



Increasing finance
for sustainable land management

ERITREA

CONTEXT

Eritrea is situated in northern East Africa, bordered by Sudan to the west, Ethiopia to the south and Djibouti to the southeast. It is situated on the western shores of the Red Sea with a total land area of approximately 124,320 km². The country has three main agro-ecological zones: the Central Highlands with a cool sub-humid to semi-arid climate; the Western Lowlands with a hot semi-arid climate; and the Eastern Lowlands with a desert-like climate and altitude ranging from below sea level (- 80 to -90m) to 600m.

This complex series of landscape and climatic features characterized by vertical zoning is subject to a diversity of land uses, the main forms being agriculture and pastoralism. Approximately 70% of Eritreans earn their living from the land and rely on agriculture (largely crop and livestock production and fishing) for income and food. The fact that agriculture is the most important sector of the country's economy and accounts for most exports and 36% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) explains why the demand for arable land and land for grazing, forestry, wildlife, tourism and urban development is increasing.¹ Sustainable land management (SLM)² is therefore of critical importance to national development processes. Food security has high priority in national development owing to its overarching contribution to poverty reduction, wealth creation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Eritrea has signed and ratified Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) including the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It has also prepared a National Action Programme (NAP) for UNCCD implementation that identifies factors contributing to land degradation/desertification and practical measures to address these. The government puts importance on domestic and innovative approaches to UNCCD implementation, to which it allocates financial resources mainly from domestic revenue.

CHALLENGES

Eritrea faces a number of SLM challenges including vulnerability to land degradation and desertification, one of Eritrea's most compelling development challenges and food insecurity, which is seen as a structural problem. Factors contributing to land degradation include deforestation, improper cultivation and irrigation systems, and soil erosion.

Eritrea is also particularly vulnerable to the effects of changing climate, including climate variability, which has strong links to land degradation/desertification. The increasing intensity of drought and floods is phenomenal. The key climatic hazards identified by the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) in Eritrea are increased climate variability, recurring drought, flash flooding and sea level rise. In addition, long-term changes in climate will have adverse impacts on agriculture, water resources, forestry, coastal environments and human health.

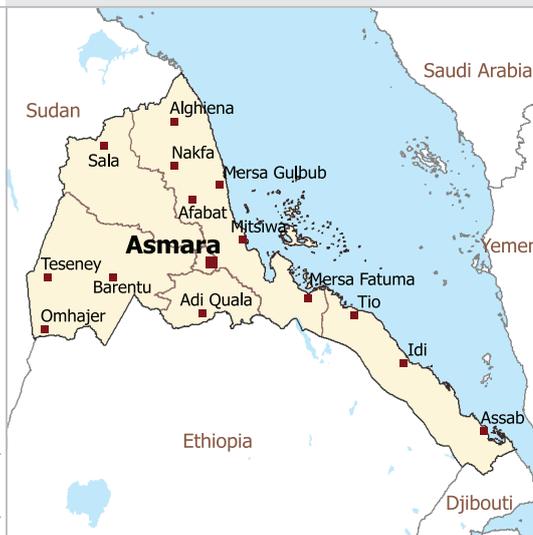
The people of Eritrea are making great efforts to address land degradation and broader UNCCD-related issues, and the government is implementing related policies, strategies and programmes. The government's SLM Partnership Platform, for instance, aims to support and step up efforts to mobilize and coordinate resources for UNCCD/SLM implementation.

In spite of these efforts, much remains to be done to address the SLM challenge effectively address the SLM challenge. The lack of adequate domestic financial resources and the low level of official development assistance (ODA) continue to pose serious development challenges. Therefore, co-operation between Eritrea and the GM seeks to support the Government efforts to address land degradation and promote SLM/UNCCD implementation.

¹ Eritrea's NAP for UNCCD implementation.

² Although there is no one single definition of SLM, it commonly refers to "the adoption of land use systems that, through appropriate management practices, enables land users to maximize the economic and social benefits from the land while maintaining or enhancing the ecological support functions of the land resources. (Source: *Country Engagement Strategy of the Global Mechanism*).

