

Annex 1:
NGO paper on the
Draft Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management

With a lot of interest we went through the draft document of OP#15. First of all we want to congratulate the Secretariat of GEF for the tremendous, comprehensive and serious work that you have done for this OP#15.

And I want to thank you on behalf of Civil Society, for the opportunity given to NGOs for feedback and suggestions. This process showed and reinforced for us, that GEF Secretariat believes in participation of Civil Society in a real and transparent meaning of the word “participation”. We hope, that one day Civil Society also will be able to have right to vote in the Council decision.

Land degradation, is one of the most important issues, of nearly all governments, developed and developing countries.

We hope with this OP#15 several projects will be implemented and Desertification and Land Degradation will be mitigate, starting at local level passing through regional and finishing at global level.

1-Introduction

Desertification, better defined as land degradation, is of major and continuing concern to communities living in dry regions. It is the cause as well the effect of poverty and endangers the welfare and livelihoods of future generations. It is generally acknowledged that the causes of desertification are mainly human in origin. But half of the reality is buried somewhere very deep we presume.

We do not want to be sarcastic and pessimist, but we should start to rethink the deep causes of desertification and land degradation for finding real and applicable, solutions this time in this new focal area of GEF !!!!!

To combat desertification effectively we need to understand these causes and underlying socioeconomic and cultural processes.

Foreign powers ignored and still ignore traditional indigenous resource management; they established the western concept of market agriculture, reoriented education and research and centralized state power. In the process community lands were expropriated and forests decimated.

And most post-colonial government elites continued to operate with these foreign concepts and policies as they pursue the global development dream. In most of arid and semi-arid countries relatively fertile region became export oriented monoculture and traditional land use practice was replaced by monoculture for feeding foreign factories raw material.

Forest, livestock and cropping are no longer mutually supportive. Pastoralism is increasingly difficult as the rangelands needed for transmigration in dry years are being taken over by sedentary farmers who have the support of government policies. At the same time traditional decision making, land tenure and management often lack the flexibility to adapt to new needs.

Traditional water harvesting systems—once the backbone of agriculture-- has been replaced by deep wells and big dams. Rural communities and tribal people in particular have lost access to forest resources as most forests have been cut down and the monocultures of market-oriented agriculture have become common practice.

Such changes have resulted in the ecological degradation and poverty of local communities, important push factors stimulating a steady stream of out migration. And the easiest argument is to say

How do we rethink and reverse the approach for combating land degradation and desertification and the role and responsibility of each stakeholder?

2- Background

It is known that the most dry lands are non-equilibrium ecosystems that require a very different kind of treatment and management than equilibrium ecosystems. This concept has revolutionized the thinking and practice of range management in the past couple of decades. The old systems were based on a complex understanding of the ecosystems and their real carrying capacity, and a opportunistic approach to using resources in micro-environment while they were there, and moving away from them before they are destroyed

How do we revive the concept of ownership, and system of community conserved areas of range and wood land that has been practiced by nomadic pastoralist from time immemorial?. Such systems have an associated set of community benefits and sanctions.

Comparing characteristics of Modern and Traditional Knowledge we see that TK most of the time is multipurpose system and functionalism in the long run but, and with internal inputs and independence, MK is specific solution and immediate efficacy and external resources and dependence. We can observe that most of the time traditional agriculture in the arid and semi-arid region has had the approach of maintenance and management organization, and administration systems has always been cohesive and people oriented.

The other question is how to find a closer linkage between modern science and other form of knowledge for their natural enrichment and benefit for a sustainable use of agriculture and rangeland and fisheries.

Non-equilibrium ecosystems were perfectly managed by local people with their traditional knowledge and local sciences. For example the old schools of carrying capacity calculation for rangelands, unfortunately still practiced in most of the region, are no longer considered valid scientifically. In fact, the practice of the nomadic pastoralists themselves is seen nowadays to be much more technically correct than what classical and conventional range

management experts have to offer. But inappropriate agricultural policies and incentives killed everything.

