

Developing National Action Programmes for cross-sector, multi-stakeholder cooperation and participation

What?

North African countries have historically taken action to arrest land degradation in dry areas. In 2000, the governments of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia requested the GM's strategic guidance and financial support for partnership-building to enhance resource flows for UNCCD implementation.

The GM's approach in North Africa focuses on elaborating and implementing National Action Programmes (NAPs) as effective vehicles for improving cross-sector cooperation, development partner coordination and multi-stakeholder participation.

Why?

Adverse climatic conditions and natural processes make North Africa particularly susceptible to land degradation. These factors are often compounded by an unfavourable socio-economic and policy environment, including a growing population, income disparities between rural and urban areas, inadequate incentives for sustainable land management (SLM), and inefficient resource use due to poor coordination.

The fundamental link between land degradation and poverty means that the cost of land degradation is high. Combating desertification is therefore urgent, and requires concerted action from all stakeholders.

How?

In each country, a short and medium-term financing strategy for UNCCD implementation is developed based on knowledge generated from information exchanges with donor partners. The GM works closely with UNCCD National Focal Point institutions on strategic analyses and partnership-building workshops. Through dialogue with national and external stakeholders, a common understanding of the challenges is reached and effective responses are developed.

At national level, the programme focuses on three priority areas, to foster enabling conditions for investment in SLM:

- mainstreaming the UNCCD into national planning processes
- investigating new sources of financing
- capacity building and strengthened multi-stakeholder coordination

At subregional level, the GM adopts a similar integrated approach, supporting the Arab Maghreb Union's Sub-Regional Action Programme (AMU SRAP) and the Programme for Promotion of Sustainable Development in Rainfed Areas of West Asia and North Africa (WANA). The aim is to complement NAP activities, promote information sharing and the exchange of lessons learned, and build capacity. In coming years, GM will identify new finance opportunities arising from decentralization and the quantification of ecosystem services. It will support national-level capacity building to create an enabling environment for mobilizing resources to implement UNCCD. The GM will also support efforts to make policies and programmes

coherent, working with development partners to achieve harmonization. As processes take root, the GM will foster the exchange of experiences and lessons learned between countries, managing knowledge so as to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of UNCCD implementation and financing.

Special initiatives

SolArid is the GM's South-to-south cooperation programme. It highlights the specific characteristics of Sahel and Sahara countries that the international community should take into account when developing strategies to combat desertification and poverty. SolArid's main aims are to establish a permanent network to exchange experiences on resource mobilization strategies, develop financial partnering strategies and foster partnerships.

An international workshop on Decentralization and Local Development in Arid Zones (Marrakech, 13-16 April 2006) brought together regional stakeholders to enhance understanding of ongoing initiatives at inter-regional level, explore capacity-building opportunities, identify potential partnerships, and define the modalities for permanent exchanges on desertification issues.

SolArid now has a Steering Committee which has adopted the 2007 Work Programme and a 3-year SolArid Programme for 2007-2009.

Lesson learned

- Mainstreaming the UNCCD into national policy, planning and implementation processes requires long-term commitment and concerted efforts from all partners.
- Financial strategies should be based on specific knowledge of a country's policy formulation, planning and budgetary processes and of its development partners' programming priorities and procedures, so that national and external priorities and procedures can be harmonized.
- Sustainability depends on all stakeholders and international development partners agreeing on common objectives. Delineating the roles and responsibilities of each promotes efficient resource use and mitigates potential conflicts and bottlenecks. As well as key line ministries, non-technical ministries such as finance, planning and international cooperation should also participate, in order to engender national ownership and broaden intervention options beyond the purely technical.
- Extensive dialogue and advocacy is required to raise awareness of UNCCD, gain consensus on the causes of land degradation, and identify solutions.

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