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**Contribution by the NGO major group sector  
on Africa and sustainable development**

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# AFRICA

## I. Introduction

Africa is the second largest continent in the world, covering some 31 million square kilometres and taking up 20% of the earth's land mass. It is home to some 900 million people<sup>1</sup> (less than the populations of India and China), making it a continent with minimal population density. Overpopulation is arguably not the most critical sustainability problem in Africa. Moreover, the continent is one of the richest areas in natural resources and cultural diversity. Although the continent is rich in resources, up to 41% of the population of Sub-Saharan Africa live on less than US\$1 per day.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that Africa appears as a theme to be reviewed during CSD-16 along with *Agriculture, Rural Development, Land, Drought, and Desertification*, as well as the review of *Water and Sanitation* decision from CSD-13, is very significant. Although the other seven themes are global in nature, the special focus on Africa suggests that there is an urgent need to further examine those themes within the African context as they have poignant implications on the continent. It could also be interpreted to signify that the world sees Africa as a problem that needs urgent global attention in order for the problem to be resolved, or perhaps to maintain the status quo and avoid degeneration. Africa could also have been selected as a precursor to further specific examination of other continents. Whatever the reading may be, this background document examines the focus on Africa as an opportunity that must be seized to provide clarity as to where Africa stands in the light of the overarching issues under consideration.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) recognised that there are special challenges facing Africa, including the negative impacts of globalisation, and that a new vision was needed, *based on concrete actions for implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa*<sup>3</sup>. The JPOI therefore set some targets with regard to the cluster of themes under review, and although no direct mention is made of *drought* in that document, this is a major challenge for many in Africa. The JPOI shows clearly how the themes of degraded land, rural development, watershed management and agriculture are all interlinked in national development.

It is important to keep in mind that Africa has a history of debilitating slavery and colonialism/neo-colonialism and related resources pillage. The impacts of those historic processes have largely inbuilt mechanisms delaying Africa's emancipation.

## II. Agriculture

Only about 6% of the land of Africa is arable,<sup>4</sup> while up to 70% of the labour force in rural Africa depends on agriculture. However, 30% of total GDP and 40% of total export earnings

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<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/sdissues/africa/africa.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August – 4 September 2002 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1), Section III, paragraph 62.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.globeafrica.com/Commons/geo.htm>

come from this sector,<sup>5</sup> making it clear that an agricultural system fully integrated with rural development is needed if Africa is to meet the targets set by the JPOI. Many African economies are dominated by the agricultural sector in terms of the latter's share of the gross domestic product (GDP). Ensuring sustainable agricultural production is therefore critical to the survival of the people and economies of African countries, and improved agricultural systems will enhance chances of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including halving by 2015 the proportion of people suffering from hunger in Africa.

#### **A. Constraints and Obstacles**

- One of the principal weaknesses of agricultural politics in Africa has been the absence of a vision shared among the stakeholders. The States, the producers and the other participants in agricultural processes often fail to come to agreement toward a long range plan for development. One of the fundamental reasons for this marginalization of the majority of the principal actors is the promotion of a model of agriculture based on a radical substitution of technologies to intensify production rather than developing traditional knowledge and practices. The machine is substituted for the person, chemical fertilizers for natural animal and vegetable matter, and irrigation systems for a culture based on the natural increase and decrease in the water levels.
- Water availability and continued land degradation will cause migration, with likely consequences to creating environmental refugee situations and security risks.
- Political/violent conflicts degrade the environment, displace and marginalize populations, upset traditional systems and also increase rate of biodiversity loss.
- The 2006 Abuja Summit on Fertilisers reached the unfortunate agreement to set up an "African Fertiliser Financing Mechanism" to finance investments on fertilizers with the sole purpose of boosting artificial fertilizer use on the continent.
- Land tenure and inequities in land holding are definite constraints. Radical land reform is needed across the continent to benefit African citizens themselves rather than foreign investors.
- Dumping of surplus agricultural produce such as cotton from subsidized production in rich countries is destructive to the agricultural sector and markets in Africa.
- Crop failures have at times opened the continent to an influx of unwholesome foods through food aid and seed aid channels, and these sometimes threaten the biodiversity of recipient nations. Such issues led to crises in the past: Zambia (2002), Angola and Sudan (2004).<sup>6</sup> It is a well known fact that hunger is not caused so much by a lack of food as by a lack of access to food. In the situations cited above, the main problem was access or ability to procure and move foods from one region to another. Food aid has become a huge commercial pursuit.
- Lack of market access for agricultural products, both on national and international level.
- Subsistence farming continues to dominate agriculture in most of Africa. Taking land out of subsistence farming for other agricultural purposes will affect women negatively and

