



MAKING A DIFFERENCE



Secretariat of the United Nations
Convention to Combat Desertification

UNCCD

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Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
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First published by the UNCCD Secretariat in June 2002
in co-operation with the

Global Cooperation Council
www.gccforum.net

and the

IPS-CIC Communication Project
www.ipscic.net.

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Layout:

Globalom Media
www.globalommedia.net

Printing: A&A Copy-Druck-Centre, Bonn

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Cover picture:

Gebre Giorgis Heluf keeps watch for the community
over the gully he helped to reclaim (Ethiopia) © REST

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FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION



In the ninth year since the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification was adopted in June 1994, it is pleasing to note that the Convention has reached maturity and is moving from preparation of the national action programmes to the implementation phase.

The Convention has been particularly successful in securing the participation of local communities in the decision-making and implementation processes, without which enduring and effective changes needed to fight land degradation and desertification would not be possible. Unlike the traditional top-down approach in the past, which more often than not

failed, the Convention's emphasis on a bottom-up approach and partnership building has empowered those people who are most directly affected by desertification and who depend most on the land for their livelihood, to become the initiators of, and the driving force behind, many successful projects that are helping rehabilitate barren lands and fight poverty in affected regions of the world.

The stories collected here are good examples of how local communities in different parts of the world have each sought to tackle the problem of land degradation and desertification in partnership with non-governmental organizations, international organizations and other institutions. While some have just started to fight the problem, others are collecting and enjoying the fruits of their successful projects, ready and eager to replicate their experiences in other communities. In this edition, we have collected more stories, as the exchange of information on their diverse experience in similar struggles is enabling more communities affected by these problems to understand properly the issues at hand and take courage in formulating their unique solutions to the problems within their particular environmental and socio-economic conditions, for the sustainable development of their communities.

My deepest gratitude to all the non-governmental organizations and communities who have contributed by making their stories accessible to a wider public, and to the Global Cooperation Council and the IPS-CIC Communication Project in Germany for their support in the publication of this booklet.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'H.A.' with a flourish.

HAMA ARBA DIALLO
Executive Secretary
United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

AVANT-PROPOS DE LA DEUXIEME EDITION

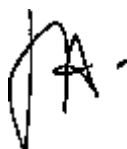
Neuf ans après son adoption en juin 1994, la Convention des Nations Unies sur la Lutte contre la Désertification a acquis maturité et effectivité dans le cadre de la préparation et la mise en œuvre des programmes d'action nationaux. Je me réjouis vivement de ce progrès notable dans le processus de mise en œuvre de la Convention.

La Convention a permis la participation des communautés locales dans le processus de prise de décision ainsi que dans la mise en œuvre des programmes. Ainsi, des changements durables et efficaces ont été possibles dans la lutte contre la dégradation des terres et la désertification. En effet, la Convention accorde la priorité aux populations en adoptant une approche « ascendante » et en contribuant à l'instauration de partenariats. A l'inverse de l'approche « descendante », traditionnellement utilisée, cette vision participative met les populations au centre du processus. Elles élaborent ainsi des projets pour réhabiliter les terres dégradées et lutter contre la pauvreté dans les régions les plus affectées du monde.



Les expériences relatées ici, montrent comment les communautés locales, de différentes parties du monde, ont essayé de lutter contre la dégradation des terres et la désertification en partenariat avec les organisations non gouvernementales, internationales ou différentes institutions. Ces expériences sont très diverses. En effet, pendant que certaines communautés entament juste le processus, d'autres en sont déjà à la phase de réalisation et recueillent les résultats, parfois très positifs de leurs actions afin de les étendre à d'autres communautés. Cette édition accorde la priorité aux échanges d'information entre les communautés sur les expériences en matière de lutte contre la désertification. Ces échanges permettent d'avoir une vision claire des problèmes afin de formuler les solutions adéquates conformes aux conditions environnementales et socioéconomiques particulières des communautés.

Pour conclure, je voudrais vivement remercier toutes les organisations non gouvernementales et les communautés dont les contributions ont permis une large diffusion des expériences réussies. Je tiens également à remercier les institutions allemandes suivantes ayant contribué à la publication de ce livre: «Global Cooperation Council» et «IPS-CIC Communication Project».



HAMA ARBA DIALLO
Secrétaire Exécutif

Convention des Nations Unies sur la Lutte contre la Désertification

THE WULUGU EXPERIENCE

George Bright Awudi
Friends of the Earth - Ghana

In Ghana, the impacts of desertification are being harshly felt in the northern parts of the country, comprising the Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions, which together constitute more than 30 percent of the total land area of the country. These areas are naturally savannah. Aside from the harsh climatic conditions, a high level of human activities such as bush fires, bad farming practices and overgrazing, have further exposed the environment to land degradation, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and a decrease in soil fertility, leading to low crop yields and large-scale hunger among the people.

Wulugu is a small but growing farming community in the West Mamprusi District of the Northern Region of Ghana. There are about 4,000 inhabitants, who are subsistence farmers, mainly involved in the cultivation of cereals such as maize, millet, guinea corn, sorghum and rice. A few are raising animals like cattle, sheep, goats, as well as chicken and guinea fowls. In addition, some are harvesting wood from the savannah woodlands for sale, as firewood and charcoal constitute a major livelihood activity and a source of income for the people - mostly the poor women. Bush fires started for the purpose of bush-meat hunting and land preparation for farming, are rampant and often burn out of control.

Like most communities in the savannah, Wulugu fell prey to the reality of a looming scourge of desertification, which ravaged the community, leaving in its trail barren land, scaled landscape and devegetated land. It exposed people to hardships that they hardly dreamt of, much less



prepared for, such as food shortages. Longer than expected dry seasons as well as dying and withering plants and fields became their lot. Firewood, which used to be gathered from just the surroundings of settlements, became scarce. People, particularly women and children, had to travel over long distances in search of firewood. Also

as a result of fuelwood scarcity, agricultural residues like corn cobs and millet stalks, and other biomes like cow dung were increasingly being used as cooking fuels, thereby depriving the soils of natural organic nutrients these residues provide. The fuelwood scarcity severely affected income generation from fuelwood by the local women. Most of the community wells and bore holes, which were dug several feet deep, became dry, forcing women to trek on foot in the scorching sun for hours in search of water for both humans and animals. Under these unfavourable and hopeless conditions, some people had to migrate to urban centres for survival, notwithstanding the social and economic implications that migrating people sometimes have to face. >>>

Conscious of these hardships, the people of Wulugu readily took up the challenge when help came, through Friends of the Earth-Ghana from the Japan Fund for Global Environment (JFGE) in the year 2000. They marshalled forces with the leadership of the area's assemblyman. About 60 people came together - women, men and children - to engage in a community wood lot and afforestation project. They formed two groups, one group worked in the eastern part and the other in the northwestern part of the Wulugu community. The two groups managed to secure about 13 acres of land through the goodwill of a generous landowner in the community and cultivated over 2000 seedlings of acacia to provide an alternative source of firewood for domestic use and for income from sale, as well as to reduce pressure on the rural savannah woodland in Wulugu. The groups, which are 95 percent women, were trained by Friends of the Earth-Ghana on nursery, wood lot and project establishment and management.

The determination and enthusiasm of the people is now paying off. The more than 2,000 seedlings planted on both projects have grown beautifully. They have inter-cropped the acacia with locally known edible and medicinal plants called "Bunghun", and with soybeans. People working on the project are hopeful that the benefits of the project will be to the entire community. They are confident that the project will help check and control desertification as well as supply their fuelwood needs. It is also an income-generating project that will bring in some extra income to improve their standard of living. They hope to sell seedlings as well as impart the knowledge they have gained to surrounding communities in the future so that they can collectively combat desertification.

They have a long-term vision for the project. One of them puts it aptly in these words "we want to do our part now and leave something behind for posterity". The children working alongside their mothers and grandmothers are happy and excited about working on the projects, and they seem ready to take over after the older generation is gone.

Workshops organized by Friends of the Earth-Ghana for the Wulugu community and its surrounding villages, with funding from the UNCCD secretariat and the JFGE, created the enabling environment for the participation of civil society in the implementation of the UNCCD in Ghana. The level of environmental consciousness and community participation in desertification issues has risen. Most local women involved in the project have now witnessed that indiscriminate felling of trees is bad. Bush fires are no longer common in the community. The Wulugu community made valuable inputs towards the participation of civil society in the preparation of the Ghana National Action Programme (NAP).

The Wulugu experience, repeated in other communities, can be a sure guarantee for combating desertification in this country, Ghana. ☑

ENERGIE DURABLE ET LA LUTTE CONTRE LA DESERTIFICATION

Ir. Swedi Elongo
CADIC, R.D. Congo

La plaine de la Ruzizi située en territoires administratifs d'Uvira et de Walungu, Province du Sud-Kivu, est une zone semi-aride où les populations sont confrontées aux phénomènes de la désertification et aux effets de la sécheresse. Naguère grainier agricole du Sud-Kivu, cette zone abrite environ 40% des populations de ces deux territoires qui sont estimées à 720.000 hommes.

Les populations non touchées vivent ces effets par le biais des mouvements des populations notamment l'afflux des réfugiés venant des pays voisins du Sud-Kivu; le Rwanda, et le Burundi; mouvements qui ont commencé en 1994 et qui sont encore entretenus par la guerre qui se poursuit à l'est de la République Démocratique du Congo. Ceci donne au phénomène une dimension internationale justifiant ainsi la mise en place de la convention sur la lutte contre la désertification dans cette région afin d'amener la population à combattre le phénomène et plus précisément à lutter contre la désertification.

Ainsi, depuis l'adoption de cette convention en 1994 notre ONG, le Centre d'Action pour le Développement Durable et Intégré dans les Communautés (CADIC), l'une des rares ONGS de la République Démocratique du Congo à avoir participé au sommet de la terre à Rio en 1992, a entrepris de mettre en œuvre en collaboration avec les populations locales de la plaine de la Ruzizi, une stratégie de lutte contre la désertification et les effets de la sécheresse. Cette stratégie a pour cadre un programme d'action de lutte contre la désertification qui consiste en l'exploitation durable du potentiel énergétique et la valorisation des ressources énergétiques locales notamment l'identification des sites intéressants pour l'implantation de la micro hydraulique rurale, le système solaire pour l'éclairage des ménages, la diffusion des foyers améliorés et des cuiseurs solaires.

En effet, la problématique énergétique de la République Démocratique du Congo et de beaucoup d'autres pays africains dans les zones arides et semi-arides est caractérisée entre autres, par la prédominance de l'utilisation des combustibles ligneux. Elle représente 80% de la consommation finale d'énergie et contribue à l'accentuation de la déforestation et de l'érosion des sols et plus globalement de la pauvreté.

Les femmes sont les principales utilisatrices de ces combustibles ligneux. Beaucoup d'entre elles consacrent une part importante de leur temps à faire la cuisine et sont souvent atteintes des troubles de la vue et de l'appareil respiratoire à cause de l'utilisation de ce combustible. Les difficultés associées à la collecte du bois de feu poussent les femmes des pays en développement à émigrer vers les centres urbains. Notre programme d'action vise à privilégier la cuisson des aliments en exploitant directement l'énergie solaire car la région de la plaine de la Ruzizi recèle un potentiel important de l'ensoleillement solaire. Ceci permet aux femmes de réduire la consommation de bois et les émissions de gaz carbonique, de gagner du temps, d'améliorer leur santé et de consacrer plus de temps aux soins des enfants. La cuisson solaire permet de réduire de presque une tonne par an et par tête le recours aux biomasses ligneuses.

Afin d'accroître l'impact du programme nous avons estimé que la composante foyers améliorés devait s'accompagner de la diffusion de cuiseurs solaires adaptés aux ménages. Nous avons également senti l'impérieux besoin des populations à accéder à l'énergie motrice pour la transformation des produits alimentaires et l'énergie d'éclairage domestique par les microcentrales hydrauliques et par l'énergie solaire. Dans notre stratégie nous mettons les groupes de femmes à contribution pour jouer un rôle important dans la promotion de l'énergie solaire et des autres sources d'énergies renouvelables en tant que principales utilisatrices de ces écotecnologies.

➤➤➤

L'utilisation de systèmes faisant appel à l'énergie solaire ou à d'autres sources d'énergie renouvelables améliore la qualité de la vie, réduit la pauvreté, favorise la santé et l'éducation et incite à la création de petites entreprises et à la mise en place d'autres activités génératrices de revenus non seulement dans la plaine de la Ruzizi particulièrement touchée par la désertification mais également dans les autres régions rurales et isolées de la province du Kivu, entraînant ainsi une diminution de l'exode rurale.

Aspects socio-économique du programme

Par expérience nous savons qu'individuellement les femmes ne veulent généralement pas prendre de risques pour investir dans un secteur d'activités donné, ce qui limite leur capacité entrepreneuriale. Pour contourner cette contrainte le CADIC a décidé de placer ses interventions à travers les groupements des femmes. De ce fait, l'investissement et le risque sont ainsi partagés entre les membres.

Le projet leur apporte un appui conseil et assure la formation technique en matière de gestion et de marketing; le plus souvent en collaboration avec d'autres structures d'appui déjà implantées sur le terrain. Cette approche permet ainsi d'agir sur les facteurs pouvant influencer la viabilité du projet.

Les foyers améliorés pour les ménages

Le CADIC conçoit et réalise plusieurs modèles de foyers améliorés: un modèle en poterie d'argile cuite alimenté au bois, un modèle métallique revêtu à l'intérieur par un pot en argile cuite troué au fond pour faire passer la cendre.

Les fours solaires

Pour fonctionner, le four solaire a besoin du soleil. Dès que celui-ci brille, on peut quitter la cuisine intérieure pour cuisiner dehors avec le soleil. Le franchissement des réticences des populations pour la cuisine à l'énergie solaire est l'un des objectifs assignés à notre programme. Nous expérimentons le modèle K12 qui est un modèle de four solaire parabolique à réflecteurs offert par le groupe d'aide au développement de l'école professionnelle de Altötting en Allemagne.

