

Desertification and Drought

Strategic Framework for combating desertification in Germany's development cooperation: UNCCD, MDGs and the Paris Declaration

Germany has made the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) since its creation an instrument of choice for its policy to combat desertification and drought and for sustainable management of land. More than ten years after the Convention has entered into force in 1996, Germany continues to view it as a key reference point and strategic instrument of its development cooperation.

As a signatory state to the UNCCD and as a country hosting the UNCCD Secretariat, Germany is committed to support the Convention's successful implementation. It presently makes annual contributions of 8,388% to the budget approved by the Conference of the Parties in 2005 and provides voluntary contributions to the UNCCD Secretariat.

The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is the German focal institution for the UNCCD. BMZ's overall policy framework is determined by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of the United Nations, to which Germany committed itself in 2000 as an overarching task, and the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* of March 2005, in which the international community as a whole pledged to better coordinate and integrate its development activities, to align such activities more closely with the priorities and programmes of recipient countries and to improve management by means of impact-oriented tools. Furthermore, donors agreed to increase their Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0,7 % of their respective gross national product by 2015.

The new architecture of international development cooperation offers new opportunities for sustainable land use and the UNCCD. In some ways, the MDGs and the new standards spelled out in the Paris Declaration are already taken up in the UNCCD. For example, the Paris Declaration matches well with the UNCCD principles of committing donors to harmonise their separate aid activities and to align them closely with the development programmes of partner countries. The MDGs 1 and 7 set clear targets to eradicate poverty and hunger and ensure environmental sustainability respectively. The UNCCD appears to reflect these new goals rather well.

The MDGs can only be achieved through interventions to protect the environment. Concerning Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSP) which are at the fulcrum of all donor actions, one would expect internationally agreed environmental measures to be integral part, but in reality PRSPs frequently neglect the environment. UNCCD could be a vehicle to mainstream environmental and land use issues into the PRSPs to sensitize both policymakers and public opinion on the issues and thus provide adequate budget allocations.

Concrete actions taken and progress made in implementation

Bilateral and Multilateral support

UNCCD obliges affected developing countries to design strategies against land degradation in so-called “National Action Programmes” (NAPs) and to reconcile them with existing measures in the fight against poverty. The developed country parties are requested to provide substantial financial contributions so that the proposed measures can be enacted.

The BMZ has launched a broad range of projects and programmes that help partner countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to implement their respective NAPs (Fig. 1).

