

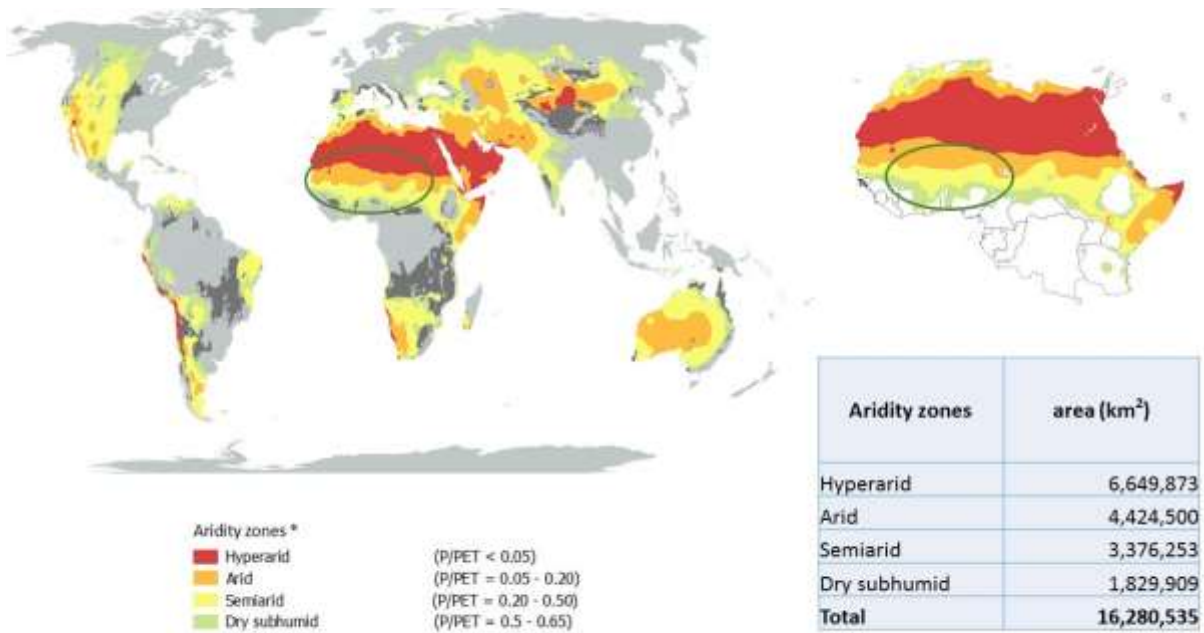
**Evaluation of the project
“Action Against Desertification in support of
the implementation of the Great Green Wall
for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative and of
the UNCCD action plans in Fiji and Haiti, and
South-South cooperation in the Africa
Caribbean and Pacific countries”**

Project code: GCP/INT/157/EC

**Annex 2. Africa’s drylands: from problem to sustainable dryland
development**

1. Drylands cover more than 40 percent of the Earth's land mass, and occur on and are distributed over all continents. In particular, they cover most of the Sahel (see figure below).