Nous sommes en train de faire connaître ce modèle aux groupements de femmes du Sud-Kivu dans le but de le diffuser dans les communautés de femmes, malheureusement il est encore cher et par conséquent inaccessible aux plus pauvres. Nous souhaitons une aide du Secrétariat de la Convention sur la lutte contre la désertification pour aider à la diffusion de ce type de four.

Diffusion des foyers améliorés et fours solaires

Ce volet consiste à sensibiliser les populations, plus particulièrement les femmes sur l'urgente nécessité d'adopter les foyers améliorés et fours solaires pour économiser le bois de feu et préserver ainsi les ressources naturelles du terroir. Elles sont dès lors formées aux techniques de fabrication des foyers conçus avec des matériaux locaux: l'argile noire des mares et marigots et des tôles de récupération. La diffusion se fait sous le slogan: «un foyer amélioré par ménage».

Impact environnemental

Les foyers améliorés permettent d'économiser plus de 50% de la quantité de charbon de bois, contribuant ainsi à la réduction de la pression sur le couvert végétal. Cela se perçoit à travers les témoignages des femmes qui affirment que les foyers sont si efficaces que le besoin de charbon de bois pour faire la cuisine est largement réduit. Il suffit d'utiliser une faible quantité de charbon de bois pour préparer un repas complet. Ceci veut dire que les pratiques de destruction d'arbres entiers pour obtenir des gros morceaux de bois de chauffe ou pour produire le charbon peuvent être remplacées par la pratique d'élagage d'où l'effet de régénération rapide des forêts. ➤➤➤

Domaines dans lesquels l'assistance de la convention est souhaitée par notre programme

La convention sur la lutte contre la désertification n'est pas bien connue en République Démocratique du Congo parce que l'un des acteurs principaux indispensable à sa diffusion, le Gouvernement congolais, du fait de la partition du pays, n'est pas à même de faire parvenir ses instructions dans les provinces contrôlées par différents mouvements rebelles qui se disputent le pouvoir dans le pays. Nous avons besoin que les informations sur la Convention parviennent aux communautés de base et que soit créé un mécanisme national de consultation qui permettrait à ces communautés de participer à toutes les étapes du processus de planification à tous les niveaux de prise de décision. Aussi souhaiterions nous l'assistance de la convention dans les domaines ci-après:

- Accès à l'information

Dans le but du processus de la prise de décision dans le contrôle de l'avancée de la désertification, les femmes se trouvent être les premières interpellées. Or il se fait que dans les milieux ruraux de la République Démocratique du Congo, les femmes ont un accès faible à l'information, éducation et formation. Comme première ressource humaine en gestion de l'environnement du terroir ; elles ont un grand besoin d'une information technique et écologique et également un fort besoin de formation et d'habileté au commandement. Pour répondre à cette attente une assistance de la convention à notre programme est vivement souhaitée.

- Accès au crédit des femmes

Le développement des ressources humaines à travers l'éducation et la formation ne nous paraît pas suffisant pour impulser l'emploi, la productivité et l'accroissement des revenus des plus pauvres. Le manque d'accès aux ressources financières pour ces groupements de femmes diminue leur capacité de lutter contre la pauvreté qui est un des facteurs de la dégradation de l'environnement. Aussi nous pensons que la convention de lutte contre la désertification devrait examiner la possibilité d'un fonds national de lutte contre la désertification pour la République Démocratique du Congo d'où les groupements de femmes s'approvisionneraient en fonds rotatifs pour lutter contre la désertification.

Perspectives

Malgré les contraintes relatives au manque d'expertise au niveau local, au coût d'investissement initial assez élevé pour certaines technologies comme celle du four solaire, on peut tout de même se rendre compte que suivant une approche intégrée les énergies renouvelables présentent un vaste potentiel de développement durable. En effet, en associant les avantages sociaux (amélioration des conditions de vie, économie du combustible bois ou charbon de bois et par conséquent économie monétaire, lutte contre la désertification) à des activités de protection de l'environnement nous arrivons toujours à une adhésion des populations au projet. L'aspect participation et partenariat tant évoqué dans la Convention sur la lutte contre la désertification trouve alors toute sa pertinence dans notre programme. ☑

INVOLVING OR NOT INVOLVING COMMUNITIES IN KENYA?

Frank Msafiri

National NGOs Coordinating Committee on Desertification in Kenya

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification calls for a bottom-up and participatory approach in identifying, implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects that combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. Projects should be initiated and managed with maximum participation of local communities, including women, youth, poor farmers and pastoralists. Projects should include measures to reduce poverty, increase income and employment opportunities, improve food security and use technologies that alleviate pressure on natural resources through the use of diverse, alternative and renewable sources of energy that are appropriate and efficient.

The UNCCD offers local communities a very wide range of opportunities based on local circumstances, traditions, culture, norms, knowledge, aspirations and priorities. There are many invisible, marginalized communities in the drylands of Kenya that use their traditional knowledge in managing drought and exploiting natural resources.

Some of the following traditional community methods for coping with drought and desertification are still practised among the pastoralists of the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya.

The communities of the Samburu, Turkana, Kajiado and Marsabit districts in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands, have exclusive user rights to territory within a five kilometers radius of their homesteads. This has the effect of limiting resource use, and thus promoting sustainable use. They also take the main herd to a far away grazing area, with most of the young people accompanying them. This is called **Fora** among the Rendille and Gabra of Marsabit, **Lale** among the Samburu, and **Endukuya Oinkishu** among the Maasai of Masailand.

The Rendille and Gabra communities also eliminate younger livestock, especially lambs, by killing them whenever drought threatens. This helps save the dwindling water sources and pastures.

Communities have a great deal of experience of drought and desertification. Some of these stories can be narrated and then used to start a discussion on the implications for the fight against desertification and the effects of drought. Experience from two communities of northern Kenya shows that dryland communities do not need to be led. As opportunities emerge, they will produce their own leaders and set their own directives. One of the provisions of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification requires the affected governments to provide those opportunities.

During the Kenyan National Action Programme consultative process, NGOs and the government detected a sense of apathy on the part of the communities. Many interviews, workshops, awareness-raising sessions had taken place and community plans drawn up, but they had not seen any implementation.

There are two key proverbs from two communities - one from western Africa and the other from northern Kenya - to illustrate this.

From western Africa: "...You (God) have the yam and the knife and only you know how much to cut for us". The people of the drylands need to be empowered. Give them the knife and let them cut the yam for themselves, don't play a small god for them. The principle here is to empower the communities to enable them to own their own projects. This involves designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating. >>>



From Kenya: "...The owner knows where to cut off his walking stick." The people of the drylands know more than anyone else about their fragile ecosystem from which they have wrested a living for a long time. They know what can work and what cannot work.

Left picture: Kitobo Water Users Association in Taita District of Coastal Kenya engage in food production for alleviation of poverty and food security.

The two proverbs are quite comparable to two community stories from the northern Kenya.

A community in the Baragoi division of Samburu district provides one story of successful community involvement in project formulation, design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. This community lost a lot of livestock, first to cattle rustlers, then to a severe drought, which killed many of their remaining stock. As a result, the community became very poor and ended up receiving food relief from the government. After the drought, the community members met and resolved to approach an NGO to assist them in restocking. The community, in collaboration with the NGO, designed the restocking programme. They used their existing traditional poverty indicators to identify the poorer members who had lost virtually all their animals and needed more assistance. Using their traditional restocking system, referred to as *paran*, the community contributed 50 percent of the small stock while the NGO provided some funds to purchase the remaining 50 percent. The animals were purchased from within the community. This was deemed necessary so as to redistribute small stock within the community without increasing the livestock population.

In this way, 326 families received between 15 and 40 head of small stock. One year later, an evaluation indicated an increase in livestock numbers by 20 percent. This is in line with the traditional percentage increase of the herds.

This intervention was successful because:

- The affected community was fully involved in making the decision;
- An accepted traditional re-stocking system (*paran*) was used;
- The community members contributed 50 percent of the stock required. They therefore owned the project and saw to it that it succeeded;

Over-stocking was avoided by redistributing small stock owned by the community.

Another, contrasting story demonstrates the negative impact on the environment caused by a lack of community involvement in projects. This was in Rendille community of the Marsabit district in northern Kenya. A priest went to work and live among the community in the Kaisut desert. It was the first time the priest had visited this, the driest part of the country. When he arrived in the area, he had no idea of what project he would initiate with the communities. The first thing he did was to make an extensive visit to the community *manyatas* (tradition homesteads). >>>

After the visits, the extent and degree of poverty in the area shocked him. There were no roads, women walked for two days in search of water, and there was a high level of illiteracy owing to a lack of schools. There were also a high incidence of disease as there were no health care services. Moreover, the community kept on moving from one place to another in search of pasture and water for their livestock.

All these things disturbed him and he became very concerned. He sat down to draw up a strategy of measures to overcome these problems. The initial projects he thought of were to construct road systems, to install over thirty hand pumps, and to build schools, a hospital and, of course, a church. This fascinated the Korr community, so much so that they happily settled down. Soon people living far and wide heard of the Korr community and the generosity of the priest. They came with their livestock to join the Korr community and enjoy the benefits. They abandoned their traditional land use systems for a sedentary one.

This had a negative impact of this on the environment in that:

- A micro-desert was created by the sudden increase in and concentration of population around Korr;
- Dependency was created as the community abandoned their traditional system, which worked, and started “waiting for the father” to provide for their needs;
- The high moral standards enjoyed by the pastoralists declined as prostitution and drug abuse became common;
- Poverty increased as the traditional economic structure (dependency on livestock) was disrupted.

The above two stories illustrate the effects of involving or not involving the communities in identifying, designing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects.



Soil and water conservation: Communities in Mwingi District of eastern Kenya engage in environmental conservation to rehabilitate denuded land for agriculture.



The rehabilitated land is put into food-crop production to address food security.

Communities in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid lands have become demotivated as a result of becoming dependent on handouts from projects, donors and governments. There is a need, therefore, to demonstrate to them that there is dignity in self-reliance and pride in personal contribution. This can be achieved by recalling the communities’ past glory, strength, self-respect and pride. It is therefore necessary to show the communities that all is not lost and that they can change their environment and living conditions. They should also be reminded that their future and that of their children lie in their hands, and that the governments and donors only complement their efforts.

Communities should therefore be encouraged to implement the UNCCD by identifying and using their decision-making processes and structures. For example, among pastoralists, group decisions are made by consensus at specific venues, such as “the elder tree” and “Naabo” among the Rendille in northern Kenya. ☑

THE SHANTUMBU COMMUNITY'S EXPERIENCE

Joseph Mbinji

Zambia Alliance of Women, Zambia

Shantumbu is a typical rural area that is situated about 16 km south-east of Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. Shantumbu is characterized by temperatures of over 200 C and an average rainfall of below 800 mm per annum. Vegetation in the area is typically Miombo woodland. The area is characterized by seasonal streams and ephemeral streams, which are only active during the rainy season.

Shantumbu comprises 11 villages, with a total number of 500 households and an average family size of about seven individuals. The total population is about 3,500 people. Subsistence farming and charcoal burning are the most important economic activities of the community.

The Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW) with its mandate to work for the welfare of rural communities, identified Shantumbu community as one of its areas of intervention. It has been working with this community for more than six years. Within this period ZAW has learned a lot of lessons about the lives of the Shantumbu community and how desertification has affected their livelihoods.

Desertification is one of the most serious environmental problems and is being experienced by most rural areas of the country. The impacts of this problem are severe in the five regions of the country, namely Lusaka, Southern, Eastern, Central and Western Provinces, owing to their being agriculturally productive areas of the country and to the semi-arid conditions caused by erratic rainfall and high temperatures most of the year.

The desertification problem in the Shantumbu area is a classic example of the extent and intensity of the problem in many other rural areas in Zambia. In Shantumbu, the problem has been caused mainly by unsustainable practices of resource utilization. The community has for a long time relied on the use of chemical fertilizers, which have destroyed their crop fields, turning them into unproductive land. This practice has heavily acidified the cropland, making it difficult to grow crops. The community, being poor, could not sustain the use of chemical fertilizers and lime to fertilize the agricultural land and neutralize the soils. Therefore, most of the cropland has been abandoned and the land that is being used does not have crop yields as high as before - a situation that has greatly affected the household food security and incomes, resulting in abject poverty.

Apart from this, the abandonment of croplands in the area has resulted in the serious destruction of indigenous forests, as more and more people search for virgin land for cultivation (shifting cultivation). Massive charcoal burning has also contributed to the problem of desertification in the area. This practice has been going on for ages as an important source of energy and income for the rural population.

Shantumbu, being near an urban centre, Lusaka City, provides an important source of wood fuel, including charcoal, to the urban population in the area. This situation has led to serious deforestation of the area, which is now characterized by large tracts of bare land and shrub-type vegetation as the dominant ground cover. This has had serious environmental and socio-economic impacts, for example women have to travel long distances to fetch wood fuel for their families and soils are exposed to extreme temperatures and rainfall. This has subjected the soil to increased erosion and consequent reduction of soil productivity and the siltation of many seasonal streams in the catchment area. >>>

Realizing the seriousness of these problems, the community has turned away from unsustainable practices in resource utilization to seek sustainable methods. This has been done with the help of ZAW, which has been working closely with rural communities to address desertification within the framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In an initial stage, ZAW launched awareness and training programmes in the area to sensitize the community to various environmental problems, their causes and how they can be avoided or addressed. The response from the community, especially women, has been overwhelming. They have been very cooperative in ensuring that solutions to these problems are sought. As a consequence of this, women of the Shantumbu community have come together to form an association that will advance environmental and socio-economic issues in the area. The community, with the support of ZAW, has been exploring alternative sources of energy and income for their households.