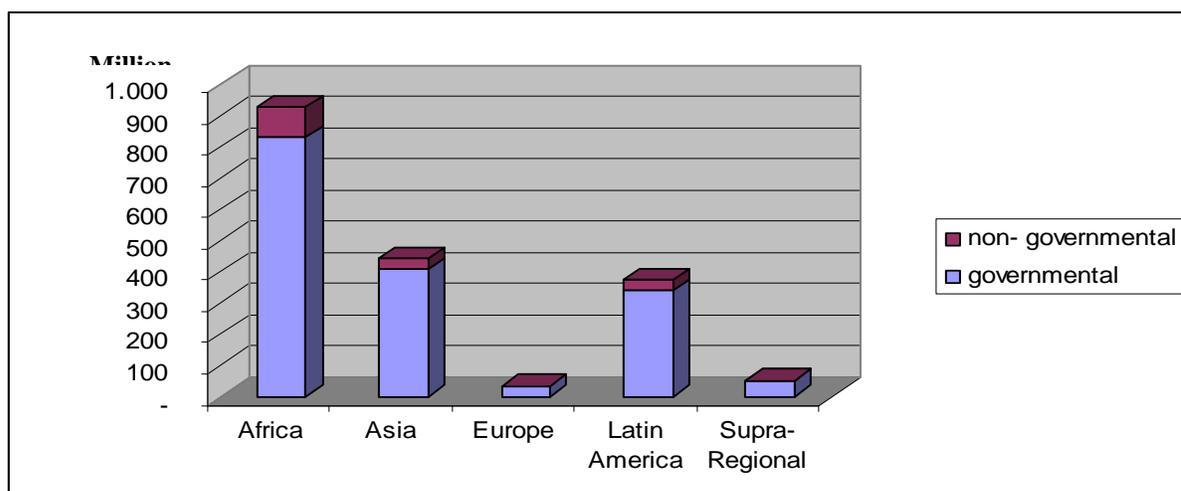


Figure 1: Total sums of funding by the German federal government for UNCCD-related projects ongoing in 2005
Source: BMZ Dasy Database

The German Government views its support for implementing the UNCCD as a cross-institutional task that combines bilateral and multilateral approaches. Germany considers that combating desertification and drought is not a sector-specific task but rather one that cuts across all sectors. Only about half the projects are located in sectors typically devoted to combating desertification, namely agriculture, water management and forestry in arid regions (table 1, based on CRS reporting¹)

Table 1: Distribution by sector of the funding volume of ongoing projects aimed at combating desertification (not all NGO projects or older state-implemented projects have a CRS key; the table therefore only includes ongoing state-implemented projects at least since 1996)

Sector	EUR	%
Water	76,351,008	5%
Agriculture	388,219,875	26%
Forestry	147,355,000	10%
Rural development	197,822,153	13%

¹ OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System

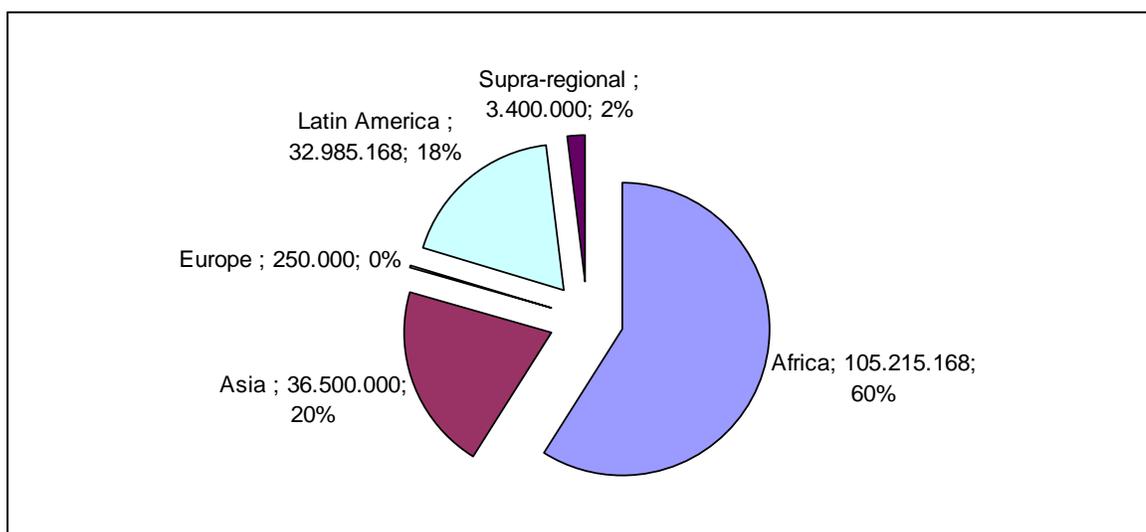
Environmental policy and management	109,318,876	7%
Other sectors	96,146,000	6%
Not possible to allocate to any sector (e.g. poverty reduction)	482,599,547	32%
Total	1,497,812,459	

More than that, combating desertification is an integral component of poverty reduction and rural development and requires supporting measures in areas such as governance, decentralisation, capacity building, economic reform and others.

The main thrust of support for combating desertification derives from numerous bilateral cooperation projects. While addressing desertification problems in all regions, Africa is clearly the focus of Germany's support for UNCCD implementation (Figure 2)

At a bilateral level, the BMZ commissions several state implementing organisations (KfW, GTZ, DED) as well as non-governmental organisations (private and church funding bodies, foundations) and research institutions.