Again how do we find a new mechanism's for marrying these two technologies TK and MK for a new sustainable way of dealing with natural resources.

Overgrazing is not at all the reason of overpopulation—the local community pastoralist in every where in the world have been experts on range carrying capacity adding. The UN Convention to Combat Desertification has shown that local governance and participation are key to the success of any sustainable development program.

How to reinstall the decentralization processes for the governance of local activities for pastoralism as well as agricultural activities

The most striking aspect of land tenure in much of the countries of the “South” is the clash of two worldviews: between that shared by many indigenous and local communities, and that held by those who influence or “reform” the process from the outside. The local communities have usually held land and other natural resources as common---and communal---property. The external models of development, often coming from countries of the north, have held that land---and other natural resources, including wildlife, rangelands, forests, water, etc---are to be held either by the State (predominantly the state socialist model, but also practiced by such non-socialist states countries), or private individual. In either case, this has usually resulted in the alienation of local communities, including women, from rights and access to these essential livelihood resources.

As a example in Kenya, as a result of pressures and financial support from the United States for the cadasterisation of land, Masai land was finally broken up and registered in the name of the heads of households, usually males. Studies have shown that women were deprived of land rights under this system, while before cadasterisation “reform” at least had access as a part of the community and the household. Participatory research is necessary to understand how local systems can be enhanced by laws and policies in order to protect marginalized groups such as widows.

Proper enforcement of customary land use rules, which define maintenance and cost-sharing responsibilities, could significantly increase the investment in land improvement and maintenance

Our concern is how to find a mechanism for enforcement of customary land tenure rules and systems, including communal ownership arrangements.

Again the major causes of woodland degradation always comes from outsiders--we should give them back to the community forest people the management of their forests the ownership of that. Inappropriate government policies and incentives, imported rules and no-adequate protected laws

Strengthening of the participation of all stakeholders in the management of natural resources---
- from planning and implementation to monitoring and evaluation—to optimize the effectiveness of measure to prevent and reverse land degradation.

Under the UNCCD provisions and support, Asian countries facing drought and desertification have collectively started of implement programmes and actions to combat the threats of desertification, and mitigating the effects of drought. They have launched a Thematic Program Networks with six topics. Desertification Monitoring and Assessment (China), Agroforestry and Soil Conservation in Arid, Semi-arid and Sub-humid Areas (India), Rangeland Management and Fixation of Shifting Sand Dunes (Iran), Water Resources Management for Agriculture in Arid, Semi-arid and Sub-humid Areas (Syria), Strengthening Capacities for Drought Impact Management and Desertification Control (Mongolia), Assistance for the Implementation of Integrated Local Area Development Programmes Initiatives. This Mechanism and agreements for management of transboundary resources can be useful and realistic approach. In the mean time they can be able to formulate joint regional projects. This thematic network can make easy the GEF Projects designs

Also documentation and further application of indigenous systems and technologies of coping with desert and preventing desertification, strengthening of indigenous governance systems, innovative community mechanisms for finding sustainable livelihoods and community conserved area is needed.

Proposed comments to be made by the Civil Society/NGOs on the Operational Programme.

A. Title of the OP:

We propose the title to be read as follow:

“TO ENHANCE THE SUPPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION”

Justification:

The preparation of the OP has been requested by the Council of the GEF and the Assembly for the purpose of enhancing the GEF support in the implementation of the Convention. This is therefore an OP on the UNCCD. The title must be consistent with the Council and Assembly decisions.

B. Paragraph 5:

In this paragraph, consistent with GEF scope and mandate, there must be a mention of the international consensus that *“Land degradation is a worldwide phenomenon”*

C. Paragraph 7:

At the end of para 7, add the following:

“and the WSSD identified the UNCCD as an important tool at the disposal of the international community in this regard.”

Justification:

At a time when the eradication of poverty is granted priority in all sustainable development programmes, it would be hardly acceptable to overlook the WSSD stance on this issue.