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<sup>5</sup> Feyissa, Regassa (2007): The Sub-Saharan Africa Agriculture: Potential, Challenges and Opportunities, in *Africa Can Feed Itself*, (Aksel Naerstad, ed.), The Development Fund, Oslo.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.eraction.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=24&itemid=23](http://www.eraction.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=24&itemid=23)

worsen their circumstances, as women dominate the subsistence level and are not adequately equipped to venture into larger scale farming.

- The need to secure women's land rights is also critical for promoting gender equality as well as enhancing the scale and levels of production.
- The State provides insufficient agricultural inputs and less than the optimum level of extension services. This has in part been the result of the failed so-called Structural Adjustment Programmes.
- Poverty and restricted access to credit is a major constraint in this sector.
- Investment in agricultural development in Sub-Saharan Africa stands below 10% and suffers from further decline.<sup>7</sup>
- Incidents of diseases such as malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS have a severe effect on human capital and thus the agricultural labour force in heavily affected countries.
- WTO rules constitute an impediment to the growth of African agriculture. Another challenge is the controversial Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) with the European Union.
- Vulnerability to climate change, lack of adaptation mechanisms, and lack of means to strengthen existing adaptive mechanisms all have serious impacts on African populations.
- Lack of sustainable agriculture policies at national, regional and continental levels and lack of will to strictly implement them where they already exist. The Lagos Action Plan (in the early 1980s) could have made a positive impact if it was adequately implemented.
- Energy security issues that threaten food security and the current lure to convert arable lands into intensive agrofuels plantations/production.
- High price of energy that impedes agricultural production.
- Lack of coherence between agriculture and agro-industry strategies.
- Lack of access to agricultural insurance.
- Transfer of technology is slowed down by the issue of intellectual property posing a barrier for access to clean technologies in Africa.

## **B. Possible Approaches**

- In Africa, in addressing the inherent inequities in the politics of food, agriculture and hunger it is argued that a solution may be found through accepting and utilising the concept of food sovereignty. This concept as developed by peasants and other allies in mass movements was further crystallised at the Food Sovereignty meeting in Selingue, Mali in February 2007. The concept of food sovereignty captures the rights of all peoples and points a just way to develop a framework that would be opposed to an agricultural system controlled solely by market forces with its inherent contradictions that perpetuate penury and hunger. Food sovereignty *defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation* and this is the true path to sustainability. It is also based on equity principles and therefore promotes the equal rights of citizens including women, peasants, tenant farmers, the youth, pastoralists and the poor.
- African governments see the launching of Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, AGRA, (by the Rockefeller Foundation and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) as an opportunity for development of improved crop varieties and training of scientists, but

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<sup>7</sup> Feyissa, Regassa, *ibid.*

some civil society groups see it as a Trojan horse which must be carefully watched because of the possibility of its being an avenue for introduction of untested or insufficiently tested and proven crop varieties (GMOs, for example). While a technological fix may not be what Africa needs, it is obvious that some structural and political changes are needed. The solution must be based on an ecological approach, should be anchored on local demands and include extensive support for local farmers, especially women.

- African governments need to substantially increase public investment in agriculture and rural development, as this will boost productivity in the sector if the funds are invested in demand-driven initiatives. Investments in agriculture should be monitored to ensure specific targets that benefit smallholder women and waged agricultural workers.
- There is a need to integrate indigenous crops in national research programmes.
- NGOs in Zambia, for example, have been effective in seed sharing among peasant farmers.
- More research programmes are needed on crops that thrive on drier landscapes of the continent. Currently research, even in Sahelian zones, is heavily skewed towards crops in more humid areas where it is possible to cultivate cotton and maize.
- Control of animal diseases must be intensified through livestock development programmes, as they constitute the major source of income for a large proportion of African farmers, especially in the drier areas. The same attention should be paid to controlling plant diseases.
- Diversification of farmers' incomes should be undertaken through livestock development, agro-processing, and fisheries.
- *The World Development Report 2008: Agriculture for Development*<sup>8</sup> underscored the fact that boosting agriculture would be a vital tool for fighting poverty. This would come about through improving the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of smallholder farming.