Figure 2: Funding commitments by the German federal government for UNCCD-related projects in 2003/2004 (in € and %)



In 2005, the German Government financed 679 projects worldwide that contributed in different ways to implementing the UNCCD and to combat desertification. These projects were run by state and non-state implementing organisations. The overall sum of funding for these projects over a period of several years was approx. EUR 1.8bn. Thereof, the state implementing organisations were involved in 278 projects with an overall volume of approx. EUR 1.6bn, while the German non-state development organisations implemented 401 UNCCD-related projects worldwide in 2005. They received ODA funds through BMZ for this and topped up by their own financial resources. The total amount of funding through BMZ for these projects was approx.

EUR 166m. With 51% of total funding, Africa came top of the list, followed by Asia (24%) and Latin America (21%).

Table 2: Number of UNCCD-related projects (ongoing in 2005) and total amount committed by German development cooperation, sorted according to UNCCD relevance (according to OECD/DAC criteria)

	Number of projects per UNCCD marker			Total amount committed per UNCCD marker (million €)		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
Africa	92	226	12	424	445	59
Asia	57	79	5	264	155	23
Europe	5	2	0	7	27	0
Latin America	61	128	3	208	159	8
Supra-Regional	4	4	1	29	12	10
Total	219	439	21	932	799	100

In terms of multilateral cooperation in the field of desertification control and drought, Germany provides a considerable share of the funding of multilateral institutions involved in UNCCD implementation like the EU, UNDP/UNSO, UNESCO, UNEP, FAO, the World Bank and regional development banks. However, it is not possible to quantify which share of the German contribution to these organisations directly serves UNCCD-related activities. With its contribution to the GEF (US\$293.67m for 2002-2007) which makes up 11,5% of its budget, Germany is the third largest donor of the GEF.

Measures aiming at the implementation of UNCCD are not limited to “classical” projects and programmes that deal with establishing action plans or supporting technical measures for erosion control, but include also broader programme approaches.

These broader programmes frequently aim at the integration of desertification concerns with recipient countries development objectives through institution building, capacity development, strengthening the regulatory and policy framework, or research. Capacity development and policy advice, adjusted to the situation in each country, are aimed at

- participatory involvement in designing and implementing a NAP
- strengthening civil society participation in the implementation of the UNCCD

- strengthening inter-institutional steering committees, including decentralised structures
- integrating UNCCD goals into sectoral and regional policy
- NAP management, in particular monitoring and evaluation capacity, as well as
- improving management of knowledge with regard to combating desertification.

To help the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America draw up their National Action Plans (NAPs), the BMZ has established special assistance instruments. These include regional projects in Africa, Central America, the Caribbean and Central Asia as well as the supra-regional German UNCCD project helping to mainstreaming desertification in German development cooperation.

Fostering consultation processes and forging strategic partnerships are further priorities. The mobilisation of financial resources, in particular, is one element of such partnerships.

After intensive dialogue with partner countries and in an effort to further improve efficiency of its development assistance, Germany has proceeded to a geographical and thematic concentration. Thus desertification control has to be aligned with relevant sectoral priorities, e.g. sustainable agriculture, renewable energies, environmental policy advice, environmental education and disaster risk management in Latin America, sustainable water resources management in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. In Africa, in view of mounting desertification-related losses of arable and pasture land, natural resources management remains a key priority. Efforts focus upon the sustainable use of the natural potential for poverty reduction, particularly in rural areas. Cooperation in the field of good governance for peace, conflict prevention and democratisation, and in the field of private sector promotion shall contribute to establishing favourable framework conditions for sustainable development.