D. The heading before para 9 page 3: The Conventions.

The drafters of the OP seem to encounter difficulties in realizing that land degradation in the OP is, from now addressed as a stand-alone focal area. While it is understandable that synergies with other Post Rio Conventions be referred to, the title should be different that OP.12. It is therefore proposed that the title “The Convention” be replaced by *“The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.”*

This is important to avoid once again the shortcomings encountered in the “New Delhi Statement” approach (Whereby Land Degradation was only eligible through its linkages with other GEF Focal areas) which led to very limited concrete projects.

E. Paragraph 10:

Today it is more adequate to say “Land Degradation is especially serious in Africa as well as in Asia and Latin America”

F. Paragraph 29:

It is better to say: *“it urges to countries to integrate ASAP sustainable land management traditional and local practices into their national priorities framework”*

G. Paragraph 30:

These conditions will be achieved if the country driven activities and priorities are reconsidered with the participation of all stakeholders.

H. Paragraph 31:

Paragraph 31 is about the Programme objective.

As for the title, the programme objective of the OP cannot be developed without anchoring it to UNCCD.

Suggestion:

Add to the end of paragraph add the following: *"in the framework of the UNCCD"*.

I. Paragraph 35: (sub-para a):

This is about Program Assumption. At the end of para 35 a, add the following:

"Including the implementation of the UNCCD NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs".

Justification:

Action programmes constitute frameworks for any CCD implementation. They are country-driven and are elaborated through a bottom-up approach. Nobody could pretend help implementing the UNCCD without using those tools.

Sub-para b:

After Executing Agencies, add *"mainstream the UNCCD related programmes and other"*

Eligible Activities For GEF Support (page 11)

J. Paragraph 41:

After the sentence GEF assistance would cover three inter-related types of interventions—capacity building, add the following: *"including activities which assist affected developing countries in meeting their obligations under the convention such as the streamlining of NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs as well as related Reports"*, and open a new extremely important paragraph 42, reading:

"GEF will provide full cost grant financing of up US\$250,000 for initial activities at national level, to assist affected countries to meet obligations under the Convention (national reports and action programmes) using GEF expedited procedures"

Justification:

The original proposal on OP had suggested that amount to be used for capacity building and related activities. While some members of the Council deplored the insufficiency of the amount, others differed on some of its aspects. The OP cannot afford not to indicate the level of that kind of funding.

Likewise, the language proposed in the above para regarding "activities which assist countries..." is a result of a careful consensus forged at the UN General Assembly last

December between Developed and Developing Countries. Major GEF Donors such as USA, Germany (which acted as a EU negotiator), Japan have agreed on such a language. In principle, no GEF Council Member should object this since they all are members of General Assembly which approved that formulation.

On-the-ground investment

K. Paragraph 42

As the paragraph is actually drafted, there is a need for flexibility in applying GEF procedures, taken into account the UNCCD a new paradigm. Before the last sentence of the paragraph, please insert the following:

“There will be need for flexibility since the UNCCD represents a paradigm shift for GEF’s support towards its effective implementation. Incremental GEF funding for sustainable land management activities will largely be based operationally on cost sharing”

L. Sustainable rangeland/pasture management (from para 47 to 49).

In the first sentence para 47, there is a need to insert, among other activities *“sand dunes fixation and reduction of stand storms”* .

M. Paragraph 53 and 54:

These two paragraphs shown the right target research presented in this OP#15. The evaluation to experiences around the world demonstrate that the only way of success will be the targets of para 53 and 54.

N. Paragraph 55: Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a need to involve the Committee on Science and Technology in this task. It is therefore suggested to start para 55 with the following:

“While supporting the work of the Committee on Science and Technology of the UNCCD and in consistency with its ongoing work programme” .
Also for a successful Monitoring and Evaluation we should always be aware that local community people should be involved and aware of the GEF objectives and global benefit of them.

O. Paragraph 58 and 59:

The OP#15 on the issue of public involvement is perfect.