This has been carried out through the promotion of energy-efficient and environmentally friendly cooking stoves called ZIKOs, which not only accommodate charcoal but also other energy sources such as tree twigs, saw dust and dry cow dung. This initiative is helping to conserve the indigenous forests of the area. The community has also embarked on income-generating ventures, which include pig-geries and chicken-rearing.

This initiative is twofold in that it provides the necessary income to households and also provides them with organic manure as an indigenous agricultural practice for fertilizing crop fields. In this project, individual households will be collecting cow dung before each planting season and storing it in sheds for use in the next planting season. In addition, the Shantumbu community, with the assistance of ZAW, has started introducing community-based-eco-tourism, an income-generating and sustainable environmental utilization and management initiative that has been learned from other communities: Mukuni village in Livingstone and Muwele village in Bangweulu region, where this initiative has been very successful in empowering the local people economically.

At this stage, the Shantumbu community has realized and appreciated the need to manage their environment sustainably, in order to have sustainable livelihoods - stable incomes and household food security.

Through the Community Exchange and Training Programme (CETP), which will be implemented by the South African Development Community International Network on Desertification (SADC RIOD), many rural communities will learn, share experiences and exchange ideas. That will enhance their livelihoods, improve their food security and reduce poverty. This programme has been funded by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and will be administered by ZAW as the non-governmental organizations' subregional focal point for the implementation of the UNCCD in southern Africa. ☑

UN ESPOIR DANS LE DESERT

Emmanuel S. Seck

ENDA Tiers Monde, Senegal

La désertification par ses effets, est un phénomène difficilement vécu au Sénégal. En milieu rural, plus particulièrement, les populations sont affectées par le manque d'eau, la dégradation des ressources naturelles, la baisse des production agricole et animale, le déboisement, la dégradation des sols, l'exode rurale etc. Cela peut entre autres s'expliquer les prises de décision en amont par les gouvernements sans implication des populations concernées en aval.

En 1992, les gouvernement de tous les pays se sont réuni à Rio pour trouver des solutions aux problèmes de l'environnement global. Il en ressortira de se sommet trois principales conventions sur les changements climatiques, la biodiversité et la désertification. Cette dernière sera adoptée à Paris en Juin 1994 avec pour originalité l'approche participative. Elle insiste en effet sur l'implication des populations dans l'élaboration et la mise ne œuvre des programmes d'action.

Cependant, les enjeux de la Convention ne sont pas bien maîtrisés par les populations. Ce qui a motivé d'ailleurs l'intensification des campagnes de sensibilisation au Sénégal depuis l'adoption de la Convention et même avant. Mais la popularisation de la Convention de lutte contre la désertification reste malgré tout un objectif à poursuivre afin qu'un plus grand nombre d'acteurs locaux en saisissent les enjeux et s'impliquent davantage.

En 1996, dans le département de Linguère plus précisément dans les localités de Loumbel-lana, Barkedji, Djagali, Dodji et Labgar, ENDA a organisé des activités d'information et de formation des animateurs de l'Association des Défenseurs de l'Environnement Sahélien (ADESAH), groupement des villages, pour populariser la Convention. Ces localités se situent principalement dans la zone sylvopastorale du Sénégal communément appelée le Ferlo. Ici, les effets conjugués de la sécheresse, du surpâturage et des forces érosives des pluies sont la cause de la formation de paysage dégradés fréquents le long de certaines vallées fossiles.

Les populations locales, principalement de l'ethnie Peule, ont montré leur intérêt pour la Convention qui doit renforcer leurs activités de gestion des ressources naturelles. En effet, pour répondre aux sollicitations de ces populations, et en attendant la mise en œuvre effective de la Convention, ENDA a développé avec celles-ci des activités relatives à la sauvegarde de l'environnement et la lutte contre la pauvreté.

Des actions de restauration de sols victime des effets d'érosions éolienne et hydrique sont réalisées à travers des parcelles de mise en défens, l'instauration de brise-vent autour des jardins polyvalents et l'application de techniques de récupération de terrasses.

L'intérêt des populations pour les essences locales telles que le gommier et le jubier qui engendrent d'importantes retombées financières, incitent les populations au reboisement. De même la vulgarisation des foyers améliorés dans localités susmentionnées a réduit la pression des populations sur le couvert végétal pour satisfaire leurs besoins énergétiques de cuisson. >>>

Il apparaît clairement à travers certains articles que la Convention de lutte contre la désertification est une convention de lutte contre la pauvreté car elle invite les Parties à renforcer les programmes d'élimination de la pauvreté et de sécurité alimentaire. Des programmes qui doivent contribuer à améliorer l'environnement économique et social des populations locales. Les activités de ENDA s'inscrivent dans cette dynamique pour le développement local basé sur la solidarité, la confiance et la revalorisation du statut de la femme rurale. Elles sont relatives aux

- Banque céréalière ; celles-ci sont constituées initialement par la production d'un champ collectif villageois renforcée par la quote-part de chaque adhérent équivalent à 10 ou 20 kg selon la participation ou non aux travaux. Elle sont déstockées pendant la période soudure pour la vente de céréales aux membres. « *Avant la mise en place de cette banque de céréales, le mil se vendait cher pendant la période de soudure à cause de sa rareté. Et il nous était très difficile de l'avoir. Aujourd'hui, grâce à elle (banque de céréales), le mil est disponible à bon prix en période de soudure* » laisse entendre un chef de village.
- Banques fourragères; elles sont constituées du foin collectée par les membres durant la période propice. Elles jouent le même rôle pour le cheptel que la banque céréalière. Le cheptel le plus fragile (agneaux par exemple) est ainsi sauvé du risque de manque de pâturage en saison sèche.
- Jardins polyvalents; ils jouent un double rôle. Ils constituent d'une part, un cadre d'identification et reproduction de plants de reboisement; et d'autre part, un champ maraîcher de production de légumes.

L'impact de ces activités dans la vie des communautés locales est perceptible dans le cadre d'une amélioration du revenu des femmes (vente de légumes, vente de plants de reboisement) et des conditions d'alimentation (amélioration du menu quotidien). Par ailleurs ces activités ont permis une certaine prise de conscience des femmes de leur possibilité à se prendre en charge et du rôle prépondérant qu'elles peuvent jouer dans le développement de leur localité.

Cependant certaines activités tels que le maraîchage et le reboisement voient leur développement compromis par le manque d'eau dû à la profondeur de la nappe phréatique et la panne des forages. ☒

L'ARBRE MORT

Le temps est lourd sous le soleil brûlant,
Un vent sec souffle : l'harmattan,
Dans cette zone dépeuplée
Où vivent des êtres désespérés
Au-dessus de la terre,
Je perçois une eau fictive
Qui disparaît
A chaque fois que je me rapproche.
Dans ce panorama,
Des espaces dénudés, victimes de la désertification,
Ouvrent la voie libre aux vents
Qui viennent voler la fertilité des terres
Et former ailleurs des dunes de sable.
Voilà qu'ils s'acharnent sur des hères,
Fouettant leurs corps desséchés,
Décoiffant leurs têtes désormais chauves.
Au loin, j'aperçois une femme, seule,
Couverte d'un gris voile.
Elle ne sent plus le soleil, ni la pluie.
Elle ne porte plus de feuilles, ni de fruits
Et n'enfantera plus sur cette terre stérile.
Pourtant l'écho de sa plainte me parvint :
"vos pères ont favorisé notre disparition,
Pendant que le désert faisait son apparition.
Enfants de la terre, pensez-vous sauvegarder ?
Oui ! Sauvegarder notre vie : votre avenir".
Plus de vent,
Plus de vie dans cette voix.
Hélas ! la femme statique là-bas,
Qui semblait courber l'échine sous le vent,
Est un arbre mort.

Emmanuel S. SECK (1996)

NB: Ce poème est une prise de conscience des effets de la désertification. Il nous invite au combat pour un meilleur environnement, un défi à relever pour les générations futures. ☑

EXPERIENCE OF A LOCAL COMMUNITY IN KAZAKHSTAN

Zhapar A. Zhambkin
Zhangeldy, Kazakhstan

Desertification is encroaching upon the villages and settlements of Central Asia. Paths trampled by cattle – single tracks - more and more surround Kazakhstan's settlements.

In recent years, when there were *kolkhozes* and *sovkhazes* (soviet period), a considerable proportion of personal cattle grazed on distant pastures together with the community's cattle. In those years, part of the fodder stored up for the winter was given to the personal sector as well.

Now the situation has changed completely. There are neither community cattle, nor social production, nor fodder storage. The majority of the rural population is not now able to drive their few livestock to distant pastures or produce fodder for winter for their own cattle. One should also add that in recent years personal cattle have played only a supplementary role in a family budget. Whereas now, the production of a small herd of 2-3 cows or 2-3 camels- (horses) or 10-15 sheep (goats) has become the basic source of living. That's why the question: "How to feed the cattle?" has become the daily problem of every rural family.



The "Zhanartu" project initiated in 1998 by the fund of a non-governmental organization "The Farmer of Kazakhstan," has helped to find a way out of the difficult situation. Now the project is being implemented by the local community in Zhangeldy and the farm "Zhuldyz," under the leadership of experts from the non-governmental organization. During the initial phase in 1998-2001, the project was implemented with financial support from the Small Grants Programme

(SGP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) within the framework of the United Nations.

The objectives of the pilot project "Zhanartu", meaning 'renovation', are restoration of biodiversity of the bush and motley-grass ecosystem on degraded river plains around Zhangeldy, and improvement of the local population's living standards. These objectives are to be achieved by decreasing grazing pressure around the village, the creation by local people of alfalfa plantations on irrigated areas and by increasing the ecological literacy of the local population through seminars and training.

The project's activity

The area around the village that formerly belonged to Zhangeldy is more than 10 thousand hectares. In order to implement rational pasture use, three pasture zones were identified by the project:

- Pasturing zone I – within a radius of 2 km from the centre of the village;
- Pasturing zone II – within a radius of 2-4 km from the centre of the village;
- Pasturing zone III - within a radius of 4-6 km from the centre of the village. >>>

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In pasturing zone I, 80 hectares of land were exposed to wind and water erosion. Most of the territory is covered with weeds and inedible plants. Alongside, plants are found that are valuable in terms of nutrition: alhagi, tamarisk and statice bushes, ephemers, ephemeroïds, and other plants of spring-summer phenorythmotype. Until 1999, almost 100 percent of the latter within 1000 meters from the village were eaten in the spring and early summer.

However, the pasture fodder in the first belt did not satisfy the pasturing livestock's productive need for nutritious materials. Consequently, prolonged grazing of the village livestock in this zone led to low cattle and sheep milk production, their low prolificacy, the shortage of live weight of young animals, the production of below-standards meat, animal diseases, etc. In spite of such negative effects the village residents preferred to keep their livestock in this restricted area within a 2 km radius of the village. This forced preference was mainly due to their concern for the livestock's safety. To ensure the livestock's safety, the owner must keep the livestock within his or her farm at night and under his or her control during the day. In other words, social instability and the frequent theft of livestock (usual in villages nowadays) has had an almost direct impact on Zhangel'dy's environment.

Pastures in the second and third belts have recently been used as spring-autumn pastures for common sheep flocks. In the 1970s and 1980s, vegetation in these pastures degraded, especially around the wells. But for the last decade, due to the absence of grazing pressure, basic vegetation has been restored. For example, the productivity of pastures in the third belt was 1000 kg/ha of eaten dry mass in the autumn of 1998. This is a very good figure for deserts in the Aral Sea region.

Though the village residents clearly realized that keeping livestock in the second and third pasture belts during a pasturing period would result in larger production and a higher return from livestock breeding, their fear of losing their livestock (if entrusted to a hired herdsman) has long prevailed over the potential benefits. This problem was repeatedly discussed at local community workshops and meetings.



Only after several exchanges of views, did the majority of the local community members come to the conclusion that use of relatively remote pastures would not only improve the village environment but also make poverty alleviation possible.

Consequently, in the summer of 1998, a decision was made to explore the possibilities and to start a step-by-step development of the second and third pasture belts by having the most numerous and dry livestock graze on them (250-270 days). >>>

To this end, they approached the local *akimat*, who assigned five wells located in the second and third pasture belts to the local community of Zhangeldy. Three groups were identified for keeping common livestock on remote grazing areas, and for well repair and use. During 1999-2000, with the financial support of GEF/SGP and the United Nations Programme to Combat Desertification, several *jurts* (a kazak movable dwelling), pumps (tap water-elevator) and mini power stations were purchased.

The costs, though not high, were significant for poor villages. In connection with the peculiarity of this problem to the whole arid region, it would be advisable to appropriate local budget funds for the restoration of watering devices on pastures around villages as environmental protection activities.

One of the major objectives of the “Zhanartu” project is to facilitate local capacity development. Under the conditions prevailing in Zhangeldy village, this means housekeeping development and, above all, higher production, fodder storage and an increase in stock numbers on every farm. Calculations made together with the local community members showed that the average cost of a basket of goods for one person amounted to 60 thousand *tenge* per year. The basic and only commodity produced in remote districts of Kazakhstan, to which the Otrar region belongs, is meat. For example, a sheep can be sold here for 4-5 thousand *tenge*.

Consequently, the annual living wage per person corresponds to the sale of 16 sheep. If we assume that these would mostly be lambs of 8-12 months, then it is necessary to have no fewer than 20 sheep per person. As mentioned above, there are 133 persons in the settlement of Zhangeldy. Based on the above calculations, there should be 2,660 sheep, plus 40 rams; altogether there should be about 2,700 head of sheep per capita. Assuming that the grazing area for one sheep is 4 hectares a year, the settlement should have per household an area of 10 thousand hectares for grazing. Apart from that, 540 tons of hay should be stored for the period of stabling (100 days). If the harvest is 8.0 tons per hectare, there should be 67.5 hectares of irrigated land. We have such land resources being used now.