Consultative processes and Strategic Partnerships for effective desertification control

Germany's support for harmonisation processes among donors and the creation of strategic partnerships as preconditions to combating land degradation effectively, have generated positive results overall. Coordination activities within the donor community and processes of coordination with the regions' countries aiming at a better alignment of ODA with national programmes and policies, have acquired greater importance in Germany's cooperation policy. The aim was to bring about binding operational agreements between donors and affected countries that would improve living conditions in the regions affected by desertification. These partnerships are also intended to facilitate the best possible use of comparative advantages that exist among the various organisations, particularly with regard to the different levels of intervention and specialist expertise. The key ingredient in their success is the political status accorded to the convention both by the partner countries and the donor organisations. It has to be recognized that these processes place heavy demands on individual partner organisations in terms of commitment, flexibility, transparency and communication skills.

The following examples are meant to highlight the specificities of different initiatives in different regions.

- **Case study Dominican Republic and Haiti:**

The “hotspot” on the island lies in the border region between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. With the ratification of the UNCCD, awareness of the intensive interplay between poverty and soil degradation increased. The “Plan d’Accion Nacional para la zona Fronteriza” was launched as a coordination mechanism to orchestrate the development efforts undertaken by international, national and local organisations in the border region. This initiative gave the necessary impetus to the national UNCCD processes in both countries and ultimately prompted the formation of national coordinating bodies and the signing of cooperation agreements with the various international organisations. Key outcomes of these agreements include raised awareness of the UNCCD in the two countries, the formation of a platform for cross-border policy dialogue, the consolidation of the coordinating bodies, training for government staff and cooperation in two bi-national GEF projects. Germany’s contributions mainly take the form of human resources and technical cooperation projects.

- **Case study Brazil:**

Coordination among donors was formalised in view of the CCD process. During the development of the NAP, advice for the CCD focal point was largely provided by German development cooperation and the IICA, while the Global mechanism mainly delivered financial support. After the alignment of the World Bank-funded poverty reduction programmes, the German organisations have been working with the WB and IICA as the organisations responsible in the implementation of these measures. Cooperation in Brazil is impeded by the size of the country and the sheer diversity of projects. The German development cooperation having been present in many federal states and the wealth of experience acquired over many years has been very beneficial in developing the NAP, formulating suitable programmes and enabling NGO partners to be integrated into the NAP process. The commitment of the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations – not only the Environment Ministry – claiming ownership of the process, was critical to enhance complementarity, create synergies and open up new opportunities for better alignment between the international contributions and well-funded national programmes.

- **Case study Central Asia:**

In Central Asia, Germany is involved in new and more far-reaching approaches to partnership building. After a series of initial experiences, Germany joined with other donors to create a Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA). With the Asian Development Bank acting as lead agency and with support from the Global Mechanism (GM and the GEF, SPA members created a new regional initiative, the Central Asian Countries Initiative on Land Management (CACILM) aimed at improving land management and developing a broad range of operational goals. CACILM in the meantime has generated concrete results. All the Central Asian countries have approved a National Programming Framework for shaping policy and channelling investment in the area of land management and all the partners

approved an initial investment package of US\$ 158m. Germany's contribution to the success of CACILM was not only being an initiator along with GM and ADB, but also its involvement in the political and specialist aspects of the process, the financial support of country working groups, the integration of current projects in the investment programme and its involvement in the overall funding of CACILM.

- **Case study Middle East:**

Germany has been supporting the Arab Centre for Studies of Arid Zones and Dry Lands (ACSAD) since 2000. Germany is cooperating with the GM, the UNDP Dryland Development Centre and the Lebanese ministry of agriculture on the development of a long-term funding strategy for implementing the NAP. In the planning and implementation of pilot measures, for example, more efficient irrigation schemes, reforestation measures and pasture management, German assistance resources are pooled alongside those from partner organisations national programmes and other partners. The initiative is also very successful in strengthening networking between Arab and European research institutions and, in particular, the process of networking the regions' remote sensing centres with the aim of improving regional and national capacity in remote sensing.