***Other elements to be considered:***

- The necessity to build capacity of farmers' organizations engaged in the practice of sustainable agriculture as outposts for scaling-up and replication of successes.
- Linking practice to policy through partnerships among the major groups of civil society identified in Agenda 21<sup>9</sup> is essential to increased capacity to achieve mutual goals. Producers (pastoralists, herders, women, small scale farmers, indigenous peoples' groups, waged agricultural workers and artisanal fisher folks) should be given their place in the centre of policy making.
- Favourable policies to assure the food sovereignty of the continent where countries have a right to determine their agricultural and food policies in a way that makes for sufficiency and takes into cognizance the cultural needs of the people.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.worldbank.org/wdr2008>

<sup>9</sup> Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II, section III.

- Active participation of NGOs and of farmers' organizations in the definition of these food sovereignty policies. Partnership of key stakeholders will play an important role in strengthening the capacities of the farmers' organizations in policy making processes.
- Fair trade and good pricing of agricultural products, their promotion and sale in local markets by State measures, permitting healthy competition with imported products.
- Recognition of women's specific agricultural needs and concerns that allows them to participate equally with men in agricultural policies at international, regional, national and local levels, in line with global principles of promoting gender balance.
- Investment in local infrastructure such as roads, processing and packaging plants, means of transportation, communication tools, and irrigation technology.
- Involvement of the technical services of the State, NGOs, and institutions of research and agricultural consultation in the generation of systems of sustainable agriculture, which require participatory approaches and methodologies but also affirm the benefits of technical, environmental, political, institutional, cultural, social and economic planning.
- The need to acknowledge the rich biodiversity of African agriculture.
- The necessity to strengthen the adaptation capacities to climate change through awareness raising, capacity development and resilience building by means of infrastructural development, among other measures.

### C. Mobilising For Further Action

- **Youth Action:** Develop new strategies to build the interest of youth in the agricultural sector. Agriculture must be optimised to yield surplus rather than simply securing subsistence. This can be tackled through targeted education for capacity building and deepening of local knowledge and food production systems. Provision of rural infrastructure, including communication and access systems, will have a multiplier effect in the area of attracting more youths into the sector as well as creating access to markets.
- Awards can be given to the best youths in agricultural endeavours as a way of boosting interest and engagement in the sector.
- **Farmers and Civil Society:** The civil society-led Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) Initiative, which emerged from the Dialogue on Land and Agriculture at the eighth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-8) in 2000, works to achieve concrete and measurable improvements in the livelihoods and living conditions of the rural poor and the sustainability of their environments. Lessons learned and knowledge acquired through the SARD Initiative should be utilized to influence policies, processes, and institutions that make investments in physical and institutional infrastructure for viable, equitable and sustainable rural development efforts to support the transition to people-centred sustainable agriculture and rural development, and to strengthen participation in programme and policy development.
- **Farmers and Researchers:** There has to be better cooperation between farmers and researchers to ensure that new research is demand driven and that accumulated local knowledge is utilized for the benefit of the continent and the world. Extension agents should be involved in this. Special attention must be paid to the needs and knowledge of women.

- **Political Will:** African Governments should undertake to promote and strengthen their agricultural policies, particularly in the food crop production sector, to reverse decades of bias in favour of cash crop production.

#### D. Best Practices

- NGOs are collaborating with research institutions and government institutions in Mali, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea within the Drylands Coordination Group (DCG) in order to share experiences and knowledge, and thus build capacity on agriculture and food security in the drylands through the networks within and between these countries.<sup>10</sup>
- There is a growing trend to introduce legislation and special programs aimed at targeting women's needs and to remove barriers to accessing land and credit as a right. Some financial institutions like the Agricultural Development Bank of Ghana have taken the initiative to provide funds to support small scale farmers.
- The REVA '*Retour Vers l'Agriciculture*' Programme in Senegal targets the return of youth to agriculture and rural areas.
- The multistakeholder SARD Kenya project focuses on the identification and documentation of SARD good practices and community exchanges in the region. It encompasses the Kenya Livestock Working Group, devoted to sustainable livestock-based livelihoods, and capacity building for pastoralists and farmers, hosted by Heifer Kenya.<sup>11</sup>

### III. Rural Development

Nearly 75% of the African population live in rural areas.<sup>12</sup> 50-80 % of the rural population in Africa depend on production from small family farms for their livelihood.<sup>13</sup> Of this, women constitute an estimated 80% of the agricultural labour force.<sup>14</sup> It is evident that gender and youth issues, rural development and agricultural production are intertwined and a holistic approach must be adopted in considering these issues. The assurance of best conditions for continued and enhanced self-employment in this context is the best way to ensure political and economic stability on the continent.