Zhangeldy, a former division of the former state farm of “Shouldersky”, had 100 hectares of irrigated land. Water for irrigating the state farm field was pumped up, and the pumps worked on diesel oil and electricity. But irrigation stopped in 1993 and has been out of service ever since, because the electricity was cut off.

Members of the local community began work in early spring 2000 to restore the irrigated land. They began with the cleaning and deepening of the bed of an old gravity 8.5-kilometer channel from the Syrdaria river to the settlement of Zhangeldy. The farm «Zhuldyz», which had relevant equipment available, did most of the reclamation work. They also received financial support from GEF/SGP for buying spare parts for the equipment, fuel and lubricating materials.

Thanks to this cooperation, water has been regularly supplied for the irrigation of fields in the local community since the spring of 2001. Today, 57 hectares are under seed and forage crops and 20 hectares of that area belong to households. The local community, that is the “land proprietors”, looked after the upkeep and water and gathered alfalfa for hay or green fodder. >>>

Yield stability of alfalfa plantations and the development of households and farms in that area depend first and foremost on the water supply, which in turn ultimately depends on the water level in the Syrdaria river. The latter is regulated. Now the governments of the four border States have decided to admit the outflow volume. Sometimes their decisions are not in favour of Kazakhstan. That is why the Aral Sea region, including the settlement of Zhangel'dy, which is situated on the lower reaches of the Syrdaria river, is in the risk zone.

Project results

1. The transferred grazing of large numbers of dry livestock to land further away has enabled the introduction of spare usage of the nearest pastures, promoting:

- The partial consolidation of lands eroded by ephemera and by annual stalwart;
- The annual appearance of rare endemic plants on the earlier eroded lands;
- The appearance of gramineous plants (though not much) and others, which are capable of stabilizing the turf process, and consequently, of rehabilitating soil-vegetable cover on the eroded land around the settlement of Zhangel'dy;
- The economic rotation of more than 8,000 hectares of pasture with good forage, in spite of a recent drought;
- A rather high level of feeding of domestic animals;

And, ultimately, in its turn, a surge in milk, meat and wool production from the local community's cattle during the grazing period.

2. The establishment of forage alfalfa plantations on irrigated areas by members of the local community has enabled:

- The growth of alfalfa for hay and green fodder in the village for the first time since the collapse of the *sovkhos*;
- The provision of forage, which in turn has made it possible to milk the cows and give rise to an increase in the live weight of young animals in the winter;
- The cessation of 'winter pasturing' around the village, which has decreased considerably the degree of trampling on land near the village.

Thus, certain results have been achieved both in preventing soil erosion and restoring plant society, and in improving the living standards of the local community. For example, the farms at Esengeldy Mamakov and Kambara Kuntureeva and some other members of the local community began to sell lambs of 8-9 months directly from the pastures and the live weight of every lamb is 38-42 kg. No such practice existed before the project was launched. The rise in milk production during the grazing period means not only that the supply of milk is sufficient to meet the existing needs of a family, but that some milk can be saved to make butter and kurt (dry cheese) for the winter.

On the whole, the increase in animal production has provided a tangible increase in food for most of the village. Some families are already able to offer the produce from their animals for sale at the market. At present, the activities carried out by village members are wholly self-financed. ☑

DE L'EMIGRATION AUX BRIQUES

ATVPE, Tchad

Le phénomène de la désertification qui sévit au Tchad ainsi que la dégradation des sols s'est intensifié. Des recherches ont été faites dans les années 1968, 1973 et 1984. Une dégradation progressive du fragile équilibre entre l'homme et son environnement fut constatée.

Beaucoup de populations se sont déplacées, surtout des jeunes qui ont quitté leurs villages pour émigrer à l'étranger et dans certaines grandes villes du pays. La population de certains villages a été formée par les associations nationales. Les informations concernant certaines conventions des nations unies ont été bien diffusées, toutes les couches sensibles ont été sensibilisées, mais le handicap, c'est l'accès à un fonds pour le financement des projets. C'est ce qui a remis en question le principe de la convention auprès des populations.

Ce phénomène a poussé notre organisation à mettre sur pied quelques programmes qui consistent à encourager la population de certains villages à s'organiser et à suivre certaines recommandations de la convention.

Les Programmes sont les suivants:

D'abord, nous avons, après un mois de discussion avec les chefs de certains villages, les personnalités religieuses et autres personnes influentes par rapport au problème de la distribution des parcelles cultivables, aux femmes (les femmes étant les plus touchées par la pauvreté). Il est impossible d'éliminer la pauvreté sans la participation massive des femmes, car les femmes sont seules responsables de la survie et du bien être de leurs enfants, et le revenu de la femme est plus largement consacré à la famille que celui de l'homme.

Ce sont elles qui portent le fardeau de la pauvreté et ce sont encore elles qui jouent un rôle majeur tant dans l'économie que dans la production alimentaire de la famille. Nous avons appuyé nos arguments avec la projection d'un film montrant des femmes ouest africaines exerçant différentes activités. Notre programme, nous l'avons baptisé : (la terre pour ceux qui la protègent.)

Notre deuxième programme est baptisé (un frère pour une vie.) Chaque femme d'un village qui donne naissance à un enfant doit planter un arbre au 8ème jour de la naissance de son enfant, l'arbre doit être entretenu par l'homme que l'enfant porte son nom ou qu'il soit membre de la famille. Nous avons inculqué aux paysans l'amour des arbres, que l'arbre doit être traité comme un être humain. ➤➤➤

Notre troisième programme vient d'être mis sur pied, ce programme consiste à demander une contribution aux commerçants et autres personnes qui n'ont pas le temps d'aller planter des arbres, de verser une somme de 200 F CFA, cette somme nous permet de produire des plants, le programme est baptisé (200 F pour sauver des vies).

Notre organisation a fait quelques recherches qui ont abouti. En effet nous avons remporté le premier prix du PNUD/UNSO en 1998 pour les meilleures pratiques en technologies traditionnelles de lutte contre la désertification et l'atténuation des effets de la sécheresse. Suite à ce prix, nous avons fait des recherches sur la fertilisation des terres dégradées, régénération des marres, marigots et marais taris, avec l'aide d'un fonds de 1.500.000 F CFA. En creusant dans la marre, et avec la terre enlevée nous fabriquons des briques cuites que nous revendons ensuite. Les briques sont disposées de telle sorte qu'entre les espaces nous mettons des fruits de rôniers, de bouse de vache sèche ou des papiers trempés dans l'eau et séchés au soleil, la vente des briques cuites fait rentrer suffisamment d'argent dans les caisses des groupements paysans.

Ce programme est apprécié par les paysans et certains villages nous ont d'ailleurs adressé des lettres pour demander à notre organisation de venir faire le même projet dans leurs villages. Ce projet n'est pas seulement rentable de par la vente des briques, mais la marre creusée peut contenir de l'eau jusqu'à la prochaine saison de pluie, et cette eau sert à faire de la culture maraîchère et autres choses.

Nous avons gagné le prix du sultan Qaboos pour la prévention de l'environnement en l'an 2001 au siège de l'UNESCO à Paris. Prière de consulter le site www.unesco.org/mab/qaboos où vous trouverez toutes les informations concernant ce prix.

Etant données les difficultés rencontrées sur le terrain par les associations, nous avons eu une réunion regroupant quelques ONG et associations, avons créé un organe qui regroupe quelques 4 ONG et 17 Associations de protection de l'Environnement, cet organe est dénommé (collectif des ONG Amies de la nature CONGAN) le but est de créer une synergie entre les associations qui œuvrent dans les domaines environnementaux, de bien coordonner leurs activités. Le Gouvernement tchadien depuis 1999, a bien élaboré son plan de protection de l'environnement en créant certaines structures qui consistent à bien gérer les ressources naturelles en associant et responsabilisant les paysans. Il y a eu des créations de marchés ruraux, un plan de gestion de ressources naturelles avec une mesure d'accompagnement très efficace. ☑

RECLAIMING LOST LAND

Fiona Meehan
REST, Ethiopia

Gully formation is one of the effects of severe erosion, when the earth literally cracks open, creating barren fissures, which can expand at an alarming rate, eating up potentially productive land. But with vision, determination, willing labour and minimum tools, this process can be halted and lost land reclaimed.

Gebre Giorgis Heluf described the gully at Adisalam, in the Degua Tembien district of Tigray, Northern Ethiopia, before the Relief Society of Tigray (REST) started its reclamation work. "It was a very big gully, totally barren, and getting deeper all the time. It was also very hazardous, even the cattle couldn't cross it."



Six years later, Gebre Giorgis is one of two guards appointed by the local area council to oversee the annual distribution of improved fodder and to protect the reclaimed gully from grazing animals. Expansion of the gully, which was 400 metres long and up to 7 metres deep in places, has stopped, and lush elephant and phalaris grasses now grow up to 4 metres tall.

(Above: Gebre Giorgis Heluf keeps watch for the community over the gully he helped to reclaim)

Getahun Tedla and Yared Tsehayu, from REST's Environmental Rehabilitation and Agricultural Development Department, explained how stone check dams were constructed to prevent further erosion of the walls of the gully, to catch rainwater and to build up soil fertility. This process was then helped along with the planting of improved grass seeds and leguminous trees. What was previously barren land is now producing approximately 1,500 bales, (over 25 metric tonnes) of good quality livestock fodder every year. Land adjoining the gully, farmed by 22 subsistence households, is now protected from further collapse, and with improved soil fertility, production has increased. Gully reclamation is just one of a wide range of environmental rehabilitation measures undertaken by REST with local communities as part of watershed management and development activities.



Abeba Girmai

Abeba Girmai, 30 years old with two young children, worked on the initial soil and water conservation activities at Adiselem, along with most of the able bodied community in and around the small town of Hager Selam. Hauling stones and earth to help build the crucial check dams was tough, backbreaking work, but "we wanted to see this land become productive again", she explained. "Everybody who could, contributed a month's free labour, and then the poorest households continued to work, paid with grain provided by REST". Selection of households to receive food for work is carried out with the local elected *baito*, or council. This council also establishes by-laws for the management of the rehabilitated gully as well as other development outputs and distribution of benefits. >>>

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Now Abeba is one of about 500 householders benefiting directly from the reclaimed gully. She receives two donkey loads of good fodder grasses a year, which go to feed her new dairy cow, a high yield Friesian introduced by the local Bureau of Agriculture. "With this fodder, the cow produces 10 litres of milk a day, compared to less than 8 litres with other local straw. I make some cheese and butter with the milk. I use the butter and some milk in the household, especially for the children, and I sell milk and cheese locally."

The impact of the rehabilitation work has expanded beyond the original land treated in the gully. Foxes and other wild animals, birds and insects, long departed from the area, have reappeared. Local grasses and other vegetation have appeared and spread in the area around the gully, expanding fodder availability, honey production and crucial biological diversity. It provides a startling green contrast in an otherwise dry, dusty landscape, in an area suffering badly from successive years of severe drought and harvest failure. In Tigrai, such green is the colour of hope, the colour of success, a potent symbol of yet another small battle fought and won in the long term struggle against desertification. ☑

LA CREATIVITE ARTISANE VERITABLE ALTERNATIVE POPULAIRE

Alfeddy Khadija
HERD, Maroc

Les femmes assurent les coûts les plus élevés de la crise environnementale , car elles portent la responsabilité de fournir l'eau, la nourriture, l'énergie et les soins à la famille. Par conséquent, elles doivent gérer les responsabilités de leur milieu, et ce malgré leur statut subalterne dans la société marocaine et leurs conditions défavorables (analphabétisme, manque de formation...).

L'accès au travail et aux moyens de production reste difficile dans ces conditions de sous estime. Bien que le travail pour beaucoup de femmes ne constitue pas un choix mais plutôt une question de survie et pour combler le déficit du budget du ménage. Dans cette lutte quotidienne la femme marocaine crée, innove, propose des solutions et donne des alternatives pour gérer les crises . Voici une expérience réussie de nos femmes artisanes reflétant leur activité face à une crise environnementale et un avatar économique.

L'expérience a vu le jour dans la région de Marrakech Tensift Elhaouz, région à l'intérieur du pays à climat semi-aride connu par sa palmeraie. Parmi les pratiques traditionnelles féminines autour du palmier, il y avait la pratique du Doum (folioles de palmier). Avec ses folioles, les femmes faisaient de multiples ouvrages de sparterie et de vannerie:plateaux, couffins et paniers. De cette activité vivaient des familles entières, les hommes se chargeaient de la coupe du Doum et la vente de la production, les femmes de la confection des articles. Malheureusement en raison des aléas climatiques, notamment les sécheresses répétitives qu'a connues la région, l'expansion urbaine et les épidémies et germes pathogènes, la palmeraie s'est dégradée et les autorités ont interdit la coupe du palmier ainsi que du Doum dont se servaient les femmes.

La sécheresse, le manque d'eau et de matières premières pour assurer les activités, ont causé un exode rural vers la ville de Marrakech particulièrement dans les quartiers périphériques. Comme alternative au Doum du palmier, les femmes dans leurs usages quotidiens commencent à récupérer les sachets de plastiques de diverses couleurs et de divers usages afin de les utiliser dans les activités de sparterie et de vannerie. Elles créent ainsi des articles de vannerie et de sparterie très jolis à partir des rejets plastiques.

Ainsi la créativité artisanale renouvelle ce savoir faire traditionnel, qui allait disparaître suite à une crise environnementale, par respect et dans un souci de préservation de la palmeraie. De plus, il y a un recyclage d'une matière non biodégradable.

Cette expérience montre comment les femmes s'occupent de l'environnement et interviennent dans le développement. L'écologie féministe marginalisée au sein des approches de développement est une véritable alternative populaire non violente intégrant le savoir faire, l'expérience et contribue en même temps à gérer la crise. ☑

KASENA NANKANA DISTRICT OF UPPER EAST REGION OF GHANA

GIA/NABIO Agroforestry Development Organization (GNADO) GNADO, Ghana

The Bible said that when God created the heaven and the earth, the earth was dry and bare. It said that God caused vegetation to grow on it. He did that not only to protect the earth but also to make it support life. The Bible went further to say that God then created man and put him in charge of the earth to exploit it (Gen:1:1,9,10,26-31). Unfortunately however, this great asset – earth on which man depends for his survival has not been handled the way it should. Over the years, man's activities on earth have tended to be destructive rather than constructive.