- **Case study Mali:**

The German, GTZ advised the Malian UNCCD focal point and supported regular in-country donor coordination since 1994. Furthermore the project advised and supported the Malian focal point in efforts to create synergies between the three environmental Conventions. The strong "chef de file" role in Mali has facilitated a broad-based public dialogue at national level on NAP elaboration. With decentralisation approaches/policies gaining importance in Mali, the responsibility for community development management was transferred to the local communities. It is now critical to integrate sustainable land use systems in the rural community planning. To this end, the community development programme PACT ("*Programme d'Appui aux Collectivités Territoriales*") presently supports 95 rural communities along the river Niger in their development planning, in particular to establish in a participatory process rules for the sustainable use of their natural resources. This is done at village as well as district level. Most villages live on agriculture but fertile soils, pasture and water become increasingly scarce. Even though most land still belongs to the government, the communities have considerable influence on land use rules and regulations including punishment.

- **Cooperation in the field of research**

The *German Competence Network for Research to Combat Desertification* (DesertNet) (<http://www.desertnet.de/>) aims at investigating the complex causes and effects of desertification in interdisciplinary research approaches. It also wants to involve policy makers and public institutions, as well as to link national expertise with international research. DesertNet, as a network of scientists and experts, provides rational data outputs, gives advice on scientific methods and projects and promotes cooperation between institutions in Germany that work in various fields of desertification research. In October 2006, it has launched the European DesertNet Initiative which has taken up its activities.

- **Desertification and land degradation assessment**

The “*Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel* » (OSS) is targeted at South-South and North-South partnerships within the context environmental monitoring and transboundary resources management. Germany has been supporting OSS activities on setting up national monitoring systems for desertification in the context of National Action Programmes. In cooperation with bilateral projects, National Monitoring systems have been set up in Tunisia and Morocco. In other countries like Argentina and Namibia national monitoring systems have been set up in cooperation with bilateral projects.

The role of global governance in combating desertification - German experiences and recommendations

German experience shows that the UNCCD has potential to mobilise actors and resources for sustainable land-use approaches in drylands. Moreover, as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has shown, sustainable land use is a key factor in realising MDGs1 (eradicate poverty) and 7 (ensure environmental sustainability). Political will and the commitment of all relevant partners, however, is an essential precondition.

- Integration of the UNCCD within the new architecture of international cooperation is a key parameter determining the success of UNCCD’s future implementation. This means that actors must harness the opportunities that arise from creating more coherence between donors and recipient strategies at all levels, and from joint financing arrangements. In the same vein, it is more important than ever before to make the theme of desertification control a political priority in developing countries.
- There has already been success in better integrating the instruments of bilateral cooperation and dovetailing these with multilateral development cooperation. The factors that determine the success of these moves are the transparency of investment, partners’ political priorities and procedures, the trust that it engendered by good communication among partners, and, not least, the joint experience gathered in implementation.
- Partnership-based approaches and innovative forms of financing are a first, successful step towards the new architecture of international cooperation.

However, German development cooperation experience also shows, that the strategic potential of the UNCCD to tackle one of the most important global challenges – to maintain the productive capacity of 41 % of the Earth terrestrial area is still not harnessed fully. Chief among the limiting factors are insufficient financing compared to its two Rio sister conventions, a weak scientific basis, insufficient advocacy and awareness among various constituencies, institutional weaknesses and difficulties to reach consensus among parties. Concerning the NAPs, being the most important instrument to translate the Convention’s objectives into practical action, the Convention has failed to oblige countries to lay down clear indicators, responsibilities and time-lines.

There has been a general lack of clear and binding guidance regarding the methods and contents of NAPs and on how the overall objectives of the Convention translate into concrete measures and activities at country level.

The UNCCD operates today in an environment that has considerably evolved since the days it was negotiated and faces now opportunities and constraints that will condition its implementation in the upcoming decade. The policy environment has changed considerably since Rio including increased support to Africa and least developed countries, stronger commitment for climate change mitigation and adaptation, prospects of global agricultural trade liberalisation, and growing numbers of environmental migrants shedding new light on the impacts of poverty and environmental degradation.

