

Increasing finance
for sustainable land management

GUATEMALA

CONTEXT

Guatemala is located in Central America and covers an area of 108 889 km². It ratified the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on 25 March 1998 through Congressional Decree 13-98.

One of Guatemala's first actions was the preparation of a National Action Programme (NAP) to fight desertification and drought. Since then, the country has prepared and presented national follow-up reports on the Convention's implementation.

The Government of Guatemala has undertaken activities to promote and implement the NAP in the 'dry corridor', where 1.3 million people live in poverty or extreme poverty. It is estimated that 82% of the country is affected by recurring droughts.

The government has focused its attention on environmental issues through the National Plan for Socio-Environmental Improvement (PNMSA), which centres on socio-economic security to ensure environmental protection and improvement. The ultimate aim is to promote inter-generational human development, paying special attention to climate change, drought and food security issues.

Since August 2006, Guatemala has received direct support from the Global Mechanism (GM) of the UNCCD to support activities to enhance Convention implementation and to raise awareness on desertification and drought as issues of national importance.

CHALLENGES

The lack of a land management policy and inappropriate land-use practices have led to significant land deterioration in Guatemala. Over the last ten years, large areas of forest have been converted to pasture for livestock production and to extensive cultivation of crops such as African palm and sugar cane. This expansion and inappropriate use of the agricultural frontier, combined with forest fires, have harmed the environment, resulting in increased land degradation.

According to the environmental profile (IARNA 2006), soil loss is estimated at 60 million tons per year, equivalent to USD100 million per year. These figures point to alarming land degradation, as a result of insufficient government policies and norms for optimum and indeed appropriate land use.


In the coming years, institutional efforts must be made to raise awareness of the importance of the UNCCD at the highest political decision-making levels, in order to ensure the effective implementation of actions to fight desertification and drought and promote sustainable land management (SLM). The GM's Integrated Financing Strategy (IFS) is a good instrument for mobilizing financial resources and stimulating greater investment in SLM.

The Country Engagement Strategy is the best tool for the government's long-term activities to fight desertification and drought, through which it assigns human, financial and physical resources. Implementation of these and other national strategies will constitute a practical, tangible response to the challenges posed by climate change.



Map courtesy of IFAD

Population (million): 12.7
 Population growth: 2.8%
 Rural population: 54%
 Poverty: 57%
 Extreme poverty: 15.7%
 Human Development Index: 0.689
 Illiteracy: 27%
 Per capita gross national product (GNP): USD 5 120
 Forest cover (million ha): 4.3 (40%)
 External debt (million): USD 4 100

 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

- Develop and implement a series of strategic actions that impact public policies and the legal and institutional framework and that allow for long-term, sustainable implementation of the UNCCD and the NAP.
- Assign high priority to the establishment of measures to restore and rehabilitate degraded lands in areas of Guatemala affected by desertification and drought.
- Support and guide implementation of the IFS to tap financial resources for effective UNCCD implementation in the country.
- Strengthen national capacities through the implementation of a country involvement strategy, as a step towards achieving the long-term sustainability of UNCCD implementation.
- Coordinate with the GM's activities for effective UNCCD implementation at the local- and regional-levels.

WHERE DO WE STAND ON IMPLEMENTATION?

The Government of Guatemala has made desertification and drought a priority, and is working in this area with the technical and financial support of the GM. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources has included desertification and drought in its Institutional Strategic Plan.

Work has begun on the development of the IFS, which will allow the government to assign financial resources to strengthening the capacities of the Unit to Fight Desertification and Drought. This will help improve Convention and NAP implementation.

During 2008, consultations on the IFS began at the local government level, and the NAP has been widely publicized at workshops and technical meetings attended by many sectors of society.

The Inter-Institutional Technical Group for SLM in Guatemala was recently created as a joint initiative between the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources and the GM. This group comprises representatives of relevant national institutions and provides a forum for promoting UNCCD issues. The group will strengthen national capacities in this area and contribute to the coordination and management of activities among the various institutions involved.

NEXT STEPS

The GM has undertaken to assist the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources in ensuring effective implementation of the Convention through instruments such as the IFS, the Country Engagement Strategy and the NAP. By so doing, the GM aims to ensure that all stakeholders in environmental management in the public, private and civil society sectors achieve the effective, long-term and sustainable implementation of activities to fight desertification and drought, within the framework of government priorities geared towards responding to the effects of climate change.

FOR MORE INFORMATION



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