds in plastic bags. 14,000 trees were produced in 1999.