The scientific environment has also evolved with the work of the Millennium Assessment on dryland ecosystems. It has contributed to improve understanding the biophysical and socio-economic trends related to land degradation in drylands, and their impact on human and ecosystem wellbeing and map out key data gap in this field.

The financing environment has also changed profoundly in the last decade with the GEF becoming a financial mechanism of the UNCCD, ODA flows increasing again after a decade of stagnation, and declining resources for rural development and agriculture. Donors have refocused their financing strategies to support country-driven priorities, based on PRSPs and other country-led development planning instruments. Lastly, innovative financing instruments have come to life, including payments for ecological services, carbon finance and others.

Therefore Germany emphasises the need to

- establish a connection between poverty reduction and resource protection
- define an explicit environmental goal in order to advance sustainable development
- promote sustainable land use systems in arid environments and incorporate them into superior development strategies as well as into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies.

Germany would like to emphasize the outstanding importance of good global governance and the application of its principles: clear analysis, coherent action, transparency and sound management. Good governance applies not only to the actions of governments but also to international political instruments like the three Rio conventions. Their close interaction, connection and complementarity needs to be enhanced through multi-sectoral approaches.

Governance elements of the Convention can and must be newly interpreted with regard to a changing development context by précising goals and formulating expected changes, by concentrating on the essentials and recognizing that “form follows function”.

The way forward: UNCCD Ten-Year Strategy

For all the above reasons, Germany welcomes the adoption of the “Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance Implementation of the UNCCD (2008–2018)”, at the 8th session of the Conference of the Parties in September 2007. Germany is committed to this landmark process and has actively participated in the working group which prepared the draft strategy. From Germany’s practical experience, the following elements are considered to be key elements for the future strategy:

1. **Enhanced efficiency and accountability of Conventions Bodies:** Convention bodies will be reshaped, have to develop their RBM multi-year programmes of work in line with the Strategy and will report regularly on progress. The envisaged result-based work programmes of the secretariat and the other subsidiary bodies will be clearly aligned to the Strategy’s objectives and relevant indicators developed to allow for proper evaluation. The coordination of work of the different subsidiary bodies will be improved to better allow for targeted joint activities
2. **Performance Monitoring:** The development of indicators and an independent mid-term evaluation of the Strategy will allow more efficient performance monitoring and evaluation
3. **Links with climate change:** The Strategy underscores the importance of desertification control for climate mitigation and adaptation to climate change and for the MDG attainment
4. **Improved scientific excellence:** The CST expertise and composition will be improved to produce sound scientific output and policy-oriented recommendations in order to make UNCCD institutions become a global authority on land management issues;
5. **Mainstreaming:** National Action Programmes to combat Desertification as the most important instrument to translate the Convention’s objectives into practical action need to be mainstreamed in national strategies and policies and donor programming and Maintaining the Chef de File approach as a best practise for coordinating and streamlining the different donor efforts and resources
6. **Enhanced Investments:** GM and GEF to be strongly invited to promote and facilitate the mobilization of funds for subsidiary bodies and developing countries’ actions

In adopting the “The 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention, (2008 – 2018)” at the 8th conference of the parties, Parties have engaged in an important reform process which includes UNCCD bodies as well as all Parties. Adopting the strategy expresses a fresh look at ways to adjust the Convention to the new fundamentals of development cooperation. Nevertheless, political will among both the affected countries and the donor countries is needed in order to make desertification a priority on the agenda of decision makers. It is a unique opportunity to revitalize the UNCCD as an essential instrument recognizing that the issues which gave rise to the Convention are even more pressing today than 10 years ago. Donors and affected countries should therefore actively engage in the implementation of the “Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance Implementation of the UNCCD (2008–2018)”.