

GHANA

National Reporting to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) on Desertification

1.0 Strategic Planning Frameworks

The National Action Programme (NAP) to Combat Desertification and Drought is the strategic planning framework for the protection and sustainable management of natural resources in deserts and areas affected by desertification. The Government of Ghana (GoG) has demonstrated a clear commitment to address environmental degradation by ratifying the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and Desertification (UNCCD). The GoG adopted the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) on 17th June 1994 and ratified it on 26th December 1996. As a signatory to the Convention Ghana was required to prepare a National Action Programme (NAP) to Combat Desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. This obligation was duly fulfilled in April 2002 and approved by the Government of Ghana in 2003.

The development of the NAP involved extensive review of existing environmental drylands management practices and policies as well as strategies to harmonise actions, and consultations led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The overall objective of the NAP is to emphasise environmentally sound and sustainably integrated local development programmes for drought prone semi-arid and arid areas, based on participatory mechanisms, and on integration of strategies for poverty alleviation and other sector programmes including forestry, agriculture, health, industry and water supply into efforts to combat the effects of drought. The aim of the NAP is to find practical steps in halting desertification in the affected areas of Ghana. The EPA is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the NAP.

The NAP is a 200-page document that outlines the bio-physical, socio-economic and land use/resource management aspects, the assessment and

monitoring needs and the measures for mitigating desertification and drought. Decreased rainfall and low soil fertility, combined with poor cultivation and water management practices, deforestation, bushfires and mining activities are the major concerns. The NAP document recommends a series of strategies to be pursued primarily through an integrated watershed management approach. The major themes outlined in the NAP emphasize the following:

- Strengthening capacities and incentives for community-based action by District Assemblies and Traditional Authorities to address desertification;
- Development and dissemination of land and water management technologies and integrated watershed management;
- Promotion of dryland forestry, agro forestry and community fuelwood plantations;
- Promotion of drought-tolerant crops, dryland farming systems and rangeland management;
- Bush burning control, modifications and alternatives, and community support and sanctions;
- Development and dissemination of soil fertility enhancement measures and integrated nutrient management;
- Diversification of agricultural livelihood and expanded dry season farming opportunities; and
- Improved capacities to anticipate and to respond to drought and desertification.

2.0 Integration of NAP into National and District Development Strategies

It has now become necessary to mainstream UNCCD principles and the NAP into Ghana's development agenda. This is because the NAP was not initially linked to the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategies (GPRS), the national development blueprint and agenda for growth and prosperity, making its implementation difficult due to financial constraints. Besides, the GPRS have emerged as one of the main planning instruments for developing priorities and

domestic resource allocation in Ghana. Drylands and environmental issues for example have not been sufficiently addressed in the Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategies (GPRS) and National Development Planning Framework (NDPF).

This challenge is however in the process of being addressed through mainstreaming of the NAP into other development agenda. During the past year with the support of United Nations Drylands Development Centre, the process of mainstreaming drylands in District Development Plans of twenty four (24) Districts in the three Northern Regions was initiated using the tool of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The main objective of mainstreaming drylands development issues is to integrate the NAP into the GPRS at the national level and district development plans at the local level to attract the needed budgeting processes and the donors' development assistance.

Ghana has adopted the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as a tool for mainstreaming environmental and drylands issues in all development programmes, including the GPRS. The key aim of the SEA is to achieve greater integration between national policy goals and their practical delivery on the grounds of sustainable development and also help to strengthen the process of decentralising government and enhancing local decision-making.

3.0 Inter-ministerial/Institutional Coordination Mechanism

Implementation of NAP requires close institutional ties among government and non-government organizations in northern Ghana. The EPA is responsible for the coordination and implementation of the NAP. It is envisaged that successful implementation of the NAP will depend on EPA. The Agency has established an integrated environmental planning and management system to ensure broad based public participation in environmental planning and management of the NAP. The Agency has instituted four levels of desertification control in the country. These include

National Desertification Committee (DC); Regional Environmental Management Committee (REMC); District Environmental Management Committees (DEMCs); and Community Environmental Management Committee (CEMC).

The newly constituted National Desertification Committee (DC) and its supporting structures have not yet become fully operational, though this is in progress. DC memberships are high-level and inter ministerial, traditional authorities; universities, research institutions and representatives of the private sector, NGOs and farmer associations, and the donor community sit in as observers. The National Desertification Committee is responsible for the overall implementation of the NAP, including decision-making and co-ordination of all NAP activities; assessment and assigning responsibilities to various stakeholders; approval of policies and other measures to create an enabling environment; and monitoring and evaluation of all NAP activities.