In Ghana for instance, it is estimated that in 1900, the country had 8.2 million square kilometers of forest but this has dwindled down to 1.8 million square kilometers in the year 2000. Now, the annual rate of degradation is estimated at 75,000 square kilometers. So, when we talk of desertification it is the process by which arid or semi-arid land becomes desert through climatic change or human actions. The Upper East Region of Ghana is the worst degraded region. The human activities responsible for the fast degradation of the land are shifting cultivation, intensive farming on one piece of land, indiscriminate felling of trees for fuel wood and charcoal production, bush burning, over grazing and small scale mining. The main cause for these harsh human activities towards the environment is poverty, which makes them carry out the activities just to earn income for a livelihood.

The effects of desertification on the lives of the people in the region are very serious. Due to climatic changes the region experiences short and erratic rainfalls, which affect food and livestock production. Intensive farming and the destruction of the vegetation cover leaves the soil bare resulting in erosion, low soil fertility and poor crop yields. Fuel wood also becomes very scarce. In the Upper East Region over half of the population use stocks as fuel wood. The high population of the region is another factor that contributes to food insecurity and the poverty of the people. Land holdings in the region are so small that food produced on one cannot sustain a family up to the next farming season. Between the months of February and May every year, the weather becomes so hot – about 42 degrees Celsius, that epidemics such as cerebro-spinal-meningites (CSM) and yellow fever break out impoverishing the people the more.

It is these conditions that have compelled especially most of the youth in the region to migrate to the southern parts of the country in search of better living conditions. Some get employed as farmhands, others as drinking bar attenders while some serve as porters. It is estimated that about one million youth especially girls from the northern regions are down south engaged in menial jobs. They have no homes as they sleep in street corners and on people's room verandas where they are sexually abused and some of them return to their home towns infected with the deadly disease HIV/AIDS making their conditions worst off.

The Kasena Nankana district, which is one of the six districts of the Upper East Region, has had its share of land degradation, the eastern and western parts of the district being the worst. It is against this background that the contribution of Gia/Nabio Agroforestry Development Organisation (GNADO) in combating land degradation, drought and desertification in the district cannot be overlooked. The founder of GNADO – Mr. Daniel Alban Luguzuri between 1989 and 1990 planted over 2,000 tree seedlings – Cassia, Acacia, Eucalyptus, Albizia, teak, Mango and Cashew on a three hectares land. His efforts attracted the attention of the Ghana government and he was given the first Best National Agroforestry Farmer Award in 1990. This spurred Mr. Luguzuri and he formed the Gia/Nabio Agroforestry Development Organisation (GNADO), involving the people of Gia and Nabio villages in agroforestry activities. ➤➤➤



A Danida team inspecting a family woodlot plantation established in 1997 in Ghana in the Kasena Nankana district

Having realized that land ownership in the Kasena Nankana district is in the hands of family units and not the chiefs, Mr. Luguzuri took advantage of the land tenure system to introduce the family group (Unit) woodlots and fruit orchards development programme in the district. Under the programme, a family unit forms a group, which is assisted by GNADO to establish its own woodlot and fruit orchard plantation, using their own family land available. The family group for this woodlot and fruit orchard development programme sets about one and a half acres land aside. Each family group is expected to grow 1,500 woodlot seedlings and 60 fruit trees. Tree seedlings are made available by GNADO from its community nurseries established for this programme. With financial assistance from donor agencies such as DANIDA, the Government of Japan and the Inter-

church Organisation for Development Co-operation (ICCO) of Holland, GNADO raised awareness and encouraged beneficiary farmers to integrate crop farming especially groundnuts with tree growing, which they readily accepted and adopted. GNADO then supplied each family group a donkey, cart and plough on credit to facilitate early land preparation and to transport foodstuffs from the farm to the house. Each group member was also supplied with a bag of groundnut seeds for cultivation within the trees planted.



Gnado tree nursery in Katiu

The programme became so successful that within six years GNADO has extended its agroforestry activities to six communities of the district. The communities are Chiana, Katiu, Nakong, Kayoro, Mirigu and Sirigu. So far, GNADO has been able to mobilize 150 family groups of about 15 family members to a group to establish their own woodlot and orchard plantations. What it means is that GNADO has mobilized 2,250 farmers to turn 225 acres of serious degraded land in the Kasena Nankana district into forests. The people can now meet their domestic fuel wood needs, while fruits are available for consumption and for sale to earn income. A total of 2,250 bags of groundnuts are cultivated on 2,250 acres of land to produce groundnuts for domestic consumption

and for sale to earn income to reduce poverty. Each farmer can harvest eight bags of groundnuts from one cultivated bag. The beneficiaries are therefore able to pay their children's school and hospital bills and are able to solve domestic problems with the income earned from both the fruit trees and the groundnuts produced.

GNADO is therefore tackling land degradation, drought and desertification on two fronts – solving the poverty problem through the fruit orchard development and groundnut farming, while also solving environmental problems by growing trees. Ghana, as a signatory to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification has established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under its Ministry of Lands and Forestry. The EPA has been charged with the responsibility of co-managing, protecting and enhancing the country's environment. As a result, the agency organizes durbars, workshops and film shows to educate and sensitize the people not only on the dangers of environmental degradation but on the benefits of environmental protection and preservation as well. It is this high level of awareness created by the EPA, and its collaboration with GNADO, that has made the people to embrace GNADO's agroforestry activities. ☑

LA DEGRADATION PITOYABLE DU SITE MASIKITA ET DES ENVIRONS DE L'IPN/BINZA

Géorgette Bilonda Mpenda
CUCAFE, R.D. Congo

Description de la capitale (Kinshasa) R.D.C.

Située à la sortie du Pool et au début des puissantes cataractes qui arrêtent la navigation vers l'aval, Kinshasa, capitale de la République Démocratique du Congo s'étire le long de la rive méridionale du Pool Malebo (Stanley Pool), en face de Brazzaville.

D'une superficie de 10.725 Km², Kinshasa est une plaine marécageuse et alluviale. Voici ses coordonnées géographiques :

- Latitude sud : 4° 19' 45"
- Longitude est : 15° 18' 15"

L'altitude de ses collines (Mont – Ngafula, Mont – Amba, Mont – Ngaliema) et celle de ses plateaux (Kimwenza, Binza...) varie entre 310 et 635 m. Parmi ses importantes rivières, on retiendra la Ndjili, la Nsele, la Funa (et ses affluents la Bumbu et la Yolo) la Gombe, la Lubudi, la Mampeza, la Binza, la Lukunga...).

Son climat tropical chaud et humide est variable: lourd et chaud dans la plaine (à cause du déboisement) il est plutôt doux dans la région des collines. Comme l'ensemble du pays, Kinshasa connaît deux saisons: sèche (mai – septembre) et pluvieuse (octobre – mai). Avec l'état de guerre, l'exode rurale et le manque de statistiques fiables, il est imprudent d'estimer sa population.

Description des fléaux

Kinshasa est sous l'emprise des fléaux énormes qui le rongent le déshabillent du jour au lendemain. Deux de ces fléaux ont retenu notre attention: - l'insalubrité et les ravins «Pas un pas sans un sac» est le slogan, le mot d'ordre que les enfants de la rue, les élèves et leurs encadreurs sous la direction de l'ONG-D/CUCAFE ont utilisé pour rassembler, déterrer, brûler sur la superficie du quartier du 04 octobre dans la commune de Lingwala, tous les sachets d'emballage qui traînent partout.

Lors d'une séance de vulgarisation sur la désertification, tout le monde est tombé d'accord sur le propos convaincant de Madame Georgette BILONDA, Présidente de CUCAFE pour recycler les déchets. Ce serait, avait – elle dit, la solution la plus conforme aux lois de l'écologie; autrement dit il faudrait imiter la nature dans laquelle tous les éléments sont réutilisés dans les différents cycles biochimiques. En récupérant une tonne de vieux papiers pour refaire un papier neuf, on épargne une vingtaine d'arbres; de même, dans les automobiles jetées à la ferraille, on peut récupérer certains métaux et d'autres matériaux. Les boîtes métalliques usagées peuvent servir à en fabriquer d'autres etc. >>>

La dernière proposition collective était l'achat d'une parcelle poubelle. Là on y engagera 4 travailleurs et, les habitants de Lingwala et des environs y déposeront ces déchets domestiques et industriels moyennant un paiement dérisoire pour le traitement de ces 4 travailleurs qui, à leur tour, se chargeront d'extraire des déchets, selon la nature, les cailloux pour les revendre aux maçons ; les feuilles d'arbres mortes pour fertiliser nos champs potagers et les sachets d'emballage pour être brûlés. Ainsi donc, comme la désertification n'est pas seulement dans le désert, la lutte que nous allons mener contre elle est une lutte contre la pauvreté, rassemblons – nous car la victoire est de notre côté.



Le deuxième fléau est la prolifération des ravins sur presque toutes les collines décrites dans l'introduction de cette rédaction. Ces ravins qui emportent maisons, églises, routes et quartiers se situant sur leur passage commencent à inquiéter la vie des paisibles

Kinois.

Une partie du boulevard Lumumba, aux environs de l'ex-Domaine Présidentiel de la N'sele est tombée dans un trou; la route By-Pass dans la commune de Mont – Ngafula était coupée en deux par un ravin; la Paroisse Catholique Saint-Sacrément est menacée tandis qu'une école Kimbaguiste qui se trouvait sur l'autre bord de la route Matadi qui le séparait de la paroisse ici citée est déjà tombée dans le ravin, le quartier MASIKITA en face de l'Institut Pédagogique National de Binza s'est vu transformé en une misérable contrée par des ravins qui sont sortis sur 3 axes différents et qui ont emportés les maisons, les gigantesques villas de grands dinosaures du régime défunt de la 2^e République.

S'informant pour mener ses investigations, le Comité de Gestion de CUCAFE a récolté des habitants de MASIKITA, deux types de causes majeures, l'un superstitieux et l'autre purement scientifique.

Pour les uns, depuis l'époque coloniale, l'urbanisation de Kinshasa oblige les riverains à céder leurs terres (villages) aux établissements européens moyennant des indemnités dérisoires. Cela cause une frustration des indigènes qui font naître des ravins partout où ils sont chassés.

Pour les autres, la façon dont les avenues ont été tracées sur ce site, les constructions anarchiques et l'indifférence de grands BWANA (riches) du quartier sont les causes premières de ce fléau.

Entretemps, selon l'idée du KIT pédagogique sur la désertification, des centaines de jeunes plants se rassemblent dans des écoles informées de Lingwala, apportés par les jeunes enfants pour une expérience prochaine. ☑

LE RAVIN RAVAGEUR

Elles sont dans le sable ensevelies pêle-mêle et sans bière
Sans dessus sens dessous
Elles sont portées précipitamment
Ces belles maisons, des gigantesques villas.
Qui embellissaient le quartier MASIKITA.
Et que des yeux, tu cherches
Effondré et prêt de tomber d'effroi
Fané, confus et incapable devant le désastre
Ce trou béant qui est venu de l'indifférence
De l'imprudence, de l'anarchie urbaniste
Ces maisons là sont tombées, ne le regrette
MASIKITA a perdu son beau costume d'entant
Ordures, épaves et carcasses des vieilles voitures
Viendront remplacer les gigantesques villas
Ils nous amèneront moustiques, malaria et typhoïde
Oui, ils ont caché l'épidémie
Indifférents au cri de la terre
Ils ont nié le pire
Peuvent – ils aujourd'hui cacher la mort?
Renier alors le désastre?
Riches et pauvres de MASIKITA
Egalité établie
Rebâtittez en ordre, canalisez les eaux des pluies
La terre a ses lois, ses règles, ses caprices
Elle se fâche aussi, se fait violence en silence
Bouchez les petits trous au bas de la vallée
Plantez la pelouse et ne marchez pas dessus
Reboisez les bas lieux où vont les eaux de nos toits
Prenez – y garde, chaque fois qu'ils se fendent
Petits trous deviendront grands
Et les gens n'en font pas attention
Allons, se disent les MASIKITA Kinois
Portons plainte contre les ravageuses pluies
Sans logis, elles nous ont rendu pauvres
En ces termes, elles se défendent
En perpétuelles immigrations je suis un voyageur
Du ciel au ciel passant par le sol
Coulant, visitant les couches perméables de la terre
Coulant et jaillissant en sources nouvelles
J'amène avec moi ce que les hommes négligent
Milliers et milliers de grains de sables m'accompagnent
En amont ou en aval, oui je creuse des trous
Je change l'écosystème, l'arable change
Car les humains empêchent mes gens de passer
Les désorientent ou veulent les arrêter
Si vous le voulez bien
Dites – le
Et je ne viens plus sur la terre
Alors ce serait la sécheresse
La désertification
Et la terre meurt.

Géorgette Bilonda Mpenda

N.B: Ce poème est un message pour la prise de conscience de ravage, de la pauvreté, bref de la désertification. C'est un appel au combat dans la lutte contre la désertification. ☑

COMBATING DESERTIFICATION IN PERNAMBUCO

Dr. Valdemar Rodrigues and Douglas Machado
Instituto Desert, Brazil

The day has dawned in a different way these last few days: it rained all night. We are in the community of *Macambira* – in the county of *Solidão* – one of the communities that were involved in the project “Combating Desertification in Pernambuco”. The project entailed working with affected families as part of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. We are visiting Pedro Izidório, known as Tota, a community leader, married to Dona Juvita, with seven children. He invites us to have coffee – as is the habit in the region – and starts talking.