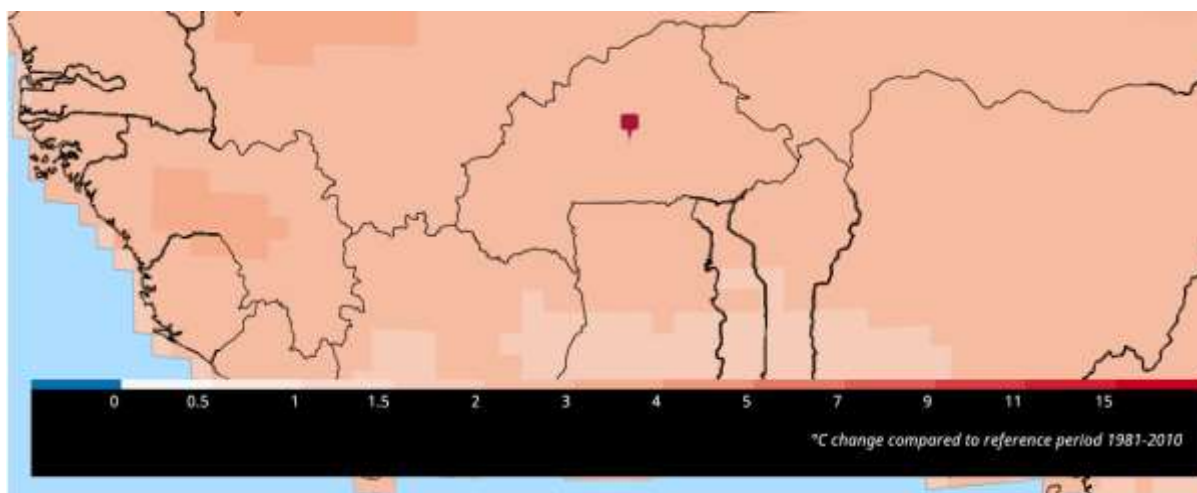
Figure 1. Global mapping of drylands



Source: UNEP-WCMC, 2007. Map conforms to UN. 2020. *Map No. 4170, Rev. 19.*

2. They are home to more than 2.1 billion people. The drylands include an endless number of cultures, traditions and livelihoods, as well as a great variety of ecosystems. What unites these different areas is the dryness or aridity of the environment, and with that the constant need to adapt to actual and potential water scarcity and unpredictability of rainfall and water provision, irrespective of whether this environment is a natural ecosystem or a social-ecological system (i.e. a system that consists of 'a bio-geo-physical' unit and its associated social actors and institutions; social-ecological systems are complex and adaptive, and delimited by spatial or functional boundaries surrounding particular ecosystems and their context problems). These drylands are also characterized by their high susceptibility to land degradation and generally high vulnerability to external shocks both natural and/or man-made. As such, drylands are areas where the use of sustainable land management (SLM) of scarce resources is a *conditio sine qua* for guaranteeing and maintaining the livelihoods of their inhabitants.
3. That 2.1 billion people make their livelihood in the drylands is testimony to the potential productivity offered by the drylands, the resilience of their inhabitants, and the great level of man's adaptation capacity. However, many of the world's dryland communities struggle to make ends meet and some regions have long been notorious for the continuous land degradation and with that eroding livelihoods, poverty and food insecurity. This is often combined with weak governance structures and a lack of adequate enabling environment to support and foster resilience and sustainable livelihoods in the drylands.
4. The foreseen severe impacts of climate change will further degrade the situation, especially in the Sahel Region: high rise of temperature (as can be seen below, up to +5°C of mean annual temperature in 2041–2070 as compared to 1981–2010), increased irregularities of precipitations, increase of extreme events (droughts, floods, etc.).

Figure 2. Foreseen temperature changes 2041–2070



Indicator: Temperature, temperature (annual mean), Time Period: Future, 2041 - 2070, RCP: High (RCP 8.5), Model: Cordex Africa, Bias Adjusted: Yes

Source: SMHI, 2021. Map conforms to UN. 2020. *Map No. 4045, Rev. 7.*

UNCCD and its strategic frameworks

5. To respond to these chronic challenges, the international community launched the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 1994. The UNCCD is unique in the way its overall goal is to address/foster/promote sustainable development in affected areas based on the recognition that ‘desertification and drought affect sustainable development through their interrelationships with important social problems such as poverty, poor health and nutrition, lack of food security, and those arising from migration, displacement of persons and demographic dynamics’.
6. The UNCCD is supposed to be implemented at (sub-)regional and national levels through scale/area-specific action programmes (RAPs, SRAPs, and NAPs). In principle, National Action Programmes (NAPs) are supposed to have the most direct impact on problems as perceived in the field. They are based on participatory principles with special attention to strengthen the role of women and promote gender equality in trying to achieve sustainable dryland restoration and drought mitigation using multi-stakeholder and multi-sector management that should also involve the young and other vulnerable groups in society. However, most African countries have not updated their NAPs since the late 1990s for lack of finance and political support.
7. In line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the concept of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) was developed. Through the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Target Setting Programme, the Global Mechanism (GM) and the secretariat of the UNCCD, in collaboration with multiple international partners, are supporting interested countries with their national LDN target setting process, including setting national baselines, targets and associated measures to achieve LDN. Many countries including Ethiopia, Gambia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal have developed national LDN profiles and national LDN target setting programmes. National LDN report frameworks include strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis related to the sustainable development of the drylands.
8. The UNCCD has been ratified by 197 state parties but in spite of a number of global efforts to address dryland problems through integrated development initiatives, challenges remain. This led UNCCD parties to launch a 10-year Strategy in 2008 to reinforce the global partnership for dryland development through four strategic objectives focusing on improving i) living conditions of

affected populations; ii) conditions of affected ecosystems; iii) global benefits; and iv) partnerships and resource mobilization for UNCCD implementation. While it was generally agreed among UNCCD stakeholders that the Strategy revived the implementation process, it was also recognized that the latter was challenged by the lack of a coherent monitoring framework. This problem was addressed in the follow-up Strategic framework 2018–2030 that includes an indicators framework.