Map courtesy of IFAD



Total population (million): 3.8
Surface area (thousand km²): 124,320
Population Density (per km²), 2006: 117.6
Apprx. 29 people per km²,
but 200 people per km² in the highlands
Forest area (% surface area), 2005
approx. 1 %
Agricultural land (% surface area), 2005: 23%
GDP per capita (USD), 2007: est.800
GDP real growth rate (annual %), 2007: 7%
UNCCD ratification (year): 1996

Sources: www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/er.html and <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20535285~menuPK:1192694~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html>

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."

COMMON OBJECTIVES

The GM and Eritrea cooperation provides an opportunity to work to achieve the country's long-term vision to address SLM challenges, particularly those bearing on UNCCD implementation. In the long term, the joint objective is to enhance sustainable natural resources management, food security and the livelihoods of vulnerable and marginal rural populations, thereby also contributing to poverty reduction and economic growth.

While the overall goal of the cooperation is to create an enabling environment for increased financing and investments for UNCCD implementation, the specific objectives are to:

- promote knowledge management in support of UNCCD implementation;
- formulate an Integrated Financing Strategy (IFS), particularly through exploring innovative sources of finance that increase the funding base for UNCCD/SLM;
- mainstream UNCCD/NAP principles and objectives into broader development and other strategies; and
- build strong coalitions and partnerships to increase investments in UNCCD/SLM, especially with bilateral and multilateral development partners, civil society and the private sector.

WHERE DO WE STAND ON IMPLEMENTATION?

Since 2005, the GM and the Government of Eritrea have cooperated to support the government's efforts to address land degradation and promote the following areas:

- **Mainstreaming SLM issues** into Eritrea's national development programmes and strategies. As part of this process, project documents were developed as inputs into Eritrea's Poverty Reduction Strategy, and to engage key development partners in resource mobilization for the UNCCD. A report on mainstreaming the NAP into key national development frameworks has been completed.
- **Partnership and Coalition building** to promote joint UNCCD implementation: Together with government and key development partners, the GM has facilitated dialogue with development partners including the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Norway, to establish a partnership platform that supports the country's SLM and resource mobilization and coordination efforts. The government has endorsed this partnership platform and, in conjunction with the GM, IFAD, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Unit of IFAD and other development partners, has co-organized a workshop on establishing an SLM Partnership Platform for Eritrea, in Asmara.
- **Communication and knowledge management** to strengthen the capacity of local communities through advocacy and awareness building, including through a programme on land degradation issues: The overall objective of this campaign is to support mainstreaming and encourage investment in SLM, which has been well received at the highest political level and acknowledged by the President of Eritrea. The GM also supported the publication of *Innovative Approaches to UNCCD Implementation: Eritrea's Experience of Social Mobilization*, which provided an opportunity for Eritrea to share its experiences and galvanize support for UNCCD implementation.

Key lessons and experiences can be drawn from the past co-operation between GM and Eritrea. First, country ownership and leadership are indispensable for mobilizing resources. The Government of Eritrea has demonstrated this leadership by investing significant portion of its domestic resources in agriculture and SLM-related activities. Second, there is a growing potential to mobilize innovative sources of financing. This, however, would require GM and government to explore the feasibility, practicality and political economy surrounding these innovative sources.

NEXT STEPS

The government and the GM are now consolidating and building on their work by developing a new cooperation programme, which will be ready for signature by December 2008. This programme reflects a partnership approach with government and key development partners, and is based on the principles of country ownership, complementarity and value addition. The objective of the programme is to facilitate the mobilization of financial resources for UNCCD implementation from national, bilateral, multilateral and innovative sources. The programme consists of three main components:

1. promoting knowledge management in support of UNCCD implementation (e.g. South-South cooperation and sharing of best practices);
2. development of a focused and targeted Integrated Financing Strategy (IFS), including innovative sources of financing; and

Map courtesy of IFAD



FOR MORE INFORMATION



Mr. Hiruy Asghedom
Department of Agricultural
Promotion and Development
Ministry of Agriculture
Asmara
heruyasg@eol.com.er



Ms Elsie Attafuah
Programme Officer
East & Southern Africa
e.attafuah@global-mechanism.org