A Regional Environmental Management Committee (REMC) on Desertification and Drought has been established in the three Northern regions (Northern, Upper East and West). The REMC is an Inter-disciplinary Committee of 11 – 15 members consisting of regional heads of departments and organizations such as the EPA, Forestry Services Division, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), Ghana National Fire Service, NGOs, private sector women organizations, the Regional Planning and Coordinating Unit, the District Assemblies and traditional authorities. The main functions of these Regional Committees are mainly for advising, coordinating and providing technical backstopping to efforts at combating desertification and drought in the respective regions for the District Coordinating and Regional Coordinating Councils. The REMC do exist in the three northern regions.

District Assemblies (DAs) offer the best channel for involving the people at the grassroots level. Besides, the DAs form the level of government closest to people and best placed to reflect local concerns and priorities and to develop and implement practical action programmes. At the District level, there exists District Environmental Management Committees (DEMCs) made up of

Assembly members; relevant environmentally related decentralized departments, NGO/CBOs. The main function is to assist to formulate local policies, programmes or enact local byelaws to protect the environment. These organizations are mandated to coordinate, plan and implement activities to combat desertification and drought at the district level.

The Community Environmental Management Committees (CEMCs) have been established to co-ordinate bushfire control and resource management. They will assist in the identification of their priority concerns to help in the formulation of viable programmes on the natural resource management and the environment. Activities include; awareness campaigns on the environment, afforestation; fuelwood plantations establishment for household energy; assessing micro-credits for the small-scale farmers and petty traders.

The Friends of the Earth (FOE)-Ghana, is accredited to the UNCCD as the focal point representing NGOs in the country and continues to interact and coordinate efforts of the Network of NGOs working in the area of Desertification and Drought.

4.0 Improve Use of Local Access to Climate and Weather Information

The Meteorological Services Agency of Ghana installed satellite receivers at Kotoka International Airport in 1989 to improve the efficiency of the public weather presentation and forecast. In addition, the system was upgraded to Primary Data User Station in 2000. These developments have improved the following;

- Seasonal forecasting
 - Public weather forecast on daily basis (national weather) on radio and television
 - Highest Temperature Recorded and Period of Record
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- Collect, process, store and disseminate meteorological information
 - Undertake collaborative work with Agricultural Agencies and others on meteorological related matters and provide expert advice

- Provide expert advice on wetlands including birds sanctuaries.
- Provide meteorological information to meet international standards

5.0 Comprehensive database

There is no comprehensive database development on desertification, land degradation and human condition, incorporating physical and socio-economic parameters. However, a lot of work have been done on the above mentioned parameters, which are scattered all over the system.

6.0 Research and Dissemination

The various institutions under the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), including-Crops Research Institute, Soil Research Institute, Water Research Institute and Savannah Agriculture Research Institute have studied the threat of desertification and have come out with the following sustainable farming practices, which permit, infrastructural development, land and water conservation without jeopardizing the resource base. The available technologies to assist on ways of reducing water loss from soils, increasing the water absorption capacities of soil and on water harvesting include the following:

- Bunding (earth, stone, vegetative)
- Tied ridging
- Strip cropping
- Agroforestry practices (woodlots, alley cropping, fodder banks etc)
- Catchment area protection
- Contour farming
- Construction of dams and dugouts for irrigation
- Drilling of boreholes and wells for irrigation
- Specially designed tillage methods based on terrain,
- Appropriate tillage technologies,
- Control grazing,
- Parkland type of agriculture

7.0 Desertification and land degradation impact assessment

A lot of research has gone on to assess the impact of land degradation and desertification. For instance, Ghana's forest cover was originally over 82,000km² representing about 34% of the total land area. This included natural forest cover as well as forest reserves. It is observed however; that the rate of deforestation between 1955-1972 has been so rapid that already 33% of the country's forest cover has disappeared. Until 1982, fires in forest were relatively uncommon. However, serious fire outbreaks have been reported in 1982, 1983, 1989, 1993 and 1996, which resulted in razing thousand of hectares of the nation's crops and natural resources. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in 1983 estimated over 50% of the country's vegetation cover with an annual loss of 4% of GDP. In addition to this, major crops such as cocoa, coffee, cola nuts, food crops, vegetables as well as timber and animals were destroyed at an estimated cost of ₵784.3 million.

Besides, Soil erosion is one of the most potent degradation processes affecting soil productivity (Oldeman et. al., 1991). Large tracts of land have been destroyed by water erosion (Quansah et. al., 1991). Overall, soil degradation is estimated to cause productivity losses of 2.9% per year in all forms of agriculture except cocoa, which suffers a loss of 2.1% (Alfsen et al., 1997). Bojo (1996) estimated that the gross annual economic loss due to erosion was between 2% and 5% of Ghana's Agricultural Gross Domestic Product.

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