“In dry Sertão, as we all know, there is practically a 90 percent chance of a drought: rain comes only rarely. The problem is that the land gets wasted because of ploughing. In the past, the land was not ploughed. The way you drilled and planted! Then, the lands have a tendency of becoming wasted. Water goes carrying what? The best lands are eroded and become good for nothing. What is important is the land cover at the top. Water takes it away and leaves behind just what we call “the bone of land”. That family, which used to produce 40, 50 up to 100 sacks of corn started to produce 10,12. So the family encountered difficulties and then the men and young boys left to São Paulo, even here Recife, Maceió. As a matter of fact, most of my own family are not here. The majority are all spread out all over the world on account of this agricultural failure”. We asked about this project. “I believe it will improve the lives of many families – in the case of our community, there are 30 families. First, one of the best things we can have is water for our survival. A well was perforated – that is going to provide water to the whole community for drinking and other

human consumption. And after all this, we are also receiving in our community a toilet, with a septic tank too”. The student Marlúcia Araújo comments, “When we felt the necessity to go to the bathroom, we had no bathroom and we had to go to the outdoor bush and pollute the soil”.



In *Barra I*, next to *Macambira*, the farmer Luiz Gonzaga emphasizes, *“It was we ourselves that did the work, I mean, from the chicken-roost to the cistern: the masons themselves are from the community and the servant is from the proper locality. We searched so as to not bring anyone from outside”.* We asked about the importance of the community’s involvement. Luiz answered, *“Because when I’m well, my neighbour is well, if I’m bad, my neighbour will be bad too. I’m quite sure about this... it’s something concrete. I think of us as a small community”.* >>>

About working together the bee-keeper José Guimarães says, *“The bee-keeping is important because the bee is there in the bee-hive working for us. And we are taking care of other things: taking care of a little herd of goats, taking care of the clean land, and bees are there filling the hive with honey, helping us”*.

Dona Juvita served us more coffee. Tota concluded, *“That’s why I insist to every community that in any kind of work first one should be able to face any kind of work, so that in the future nothing goes wrong”*. And he reminds us why he chose to raise chickens: - *“Because we know that in the future we are going to have a chicken to slaughter, and have the eggs to sell. For sure, I have hopes of this project. And my expectation is to work so that in six months from now, not only will we have 50 chickens - it was 50 chicks that we received – but 70, 80 or even 100 chicks.”* Summing up, Doralice said, *“We need to find out if it’s possible to survive right here, ain’t it? The more we sell eggs laid by the chickens, the more chickens we will buy, ain’t it? We should not let the project go down the drain! Instead, we should expand the project much more, ain’t it?!”*



The project “Combating Desertification in Pernambuco State” consists of a number of measures to control land degradation in communities affected by desertification and severe drought conditions. Each measure is composed of: a qualification assessment and training course; basic hygiene equipment; water catchment and storage equipment; and a productive unit identified by each family/community on the basis of its own needs. This could be apiculture, aviculture or embroidery. In 12 months, the following had been built in total: 263 cisterns, 12 wells, 384 septic pits and 512 productive units benefiting 504 families. The total cost was US\$1,023,726.90. ☑

QUEL DEVENIR POUR LE COUVERT FORESTIER DE LA RÉGION DES SAVANES AU NORD TOGO

Idrissou K. Labande
RAFIA, Togo

Face à la croissance démographique démesurée des pays du Tiers-Monde, la question de la rareté des ressources énergétiques est un problème majeur et la prospective énergétique n'a de pertinence que si elle prend en compte la croissance des besoins de ces pays. La région des savanes au nord Togo fait des combustibles ligneux, la seule source d'énergie pour satisfaire les besoins domestiques.

En effet, plus de 97% des ménages de la ville de Dapaong (un des centres urbain de la région) font recours au bois de chauffe ou au charbon de bois pour cuire leurs aliments. Cette consommation est évaluée à 91 tonnes d'équivalent bois exploité par jour sur le terrain. En substance, on déboise 216 fois plus qu'on ne reboise dans la région des savanes. Cette consommation croissante du bois de feu a conduit à la disparition progressive de la forêt et a ainsi compromis dangereusement le rôle de l'arbre.

Sur le plan alimentaire, cette exploitation abusive a énormément contribué à la rareté et à l'irrégularité des pluies, à l'appauvrissement des sols et donc à la réduction drastique des rendements des cultures.

Sur le plan social, qui est en fait une conséquence de la première, cette situation a entraîné le départ des bras valides (surtout les jeunes) de la région vers d'autres villes à l'intérieur du pays ou des pays voisins (Ghana, Côte-d'Ivoire...) accentuant ainsi la misère dans les villages et des cas sociaux dans les centres urbains. En outre la corvée des femmes et des jeunes filles pour la quête du bois-énergie devient une affaire de longues heures de marche sur parfois des dizaines de km. Cette situation explique en partie le faible taux de scolarisation de la jeune fille dans cette région.

Sur le plan de l'écosystème, la destruction du couvert végétal qui constitue le milieu de vie des animaux a entraîné également la disparition de ces derniers. On note également une menace d'extinction de certaines espèces végétales qui constituent la cible privilégiée des bûcherons et des consommateurs.

Face à cette situation, différentes mesures ou approches de solutions ont été prises et développées par l'ONG RAFIA (Recherche, Appui et Formation aux Initiatives d'Auto-développement) basée dans la région, pour réduire ou freiner peu soit-il cette dérive. Il s'agit entre autre :

- Information/Sensibilisation des populations de la région sur l'ampleur du drame avec des actions concrètes :
- la vulgarisation des foyers améliorés économes en combustibles ligneux,
- la lutte contre les feux de brousse avec la mise en place des comités villageois de lutte contre les feux de brousse,
- l'appui au reboisement,
- La promotion de l'agro-foresterie. >>>

De toutes ces actions, certaines ont enregistré des résultats peu encourageants alors que d'autres ont enregistré des succès éclatants. Les actions liées au reboisement ont connu des résultats quelque peu mitigés et ce à cause de la nature des sols (souvent curasés), à la pluviométrie (longue saison sèche qui s'étale sur plus de 7 mois) mais surtout à la divagation des animaux qui orchestrent de grands dommages aux plants. Les résultats probants ont été enregistrés au niveau de la vulgarisation des foyers améliorés où plus de 10000 foyers ont été construits et utilisés par les populations de la région. Ces foyers permettent d'économiser 20 à 50% de combustibles par rapport aux foyers trois pierres traditionnels. Par ricochet, ces foyers entraînent moins de dommages au couvert forestier de la zone et allègent la tâche des femmes.

La mise en œuvre de la Convention sur la lutte contre la Désertification a servi de tremplin dans la réussite de ces actions dans la mesure où :

Elle a permis au Gouvernement de définir un plan d'action national dans la lutte contre la désertification. Elle a permis une meilleure appréhension du problème et de l'ampleur de la désertification.

COMBATING DESERTIFICATION IN NICO-NOORD

Sara Bock

Nico–Noord Community, Namibia

The story starts when I met a young man called Hendrik Bock and got married in 1981. My husband was employed at a railway station on a salary of 500 Namibian dollars (US\$ 50) per month. He was the only one earning a salary in the family and it was not enough. That is the reason why I decided to take up farming in order to generate more income. After we both decided to take up farming, we decided to move south to Nico–Noord. We officially started farming there on 2 April 1982. We didn't have enough livestock but just a few goats (15) and sheep (7), and no large livestock such as cows. As I mentioned earlier, only my husband was earning a salary and it was barely enough. So I decided, although we had little livestock, to go and work for other large livestock farmers in the area. I was working as a herder and was paid in kind with one bottle (1 litre) of milk per day. I could not give up the job because at least it contributed to the household income. After some time, the farmers for whom I was working, realized that I was providing them with a valuable service and decided to raise my wages in kind to one lamb per month.

When my husband and I arrived at Nico–Noord in 1982, there was nothing but a windmill and a one-bedroom house. Grazing areas were very bad because the previous farmers had overgrazed the land with their large numbers of livestock. Owing to the lack of grazing land we were forced to gather grass and branches from trees and bring them home for the animals to eat.

The number of livestock grew and I could send my two children to school. Rain became regular and there was enough grazing available. We did not mind looking after the grazing area because we thought that there would be enough fodder for the animals and it would remain there for good. But signs of drought showed and hit us very severely.

At the beginning of 1990, we therefore started a farmers' league and I was elected as chairman of the organization. In June 1990, there were clear indications of a drought. At that moment, as the chairman of the organization, I was willing to ask for assistance from the government. Additionally, I organized an auction. Farmers were requested to sell at least three-quarters of their livestock. I also organized a food-for-work programme, which entailed repairing roads, fences and many other small things.

In 1992, as part of the Sardep programme, I started to measure the farm's area, to install rain meters, to take pictures of the grazing land and to manage the grazing areas.

In 1993, the drought got worse and the livestock began to die at a fast rate and none of us could help each other. There was no grazing land and trees were cut to feed animals.

I think the drought affected women the most because they could no longer send their children to school, and the men had to go and work for the railway or very far from home. >>>

In 1995, we started a campsite project and other small projects. The campsite, of 28 members at the beginning and now 14, could not generate income at the beginning, so we used funds from other projects to build it up.

I also started a nature protection fund with the money that I received from the NNF (Namibia Nature Foundation), with the aim of combating desertification. The campsite and its sub-projects depend on me because we have few financial resources to help the project. The farmers I started with in the 1980s are now very old and young people tend to leave for bigger cities.

Right now we are preparing a practical farm management project at Nico-Noord and DRFN (Desert Research Foundation of Namibia), which is one of the agencies implementing Namibia's UNCCD national action programme, is a big help. I just pray that the Lord will grant my wish to restore communal areas/land and make life easier.

I want to help improve the land because only that can help us. We need to use natural resources properly so they will be there for generations to come. ☑

COOL SPRINGS IN ARID AND SALTY TARTAUL DE SALCIE VILLAGE

Elena Bivol and Valentin Ciubotaru
 BIOS, Republic of Moldova

Tartaul de Salcie village is situated in the south of the Republic of Moldova and in addition to its yearly severe droughts and loss of harvest, the 250 villagers of the 458 have to face the problem of potable water caused by the heavy salinity of the local bedrocks and soils in half of the village. They carry the water from a big distance and use it sparingly.

In 1999, a 22-hectares rather boggy forest situated close to the village was gradually degrading due to intensive pasturing of over twenty thousand heads of cattle, goats and sheep from Tartaul de Salcie and other neighboring villages and due to illegal cutting of trees.

In a meeting at Tartaul de Salcie, the local people with NGO BIOS staff discussed the main problems of the villages, when the idea emerged of transforming the forest into a leisure place for the local people. The research carried out by BIOS partners identified a number of rare plant species in the forest, while the water in all its territory was stated to be potable and of good quality. Through voluntary work of all the village people with the support of BIOS staff and partners the forest was cleaned, eleven springs were cleared and fitted up for use by villagers. A small lake was dug and new trees were planted where missing. The pasturing was declared forbidden. The actions were carried out within the Project "Programme on Sustainable Agriculture" funded by the Dutch foundations NOVIB and CORDAID.

In 2001, the forest has acquired the status of an entertainment and water collection site for the local people. Many visitors from other villages, and even from Cahul, the nearest city, came to rest in the shades of the trees. Many of them said that they had never tasted such good water. The households of Tartaul de Salcie collected the spring water from the forest for their use.

In a zone so arid, with so little vegetation and with such a severe water deficit as the south of Moldova, the cool springs in Tartaul de Salcie looked as a most desired element during hot summer and early autumn days.



Initially, some outsiders consulted about the forest, said that an entertainment zone for the poor Tartaul de Salcie people was a luxury to be considered after other more pressing problems were solved. However, Sava Ghidirim, an old man of 68, said that he had worked a summers of his life in the heat of the sun and had never rested in a nice place before. Now, when he comes with his two grandchildren on Sundays to the forest, he is happy to sit in the shade of an old osier tree and listen to the song of birds and soft noise of gurgling spring water. "I could have died and never known such content times", he said. >>>

In 2002, a new meeting of the village people produced the idea of a water supply pipe for the part of the village that lacks potable water, to be built from the spring area to the village. Currently, funds are being sought and projects are being discussed to make this idea become a reality.



The NGO BIOS staff learned that the needs of the community people are sometimes not the ones visible at first sight and that the people sometimes will desire and support a project that does not look like a real or first priority need to outsiders. They also noted that village people frequently have ambitious visions for their community for which they may make big sacrifices. Being supported and encouraged in such a project, they may gain skills in solving their other needs themselves. ☑

LES ENSEIGNEMENTS D'UN FONDS LOCAL DE LUTTE CONTRE LA DESERTIFICATION

Adama Nana
NATURAMA, Burkina Faso

NATURAMA a acquis une longue expérience dans la conduite des projets de démonstration en mettant l'accent sur les stratégies intégrées qui prennent en compte les problématiques de conservation et de développement socio - économiques des populations. Cette orientation de NATURAMA cadre bien avec l'article 4 2. (a) de la Convention Internationale sur la Lutte contre la Désertification et est en cohérence avec le Plan d'Action National de Lutte Contre la Désertification du Burkina (PAN/LCD). De 1998 à 2000, avec l'appui de Solidarité Canada Sahel (SCS), des actions de démonstration qui intègrent les vecteurs Genre et la Lutte contre la désertification ont été conduites. Parmi ces actions qui s'inscrivaient en droite ligne avec l'article 5 (d) de la Convention, la mise en place d'un fonds local d'appui aux initiatives des femmes, apparaît comme un élément déclencheur de mobilisation et d'engagement.

Contexte, objectifs et stratégies de mise en place du fonds

Sanogho est un village de la région du Centre Est dans la Province de Boulgou. Avec près de deux mille habitants, le village est confronté aux problèmes de la dégradation des terres et des ressources végétales, aux difficultés liées à la maîtrise de l'eau, à une forte migration de la jeunesse vers des pays voisins et lointains comme le Gabon et l'Italie. Les contraintes spécifiques aux femmes sont également importantes avec le peu de reconnaissance de leur travail, l'analphabétisme et leur quasi - absence dans la prise de décision. Des groupements villageois existent dans le village mais sont confrontés à d'énormes difficultés d'ordre organisationnel.