9. The new 2018–2030 Strategy was timed in accordance with the timeline of the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. It sets out five strategic objectives in line with the four of the former strategy but adding Drought management. The indicator framework includes indicators for each strategic objective in addition to the Strategy's contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Moreover, affected countries are encouraged to complement these overarching indicators with more specific, national indicators. According to the implementation framework outlined in the Strategy, implementation will primarily take place through actions at national and sub-regional levels, with the support of UNCCD institutions, partners, and other relevant stakeholders.
10. National UNCCD implementation efforts are coordinated by the respective national UNCCD focal points, typically emanating from the Ministry of Environment or other ministries related to natural resource governance. Additionally, civil society organizations engaged in UNCCD implementation are organized in networks in many countries.

Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative

11. One of the world's drylands most affected by desertification/land degradation and drought (D/LDD) is the so-called 'Sahara and Sahel belt' across northern Africa, with the Sahel covering an area of approximately 305 million hectares. It is a transitional ecoregion of semi-arid grasslands, savannas, steppes, and thorn shrublands lying between the wooded Sudanian savannas to the South and the Sahara to the North – additionally, this belt area is mirrored in the South by the southern Africa drylands that cover 224 million hectares, which is 84 percent of the region's land area. Sixty percent of the northern belt is semi-arid. Forests cover 27 percent of the drylands in the region and other wooded land 33 percent, yet 47 percent of the dryland area has no tree cover. Various initiatives have been launched over the last decades to address the continuous degradation, including the ones inspired by an old vision of greening the area through sustainable land management (SLM) that would also improve the livelihood opportunities for the local populations.
12. The latter vision was finally translated into The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI), which was launched by CEN-SAD (Community of Sahel-Saharan States) Heads of State in 2005. Since then, the GGWSSI has benefitted from a high political commitment in and by the Sahel countries in cooperation with UNCCD institutions, FAO, other UN agencies, and a number of other bilateral and multilateral governmental and non-governmental donors and partners.

Figure 3. Great Green Wall of Africa



Notes: The Great Green Wall area is defined by the 100 and 400 mm isohyets, which corresponds approximately to the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones, or drylands, in the region.

Source: UNCCD. n.d. About. In: *UNCCD* [online]. (available at www.unccd.int). Map conforms to UN. 2020. *Map No. 4045, Rev. 7.*

13. To support the GGWSSI, 11 countries in the Sahel-Saharan region (Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Sudan) established the Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall initiative (PA-GGW) under the leadership of the African Union Commission (AUC) and appointed an Executive Secretary.
14. The regional strategy from 2014 outlines the latter’s vision as to provide for a ‘green, fertile and prosperous Africa rid of famine and images of malnourished children and livestock linked to famine’. The Strategy sets out three objectives centring around improving i) the living conditions of the population and resilience vis-à-vis climate change and drought; ii) the conditions of the affected ecosystems; and iii) partnerships and resource mobilization. As can be seen, the strategic and operational objectives of the GGWSSI mirror both UNCCD’s strategic and operational objectives.
15. At the respective national levels, National Agencies for the GGWSSI (NAGGW) were created as operational GGWSSI focal points. In 2011/2012, GGWSSI-countries developed 5-year national GGWSSI Strategic Action Plans (GWWSAPs) outlining the key challenges for i) sustainable dryland development; ii) key national and local actors; and iii) plans for priority actions and programmes as well as resource mobilization frameworks and investment needs. National action plans and strategies were coordinated under the national GGW Units, typically representing the Ministries of Environment.
16. GGWSSI’s progress was assessed various times, including in 2011, 2013 and in 2018, where a review of the implementation of the 2011–2017 GGWSSI was presented. According to the latter, GGWSSI has five key components: i) information systems, observatories, and early warning and response; ii) SLM and green economy, iii) climate change, socio-economic development and local governance; iv) accompanying research and development; and v) communication, marketing and advocacy.

Office of Evaluation
evaluation@fao.org
www.fao.org/evaluation

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, Italy



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