

B3 DESERTIFICATION

Government focal point:

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1. General information

Since the entry into force of the UNCCD in 1996, Switzerland has remained actively involved at every stage of the negotiation process within the Conference of the Parties. In 2001, Switzerland has played an important role in assisting the organisation of the COP 5 in the UN headquarters in Geneva. More recently, Switzerland has been among the 15 country Parties of the Intergovernmental intersessional working group responsible for the preparation of the 10-years strategic plan which has been adopted during COP8. In these processes Switzerland has constantly tried to capitalise on its experiences through its involvement on a wide range of development related activities on three continents. The focal point for the UNCCD being located within the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) allowed the exploitation of such synergies.

Swiss official assistance to combat desertification is being administrated by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), part of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. The co-operation programs are realised in direct partnership at regional, national and local levels with governmental partners, NGOs and associations, or through an intermediary agency such as international, regional and national organisations and institutions and NGOs or the private sector.

Swiss efforts continue to respond to the needs of communities and on what they can do themselves in combating desertification. Switzerland advocates financial assistance giving priority to "software" initiatives such as reforming and strengthening institutions, policy dialogue, innovative pilot schemes, etc., and accordingly supports measures aimed at improving the social and economic infrastructure.

2. Concrete actions taken and specific progress made in implementation

In its bilateral co-operation Switzerland considers those programs and projects relevant to respond to the mandate of the convention when their main focus comprises one of the following fields:

- natural resources management in arid and semi-arid areas
- water and soil conservation
- sustainable land-use management
- participatory approaches to natural resources management insisting on the participation of women
- agricultural production: livestock, crops, forestry
- decentralisation, policy and institutional reforms in natural resource management
- strengthening of capacities, training (at socio-organisational, technical, managerial and institutional levels)
- agricultural research (crops, soil, production systems) in arid and semi-arid areas

An updated list of the projects and programmes supported by Switzerland is provided in the thematic brochure *Coping with drought*⁷ published by SDC on the occasion of the International Year on Deserts and Desertification. In addition to its direct and indirect contributions, Switzerland continues to provide funds to multilateral institutions playing a prominent part in CCD implementation: UNDP, FAO, UNEP, IFAD, World Bank, regional development banks as well as for regional institutions as OSS, CILSS, the CGIAR and others. Within GEF, Switzerland has strongly advocated for a new land degradation window to benefit the UNCCD implementation. The total contribution of Switzerland to combating desertification (bilateral and multilateral co-operation) is of 58 million Swiss francs (44.5 million USD) per year.

In Africa, the focus partner countries of Switzerland in terms of relevant bilateral cooperation of desertification programs in Africa are Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Mali in West Africa and Tanzania and Mozambique in East and Southern Africa.

Switzerland has not been directly involved in new partnership agreements for NAPs in Africa, but through the Global Mechanism and the UNCCD Secretariat. However, with its bilateral programs it has contributed through various activities to combat desertification. It is dedicated to make the lessons learnt and the wide range of experiences made in its involvement of many years through the dialogue with governments and local implementation actors.

The financial resources allocated to activities to combat desertification in Africa are about 208 million Swiss francs (USD 138 mio.) for the period 1997 – 2006, which means CHF 20.8 mio. per year (USD 13.8 mio.).

In Asia and Central/Eastern Europe, the focus partner countries of Switzerland in terms of relevant bilateral cooperation of desertification programs in Asia are India, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam; in Central Asia Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; in the South Caucasus Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia.

Switzerland has not been directly involved in any partnership agreements for NAPs in Asia and Central/Eastern Europe. However, it has financially supported Government activities in relation with the preparation of NAPs in Central Asia and South Caucasus through substantial financial assistance through the UNCCD secretariat. A grant of 525'000 CHF was provided to assist countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Moldova, and Georgia. Even though the funds were channelled through the secretariat, personal follow-ups were made by decentralised Swiss offices, taking ownership on the processes involved. As for other Asian countries, no direct partnerships were maintained.

The financial resources allocated to activities to combat desertification in Asia are about 157 million Swiss francs (USD 104.6 mio.) for the period 1997 – 2006, which means CHF 15.7 mio. per year (USD 10.4 mio.).

In Latin America, Switzerland has not participated in partnership agreements related to NAPs. However the approach promoted through the CCD, namely to create a multi-partnership agreements between public-private-and community or grass-root based organisations for the implementation of action programmes an important contribution. This approach will therefore also remain the main focus of Switzerland's activities in this region. Switzerland's main partner countries remain Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Cuba. Although Switzerland is in financial terms not involved explicitly in the preparation or implementation of NAPs, there are desertification related activities, aiming at sustainable use of natural resources in dry-land hills of Central America and in Andean highlands of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. It will be a continuing challenges to link and bring in these results to the process of implementation of NAPs and SRAPs as well as to reinforce awareness on desertification risks in endangered regions where SDC already supports programmes.

⁷ www.deza.admin.ch/fr/Accueil/Themes/Agriculture_Developpement_rural/Desertification

The financial resources allocated to desertification related activities in the Latin American Region are about 91,5 million Swiss francs (61 mio. USD) for the period 1997- 2006, which means 9.15 mio. CHF (6.1 mio. USD) per year. Switzerland has also supported financially the WOCAT (World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies) programme coordinated in University of Berne.

3. Lessons learned

The SDC Programmes that contribute to the UNCCD implementation involve very often local government, in particular where decentralisation efforts have well advanced and NGO's as partners. The vast majority of programmes addressed the key issue of participatory processes involving the civil society and community based organisations with a high priority.

Knowledge generation and dissemination are important instruments and often the main aim. Scientific knowledge on the one hand supports communities and organisations in improving resource management, and thus in contributing to food security and welfare. On the other hand education and capacity building of agricultural advisers help to face challenges of agroindustrial and rural development.

In Asia, almost all of the ongoing programmes supported by SDC, the multipartnership approach and the establishment of agreements between public-private-and community or grass-root based organisations for the implementation of action programmes continues to be the main entry for any programme. As the programmes in the field of sustainable resources management aim to contribute to the efforts of people living in erosion-prone semi-arid rural areas and dry mountain areas for securing their production base and improve their livelihood system, a particular importance is given to a participatory approach and the empowerment of women and men. Local NGOs as well as technical and social services are important partners in relation with capacity building and training activities.

In Africa, access to appropriate technology and know how is still a burning matter and therefore it has a high or very high priority in all of the programmes. Scientific research methods are supported with emphasis for monitoring of water regimes and entire ecosystems, as well as for research in crop variety. Efforts also aim at strengthening the capacity of research within the respective countries. As important though is the capitalisation of research and experiences with a view to improve the livelihoods of land users. Programmes give a high priority to capacity building of the local people.

4. Major constraints and challenges

The implementation of the UNCCD faces increasing challenges of its own, in particular a decreasing level of political support, due partly to the lack of demonstrable progress on the ground and partly to a perceived polarization of its debates.

In order to curb land degradation/desertification and drought and to mitigate the effects of drought through the implementation of a common policy framework. There are two interrelated elements to this framework: the adoption of effective strategies, programmes and measures to combat desertification or restore degraded land, and the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate prevention measures, which involves the integration of UNCCD objectives and approaches into the broader policy framework, sometimes referred to as "mainstreaming".

Switzerland is currently working closely with the UNCCD Executive Secretary on the follow up of the adoption of the 10-year strategic plan for implementation of the convention. In particular, the Swiss cooperation will provide financial support for necessary steps in policy dialogue and the preparation of the secretariat's four-year work plan.