A l'issue d'une session de planification participative organisée avec les différents acteurs du village, les objectifs de l'intervention de NATURAMA ont été:

- sensibiliser et former la population du village sur la conservation et la gestion durable des ressources naturelles;
- appuyer la participation villageoise dans la restauration du couvert végétal du village;
- générer des revenus pour les femmes et améliorer leur participation à la gestion des ressources naturelles;

La stratégie d'intervention, conforme à l'esprit de la Convention dans son article 4 2© a été celui de l'accompagnement des populations du village dans leurs efforts de lutte contre la désertification et d'amélioration de leurs conditions de vie. Ainsi:

Au niveau de la réflexion: l'accent été mis sur la conduite d'échanges avec les responsables et membres des six groupements féminins et les groupements mixtes sur les objectifs du fonds et les modalités pour assurer la durabilité du fonds. Ainsi, des critères consensuels de financement sous forme de prêts ont été arrêtés et la nature des projets à financer a été questionnée. >>>

A titre d'exemple, le principe que chaque bénéficiaire consacre une partie de son prêt à l'achat de plants au niveau de la pépinière centrale communautaire (mise en place par le projet), qu'elle s'engage à planter et à entretenir a été accepté. Au plan collectif avec les groupements mixtes, la participation à des initiatives de lutte contre la désertification avec l'appui du projet comme la mise en place de diguettes anti-érosives, les reboisements dans quelques lieux publics, la Régénération Naturelle Assistée (RNA) dans les exploitations agricoles.

Au niveau de la concertation: un comité de gestion du fonds a été mis en place avec pour mission:

- d'informer et de sensibiliser les membres des groupements féminins sur l'existence du fonds;
- de recevoir et d'analyser les initiatives présentés par les promotrices lors des sessions semestrielles;
- de suivre et d'assurer le recouvrement des fonds alloués aux promotrices,
- avec l'appui de NATURAMA de négocier des ressources complémentaires auprès des institutions de financement comme la caisse populaire pour se donner les moyens d'atteindre le plus grand nombre de femmes. A terme, ajouter au micro-crédit octroyé sur une base individuelle, la réalisation de micro-entreprises rurales sur une base collective.

Au niveau de l'action: La mise en place d'un fonds proprement dit tel qu'encourage la Convention dans son Article 20 2. (a) et la réalisation des actions de plantations, de construction de diguettes, de RNA et de formation.

Les résultats et enseignements

L'apprentissage à la gestion: L'approche du projet basée sur la responsabilisation directe des promoteurs dans la gestion des ressources allouées leurs a permis de s'initier aux modalités de gestion financière et matérielle des projets. Ce qui est fort important dans le contexte de la lutte contre la désertification dont les communautés de base constituent les acteurs de premier plan.

Le renforcement des capacités: les membres des six groupements ainsi que les groupements mixtes ont été outillés sur plusieurs techniques liées à la gestion des ressources naturelles. Ainsi, un total de 611 bénéficiaires dont 307 hommes, 247 femmes et 57 jeunes ont été formés sur la Régénération naturelle Assistée, techniques de réalisation de fosses fumières, la réalisation de sites anti - érosifs... L'émergence d'un leadership parmi les femmes et le potentiel humain constituent de nos jours un élément important en terme d'entretien des investissements, de multiplication et de valorisation des connaissances acquises. Si plusieurs résultats physiques sont aujourd'hui visibles, le plus marquant reste les 2000 arbres achetés et plantés par les femmes bénéficiaires de crédit qui ont montré un acharnement extraordinaire à maintenir les plants. Le taux de survie des plants est de l'ordre de 85 %.

Conclusion

Aujourd'hui encore, trois années après la fin du projet, ce fonds de quatre millions cinq cent mille au départ a grossi et l'activité continue. D'autres opportunités complémentaires ont été saisies avec le programme TRICKLE UP qui octroie 100 dollars à des groupes de deux à trois personnes pour la mise en place de micro - entreprises rurales. D'autres opportunités de consolidations des acquis ont été négociées dans le cadre d'autres initiatives communautaires de lutte contre la désertification. De toute évidence l'on retiendrait que la mobilisation des ressources locales pour combattre la désertification tout en améliorant l'existence des populations est possible. ☑

STORY FROM NIGERIA'S DRY BELT

Enoch Okpara
NEST, Nigeria

Hassan Mantu was born into a rich indigenous family in Nigeria's Sudano-Sahelian zone, some sixty-five years ago. His father was a prominent commercial groundnut farmer. He also grew abundant Sahelian food crops for family subsistence. The soil was fertile, and the rains at the time were reliable in their timing, quantity and duration. At harvest, the family was able to spare some food for both the market, the farm labourers and the poor within the locality. Land degradation, exacerbated by a decade of drought which began in the early 1970s, has spectacularly changed everything, according to Hassan.

Consequently, the community has witnessed many decades of widespread and frustrating crop failures and livestock deaths which had brought untold hardship to peasant farmers and livestock rearers. Large portions of hitherto fertile lands were increasingly invaded by sand dunes. Many farm labourers who had hitherto depended on thriving agricultural activities, as well as small-holder livestock rearers who lost many of their animals to the devastating drought and desertification, were systematically stricken by abject poverty. In reaction, many of them migrated to new locations and cities southwards, for a variety of non-farm casual employments.

It was realized that the severity of the land degradation had been worsened by the decline in ground water level due to excessive region-wide deforestation, for agricultural purposes, even in the headwaters of streams and rivers of the area. These are much shallower today than a decade ago.

Multi-dimensional measures have been adopted to combat desertification. One major strategy was to attempt to restore ecosystem balance through afforestation, especially in the headwaters of streams and rivers of the region for the purpose of enhancing ground water recharge, and thereby minimizing the magnitude of land degradation. Survival rate of the trees was less than 100%, but high enough to bring about desired results. Secondly, farmers and herders were mobilized to build earth dams for the harvesting and storage of water during the short rainy season, for ultimate use during the dry and rainless months, to grow dry season crops, as well as water livestock. Vetiva grass was planted to prevent and minimize the possible effects of erosion on the edges of the earth dams.



The schemes have succeeded because the immediate beneficiaries were committed to the projects, for which they had formed local Community Development Associations, as well as local Project Committees. They also provided free labour in the constructional aspects of the earth dams. **Success** was equally enhanced because funds which to a large extent came from external sources, were available. The villagers, where rele-

vant, matched external funding with community labour in setting up the projects, to demonstrate the partnership concept and enhance the feeling of project ownership. ➤➤➤

The villagers hold the view that if these anti-desertification projects had failed, they would have been faced with severe conditions of food insecurity and widespread incidence of poverty. They must therefore ensure that the schemes work.

Prior to the adoption of the Convention, half-hearted attention was accorded to desertification. State Ministries of Agriculture and Water Resources in the zone were charged with the responsibility of unsuccessfully intervening in various forms of poorly-funded projects. Awareness-raising on the subject was almost non-existent. The emergence of the Convention has therefore, had a number of salutary effects:

- The Federal Ministry of Environment now became the national focal point for the UNCCD;
- Combating desertification began to be mainstreamed into national planning;
- Awareness on the phenomenon increased as a result of government/NGO awareness campaigns;
- Technology transfer from the Niger Republic through IFAD, led to the reclamation of extensive areas of previously degraded farmlands. This has been done through the excavation of different sizes and shapes of trenches, into which green manure is introduced, while allowing surface water runoff to be captured in the trenches. Crop or tree seedlings are then planted in the trenches to utilize the enhanced soil moisture and soil nutrient, thereby yielding crops, fodder, trees, which after a number of years radically changed the surface vegetation from scanty to rich;
- The Convention has also encouraged the adoption of non-farm livelihood activities among some inhabitants of the dry belt. External funding has supported skills acquisition in dress-and pomade-making, as well as other crafts. The people sell the products in local markets, for a livelihood. Thus, the pressure on agricultural land is reduced, which has a mitigating effect on the incidence of desertification and related poverty.

Best practices and lessons learned from other regions include water-harvesting techniques for reclaiming hitherto-degraded farmlands. Furthermore, local communities have now popularized community wood lots in order to preserve their natural forests, while still meeting their needs for fuel wood. The pace of sand dune advancement has diminished as a result of extensive afforestation with acacia. ☑

THE TESTIMONY OF MRS. ESTELVINA DEL CARMEN GONZALEZ GONZALEZ

Chile

Born in Pichasca, Rio Hurtado Community, Department of Limari, IV region, Chile, member of the Neighbours Association "Caracoles" of Pichasca, and participant in the project "Community Based Organisations against Desertification."

"Every afternoon I sit in my ranch porch to take a rest after my daily duties - duties that these days, I am accomplishing with the help of my daughters and my numerous grandchildren. They go to school, something that I could not do myself. I could not even imagine. My parents could never send me to school. I can only rather remember my eternal walks behind goats all along these never-ending hills, burnt as a caldron, hot and most of the times dry. Sometimes hundreds of goats and every day the same: separate the males from the females, milk them and make cheese before coming back to the plateau, the hills, the mountains and the pastures. Our farmyard was one hour away from the river. There, as far as I can remember, every winter we suffered from cold. It was a stone hut sheltered by a cave, a hole in the stone. It was there that each night, we used to cook tortillas and prepare mate tea, looking at the infinity of the night. We were young, kids scared of the taitas' (parents or respectable people) voices.

I can barely remember my youth - it passed by so quickly. I became a mother in the twinkling of an eye and if pasturing was difficult in the past, it started to get worse. Each time, we had to go farther away with our little goats, each time a bit farther looking for branches and brushwood - something to light a fire to cook our food.

Well, at that time, I began to realise that we were leaving the hut behind us, each time more behind, each time farther away from the river. It was not like it was before. And my taita, who never smiled, and myself with the kids were walking for hours through the hills, searching for small branches. But there were worse periods. I can remember for example 1969. It was one of those worse years. Nearly everything was dry and our goats became skeletal... A lot of people left, not because they wanted to but because of the imminent hunger. At that time, I lost one of my family members. It was the hunger. Everything became sand, including the weakest people.

I could never wear good clothes, not even shoes. I cannot do it even now and my daughters laugh at me about that. I now cook in the solar cooker. It was so strange before and now I cannot live without it. There, I cook my stew, my soups, marmalade, and sweets. I do everything we need for the house and I do not need to walk in the fields to look for branches and wood for fire. Now, it is a lot better and I can sit here and look at how the hill is getting greener again. Now I realise the importance of respecting greenery and the fight against desertification. I know that each dish I cook, it is prepared with sunrays. It is like I am milking the sun and I leave the grass for the trees, for the all the birds that are coming... In this way, one day, we will see the river get closer to us again. ☑

GESTION DE PATURAGES: UNE APPROCHE CONCERTEE

Issa ADO

Centre Pastoral de Kossotori, Niger

Dans la direction Est tous les animaux étaient là pendant une bonne année. Il y a eu surpâturage, il y a vraiment eu une exploitation profonde de la zone, alors on délaisse la zone. Nous regardons derrière nous et nous sentons que le parcours est menacé. Il y a eu une dégradation et nous nous demandons ce que vont devenir nos pâturages. Mais comment faire pour maîtriser sa gestion ?

Le comment faire ne peut pas venir d'un seul individu. Chacun va apporter sa contribution et à la fin nous essaierons de faire l'analyse de la situation. Dans un premier temps, ce que nous voyons , c'est que nous pouvons nous organiser nous mêmes.

Entre nous, nous étudierons comment essayer de mettre les animaux dans une même zone. Par exemple on prend le coté Est et tous les animaux vont dans cette zone. Ce côté peut être exploité pendant une période bien déterminée, trois ou quatre mois . Cette période peut même s'étendre à un an si les éleveurs maîtrisent l'exploitation de cette zone.

Supposons que ces animaux aient vécu toute une année sur le pâturage de la zone Est . Un an après , ces animaux se retrouveront dans un autre endroit , par exemple dans la zone Ouest. Pendant ce temps là vous avez encore trois autres zones qui sont en repos les zones Nord, Sud et Est. On reporte le cheptel sur une des trois autres zones par exemple du côté Ouest . La zone Est va se reconstituer et ainsi s'établit une rotation. D'année en année cela permet une régénération naturelle des parcours.

Cette méthode est très économique, il n'y plus besoin de cornières et de fil de fer barbelé.



Quelle serait la condition pour que les bergers et ceux qui s'occupent des troupeaux entretiennent bien

cette zone là et qu'ils sentent que ce sont leurs terroirs qu'ils sont en train d'aménager ?

C'est vraiment aux éleveurs d'avoir l'idée de gérer leur pâturage et de voir s'ils peuvent s'organiser et tenir des réunions entre eux , réfléchir et essayer de mettre en oeuvre cette gestion des parcours et de la maîtriser. >>>

Quelle est la profondeur d'une parcelle de pâturage ?

Les animaux pâturent généralement dans un rayon de 20 à 30 Kms autour d'un puits.

Maintenant, il faudrait organiser les espaces. Ce travail doit se faire avec les éleveurs, en allant avec eux sur le terrain pour délimiter les parcelles afin qu'elles puissent suffire à l'alimentation de l'ensemble des animaux .

Ensuite, un suivi permanent est nécessaire pour que les animaux ne sortent pas de la zone pour aller dans une autre direction.

Pendant, la période d'exploitation de la parcelle à l'Est, que vont faire les bergers et les propriétaires des animaux ? Vont-ils enrichir cette parcelle avant de la mettre en friche?

Oui, les éleveurs peuvent enrichir cette parcelle, mais surtout avec les fèces des animaux. Lorsque la pluie viendra, les arbres vont pousser à nouveau. Il peut y avoir une action d'enrichissement de la zone par le semis d'espèces végétales importées d'une autre région.

