



# CENTRAL AFRICA

## CONTEXT

The Central African sub-region comprises Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe. It has three main ecological zones:

- the humid forest zone, dominated by the forests of the Congo Basin - the second biggest forest area in the world;
- the Sudano-Sahelian zone, which covers the low altitude sub-humid, sub-arid and arid areas of the Sudano-Sahel and is dominated by the tree and bush savannah ecosystems of Chad, Cameroon and CAR; and
- the savannah zone, which covers the high altitudes of the Sudano-Sahel, including areas of high population density, such as the highlands of Cameroon, Burundi and Rwanda.

The main causes of degradation in the sub-region are: illegal harvesting of wood for fuel in the Sudano-Sahelian zone; unplanned utilization of forest resources in the humid forest zone; and expansion of subsistence and commercial agriculture. The effects of increased desertification are particularly severe in Cameroon and Chad, where erratic rainfall and widespread drought have already had a negative impact on the productivity of agricultural land.

The Sub-regional Action Programme (SRAP) to combat land degradation and desertification in Central Africa, adopted in September 2008, outlines the priorities for promoting sustainable land management (SLM) in the sub-region.

## CHALLENGES

The SRAP identifies three main needs for combating land degradation in Central Africa: harmonized management of cross-border transhumance; sustainable management of shared water resources; and information management. To finance SRAP implementation, a financial resource mobilization strategy has been designed that identifies potential sources of financing including national development funds, the Community Integration Contribution (CIC) of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the independent financing mechanism of the Central African Forests Commission (COMIFAC), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and innovative financing mechanisms.

However, neither land degradation nor desertification are considered political priorities in Central Africa and therefore resource mobilization for implementing SLM programmes and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) at the national and sub-regional levels remains a major challenge. There is need for an integrated approach that mainstreams SLM and the UNCCD issues into national and sub-regional political and budgetary frameworks. In fact, COMIFAC has requested the Global Mechanism (GM) to help build the capacity of major SRAP stakeholders in implementing an Integrated Financing Strategy (IFS) for SLM. Such stakeholders include: ECCAS and COMIFAC liaison centres; thematic lead agencies such as the Intergovernmental Agency for the Development of Environmental Information (ADIE); the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC); the Central African Economic Commission for Livestock; Meat and Fisheries Resources (CEBEVIRHA); COMIFAC and the Central African Network of Forest and Environment Training Institutions (RIFEAC); and the Central African UNCCD National Focal Points (FPs). Capacity-building will therefore be a key feature of the GM support programme.



Map courtesy of IFAD

Total population (million), 2004: 105.5  
Surface area (million km<sup>2</sup>), 2003: 5.3  
Population density (people per km<sup>2</sup>): 19.9  
Agricultural land (% of surface area), 2003: 36.7

Source: FAO (2006), FAO (2007)

 The Global Mechanism (GM) was established under Article 21 of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and began its operations in October 1997. The GM is defined as an organizational entity mandated “to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms... [and]... to promote actions leading to the mobilization and channelling of substantial financial resources to affected developing country Parties.”

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### COMMON OBJECTIVES



Map courtesy of IFAD

The main objective of the GM's support to Central Africa is to mobilize financing for sustainable natural resource management, with priority given to:

- strengthening partnerships to promote the harmonized management of cross-border transhumance (mobilizing financial resources for the SRAP requires multiple partnerships to be built in priority areas and diverse, internal, external and innovative sources of financing to be identified and evaluated);
- improving the mainstreaming of SLM into major political processes, (while SLM and UNCCD issues are being mainstreamed into national and sub-regional policies - including ECCAS's Common Policy for Environment and Natural Resource Management and COMIFAC's Convergence Plan - they have not been made a political priority or secured with ensured budgetary allocations); and
- test and assess innovative financing mechanisms for arid and degraded areas, which have great potential for financing and promoting SLM.

### WHERE DO WE STAND IN IMPLEMENTATION?

The support programme was launched in August 2008 with the signing of an agreement between COMIFAC and the GM.

The programme is being implemented through partnerships with liaison centres, lead agencies for the SRAP, the Central African UNCCD NFPs and development partners active in the sub-region. It capitalizes on and is integrated with existing regional and sub-regional processes, including the Comprehensive Programme for Agricultural Development in Africa (PCDAA), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), TerrAfrica and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership (CBFP) that coordinates support from COMIFAC's development partners within the framework of the Convergence Plan. At the national level, the SRAP is complemented by the GM's support to countries, such as Rwanda, in designing UNCCD National Action Programmes (NAPs), and in designing and implementing IFSs, for example, in Cameroon.

### NEXT STEPS

During the first year of implementation, the GM's support programme for Central Africa will focus on:

1. analysing sub-regional activities aimed at harmonizing the management of cross-border transhumance, in order to identify financial resources resulting from new and/or strengthened partnerships;
2. exploring opportunities for mobilizing internal and external resources for implementing SLM/ UNCCD;
3. strengthening collaboration between liaison centres, the UNCCD NFPs, the thematic lead agencies and other SRAP stakeholders; and
4. assessing climate change-related activities in Central Africa and their relevance to SLM/UNCCD.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION  
TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

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