Une autre mesure à prendre est aussi de protéger ce qui existe, éviter par exemple l'écorçage des arbres pour se procurer des cordes.

Qui doit assurer le suivi ?

Le suivi revient à la communauté qui exploite le terroir, c'est à dire les éleveurs eux -mêmes. C'est à eux de s'organiser , s'il faut désigner des enfants ou bien des vieux, la catégorie des personnes qu'il faut voir ou même les bergers qui sont toujours derrière les troupeaux.

Ce n'est pas qu'il n'y a pas d'entente entre eux, mais les éleveurs ne comprennent pas jusqu'à présent, le pâturage ce n'est pas pour moi, ce n'est pas pour lui, c'est pour tout le monde. Et le pâturage peut suffire à tout le monde, si on apprend ou on prend conscience de l'utilité de sa gestion rationnelle.

Il faut prévoir des mécanismes de gestion des pâturages pour que chaque campement y trouve son compte. Par exemple nous ne pouvons pas dire que pour le terroir de Kossotori il y aura quatre parcelles, aujourd'hui c'est Biranga , demain c'est Bilahardé après demain c'est Kossotori ... non il faut un règlement qui devra être accepté par l'ensemble des campements. Si cette gestion des pâturages est décidée ensemble personne ne va contester et regretter après. Cette idée de gestion des parcours doit faire son chemin entre éleveurs. Eux mêmes doivent décider, le projet ne peut être qu'un appui pour l'animation et la concertation. ☑

ENCROACHING DESERTS AND REFORESTATION

Tcharbuahbokengo Nfinn
FEEDAR & HR, Cameroon

Desertification has seriously affected most of the communities in Cameroon as it is fast approaching the forests in the southern region of Cameroon. Seventy-five percent of the country's population are peasant farmers whose livelihood depends solely on agricultural production, the farms, rivers and forest resources. The expanding population tends to threaten the forests due to the fact that their farming lands have become degraded and have lost their productivity. The available grazing fields for domestic cattle and goats have become overgrazed resulting in the complete disappearance of pasture. Moreover, relationships have been strained between members of the family because more have to scramble for land capable of supporting high agricultural output. Poverty together with such issues as food insecurity, malnourishment, and underfeeding, are plaguing the communities.

The southern expansion of deserts as compared to the northern part of Cameroon, which has been completely invaded by deserts, are forcing people in Cameroon and its neighboring countries to drift to the southern part of Cameroon, in order to escape the harsh desert characteristics. High temperature, drought and inadequate agricultural farming techniques have equally contributed to food insecurity and low living and working standards.



Njasomo Community implementing strong measures to prevent the community from destroying the forest

Measures taken to combat desertification

Many measures have been undertaken to combat desertification. One of the first measures has been to sensitize the entire communities, schools, colleges, community based organizations and other actors on the importance of preventing desertification. We encourage these individuals and institutions to promote agroforestry, community forestry protection, and reforestation as well as to employ modern agricultural techniques for sustainable agriculture. We discourage their rapid penetration into forests by providing alternative income generating activities since poverty accounts for 70 percent of forest destruction. All

these are undertaken in workshops and seminars organized locally and exclusively for this purpose where support per community per rural organization is provided.

These measures have resulted in much success since farmers devote to maintain sound drainage and irrigation systems in their farming lands. Each farmer boasts of growing at least more than 1000 newly planted, economically rich trees. There are also schools where children further their concerns to provide orchards in their colleges and in their homes. Around 200 rural organizations have been established as a result of this initiative with many having the objective of conserving the environment. More forests have been dedicated to the organization by several communities. What constituted 1,450 ha of forests has expanded to 20,000 ha. ➤➤➤



Sontane: a women's organization working to conserve the environment for sustainability

This has assisted the entire community of 300,000 people to alleviate poverty and bring about sustainable rural development. In order to eliminate the excessive use of fire wood, 20 cocoa drying ovens, introduced by the Europeans Union, have been constructed within these communities all from the initiative of the organization. Moreover, the introduction of charcoal and sawdust energy providers for household cooking has greatly gained recognition. Ten thousand plant species, especially the endangered Ebony, the king tree, and Dossier as well as other economically rich trees have been planted within cocoa estates for sustainability.

Difficulties encountered

However, some failures and difficulties have been encountered in implementing policies to combat desertification. Lack of funding to meet the goals and objectives of the organization has really been one of the frustrating issues since members of the organization volunteer for just very little or no payment and all management costs of the organization are provided by members themselves. No external funds have been provided.

A second obstacle has been the weak infrastructure for transportation and communication. The absence of vehicles and/or motorcycles to penetrate into the hinterlands for field work and other activities of the organization has really slowed down the smooth running of the organization's activities. The roads are always stony and dusty during the dry season, while they become slippery and muddy during the rainy season, making movement on foot and for long distances very tiring. Because it is very difficult to fully persuade a rural family to leave old agricultural techniques, much of the sensitization and implementation needs to be reinforced by providing support to each family in each community.

Desertification has strongly influenced the government's economic policies. The effects of desertification are bringing about the production of particular crops such as cereal and cotton mostly from the desertified, drought affected northern part of the country, and heavy timber production and other forest products from the south. Nonetheless, since the government alone cannot meet the needs of the communities to arrest desertification and bring about food security, the civil society contributes to developing the regions and sometimes replicating best practices from region to region to arrest desertification and global warming.

Example

Good examples of the imminent threat of desertification can be cited in many communities in the southwest province. For example, in Kumba, the diameter of the only river meandering through the city has shrunk to half and its aquatic life is very limited. Temperatures are fragile with drought conditions during the dry seasons. Floods are common during the rainy season with devastating effects to the community of more than 120,000 people. Because of land degradation, agricultural productivity in Kumba Central has dropped to half of what was 10 years ago. As a consequence, the rate of grain (primarily wheat and rice) importation has doubled in the past 10 years. This part of the country used to feed all of central and west Africa with food crops, plantains, cassava, banana, yams, etc. Because of desertification, as rural dwellers wipe away nearby forests for timber, farmers now have to travel long distances, even 10 kilometers, to trace a single tree for timber. On the whole, desertification and global warming remain problems that people must combat for sustainability. ☑

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

The problem of land degradation

Desertification is the degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.

Desertification does not refer to the expansion of existing deserts. It occurs because dryland ecosystems, which cover over one third of the world's land area, are extremely vulnerable to over-exploitation and inappropriate land use. Poverty, political instability, deforestation, overgrazing and bad irrigation practices can all undermine the productivity of the land.

Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification, and about one billion people in over one hundred countries are at risk. These people include many of the world's poorest, most marginalized and politically weak citizens.

An innovative solution

Combating desertification is essential to ensuring the long-term productivity of inhabited drylands. Unfortunately, past efforts have too often failed, and around the world the problem of land degradation continues to worsen.

Recognizing the need for a fresh approach, 187 governments had joined the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as at June 2003. This Convention aims to promote effective action through innovative local programmes and supportive international partnerships.

The treaty acknowledges that the struggle to protect drylands will be a long one — there will be no quick fix. This is because the causes of desertification are many and complex, ranging from international trade patterns to unsustainable land management practices. Real and difficult changes will have to be made, at both the international and the local level.

National action programmes

Countries affected by desertification are implementing the Convention by developing and carrying out national, subregional, and regional action programmes. Criteria for preparing these programmes are detailed in the treaty's five "regional implementation annexes": Africa (considered a priority because that is where desertification is most severe), Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Northern Mediterranean, and Central and Eastern Europe.

Drawing on past lessons, the Convention states that these programmes must adopt a democratic, bottom-up approach. They should emphasize popular participation and the creation of an "enabling environment" designed to enable local people to reverse land degradation through self-help.

Of course, governments remain responsible for creating this enabling environment. They must make politically sensitive changes, such as decentralizing authority, improving land tenure systems, and empowering women, farmers and pastoralists.

They should also permit non-governmental organizations to play a strong role in preparing and implementing the action programmes.

In contrast to many past efforts, these action programmes are to be fully integrated into other national policies for sustainable development. They should be flexible and adopted to changed circumstances.

...and partnership agreements

The Convention's action programmes are being developed through consultations among affected countries, donors, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. This process will improve coordination and channel development assistance to where it can be most effective. It will also produce partnership agreements that spell out the respective contributions of affected states, donor states and international organizations. >>>

Developed countries are expected to encourage the mobilization of substantial funding for the action programmes.

They should also promote access to appropriate technologies, knowledge and know-how.

The need for coordination among donors and recipients is stressed because each programme's various activities need to be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Sustainable development

The Convention opens an important new phase in the battle against desertification, but it is just a beginning. In particular, governments are regularly reviewing the action programmes. They also focus on awareness-raising, education and training, in both developing and developed countries.

Desertification can be reversed only if far-reaching changes are made in local and international behavior. Step by step, these changes will ultimately lead to sustainable land use and food security for a growing world population. Combating desertification, then, is really just part of a much broader objective: the sustainable development of countries affected by drought and desertification. ☑



CONVENTION DES NATIONS UNIES SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LA DESERTIFICATION

Le problème: la dégradation des terres

La désertification résulte de la dégradation des terres dans les zones arides, semi-arides et subhumides sèches. Elle est due principalement aux activités humaines et aux variations climatiques.

La désertification ne doit pas s'entendre par l'expansion des déserts actuels. Elle provient de ce que les écosystèmes des terres arides, qui couvrent plus d'un tiers des terres immergées du globe, sont extrêmement vulnérables à la surexploitation et à l'usage inapproprié des terres. La pauvreté, l'instabilité politique, la déforestation, le surpâturage et de mauvaises pratiques d'irrigation sont tous des facteurs qui détériorent la productivité des terres.

Plus de 250 millions d'individus sont directement touchés par la désertification. En outre, dans plus de cent pays, il existe environ un milliard de personnes à risque. On retrouve parmi ces derniers une majorité de citoyens qui se singularisent par leur pauvreté, leur marginalisation et la faiblesse de leur poids politique.

Une solution novatrice

Il est indispensable de combattre la désertification pour assurer la productivité à long terme des régions sèches habitées. Malheureusement, par le passé, les efforts accomplis ont trop souvent mené à l'échec, et le problème de la dégradation des terres dans le monde continue de s'aggraver. Reconnaisant la nécessité d'une approche nouvelle, 187 gouvernements ont adhéré à la Convention des Nations Unies sur la lutte contre la désertification au mois de juin 2003. Cette Convention vise à promouvoir des mesures concrètes en s'appuyant sur des programmes locaux novateurs et un partenariat international.

Ce traité reconnaît que la lutte pour la protection des régions arides sera longue, qu'il n'y a pas de solution instantanée. Car les causes de la désertification sont nombreuses et complexes, allant des pratiques du commerce international aux méthodes non durables de gestion des terres. De réels et difficiles changements devront être effectués, tant au niveau local qu'international. >>>

Des programmes d'action nationaux...

Les pays touchés par la désertification mettent la Convention en oeuvre en élaborant et en appliquant des programmes d'action nationaux, sous-régionaux et régionaux. Les critères utilisés pour la préparation de ces programmes sont décrits en détail dans les cinq «annexes sur la mise en oeuvre régionale» pour l'Afrique (considérée comme prioritaire puisque la désertification y est plus grave qu'ailleurs), l'Asie, l'Amérique Latine et les Caraïbes, et la Méditerranée septentrionale ainsi que l'Europe Centrale et Orientale.

Tirant les leçons du passé, la Convention stipule que ces programmes doivent adopter une approche démocratique et pyramidale de la base au sommet. Ils doivent renforcer la participation populaire et créer un "environnement porteur" susceptible de permettre aux populations locales elles-mêmes de mettre fin à ce processus de dégradation des terres.

Evidemment, les gouvernements demeurent responsables de la création de cet environnement porteur. Ils doivent procéder à des changements politiquement délicats comme la décentralisation accrue du pouvoir de décision, l'amélioration des régimes fonciers, et l'attribution d'un réel pouvoir aux femmes, aux cultivateurs et aux éleveurs. Ils doivent également permettre aux organisations non-gouvernementales de jouer un rôle important dans la préparation et la mise en oeuvre des programmes d'action.

Contrairement à ce qui a été entrepris par le passé, ces programmes d'action doivent être conçus comme faisant partie intégrante de la politique nationale de développement durable. Ils doivent être souples pour s'adapter aux circonstances.

...et des accords de partenariat

Les programmes d'action prévus par la Convention sont élaborés sur la base de consultations entre les pays touchés, les pays donateurs, et les organisations inter-gouvernementales et non-gouvernementales. Ce processus améliorera la coordination et canaliserà l'aide au développement là où elle sera la plus utile. Il conduira également à des accords de partenariat qui préciseront clairement les contributions respectives des organisations internationales et des pays touchés et donateurs.

On s'attend à ce que les pays développés favorisent la mobilisation d'importantes ressources financières au bénéfice des programmes d'action. Ceux-ci doivent également promouvoir l'accès à la technologie, aux connaissances, et au savoir-faire appropriés.

La coordination entre les bailleurs de fonds et les bénéficiaires est indispensable car les mesures prises dans le cadre des programmes d'action doivent être complémentaires et se renforcer mutuellement.

Un développement durable

La Convention ouvre une importante et nouvelle étape dans la lutte contre la désertification, mais il ne s'agit que d'un début. En particulier, les gouvernements révisent régulièrement les programmes d'action. Ils se concentrent également sur la question de la sensibilisation, l'éducation et la formation, dans les pays développés ainsi qu'en voie de développement.

Le processus de désertification ne peut être inversé qu'à travers de profonds changements dans les comportements à l'échelle internationale et locale. Petit à petit, ces changements donneront à une population mondiale en augmentation la possibilité d'exploiter durablement la terre et de jouir de la sécurité alimentaire. Le combat contre la désertification ne constitue donc qu'une partie d'un objectif bien plus ambitieux: le développement durable des pays affectés par la sécheresse et la désertification. ☑

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