The African rural area is a study in diversity. Living patterns and the overall rural environment has a rich diversity between and within countries, and one setting cannot be used to typify the entire African rural landscape. However, there are certain characteristics that are common and these also make it possible for certain basic minimum actions to be applicable across the vast continent.

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.drylands-group.org>.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.sard-klwg.org/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> Lobe, Kenton (2007): Is The Green Revolution a Solution to the Challenges Facing Africa? in *Africa Can Feed Itself*, (Aksel Naerstad, ed), The Development Fund, Oslo, page 151.

<sup>13</sup> Coulibaly, Ibrahima (2007): It is Necessary to Invest in Farmers' Political and Mobilization Capacities, in *Africa Can Feed Itself*, (Aksel Naerstad, ed), The Development Fund, Oslo, page 26.

<sup>14</sup> Kabusimbi, Getrude Kenyangi (2007): The Challenges are Multiple and Highly Complex, in *Africa Can Feed Itself*, (Aksel Naerstad, ed), The Development Fund, Oslo, page 36.

The basic economic engagement of the majority of rural dwellers is family or subsistence agriculture, with individuals and families cultivating and depending on the proceeds from small parcels of land. Agriculture is thus the economic hub of rural Africa.

Although the continent has a high growth rate of urban populations, these people migrate from rural areas while still depending on support from the rural base. The urban economy is already unable to absorb more rural immigrants, and this is manifesting in increased poverty and insecurity in the urban zones.

The rural areas remain the lifeline of the African people and all efforts must be made to maintain the rich socio-cultural diversity, boost the agricultural systems by promoting food sovereignty, support existing cultures and boost the rural economy.

It is necessary to boost small- and medium-scale enterprises in order to stem rapid rural-urban migration as well as migration to Northern countries, and increase local employment and rural family income. This should be coupled with stepping up agricultural productivity of more than 3% per year to meet the growing needs. This accommodation cannot be obtained with agriculture based on capital intensification, one of whose aims is a reduction in the workforce.

#### **A. Constraints and Obstacles**

- Rural infrastructure is largely absent and communication is expensive and/or inaccessible. This also makes market access for agricultural producers in remote areas difficult.
- Energy deficiency remains a major obstacle and the objectives set out in JPOI remain largely unmet. Vast numbers of households still depend on fuel wood and charcoal for energy needs despite attendant health hazards from indoor air pollution. In addition, electricity supply is grossly inadequate.
- The rural environment is severely degraded and is the theatre for violent conflicts, as well as rapacious extraction by industries.
- Gender inequality is sharper in the rural setting, where women have their rights curbed and economic independence is marginal.
- Lack of healthcare facilities means higher infant and maternal mortality. Diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis take up valuable time, reduce the quality of life and in cases of mortality reduce the labour force available.
- General marginalization of rural people. Being far away from the capital and political power—geographically, socially and culturally—it is difficult to influence political processes concerning rural development and to have needs of rural areas fulfilled.
- There is a gap between short term relief and long term assistance, e.g., within food aid. This work should be coordinated in order not to risk doing damage to the local production systems and markets and undermining local institutions.
- Lack of financial mechanisms and resources (seed investment) to boost small- and medium-scale rural enterprises.

## B. Possible Approaches

- The promotion of local economies by processing agricultural products in small enterprises and factories within the rural milieu, thus permitting a greater retention of profits.
- Gender-sensitive approaches for addressing concerns of rural workers.
- Investment in socioeconomic structures and infrastructures in rural areas for access by the population to basic services of education, health, potable water, transportation, and housing, as well as communication and energy services.
- NGO initiatives in Kenya have assisted in provision of extension services to rural based small-scale farmers.
- The African Rural Energy Enterprise Development initiative (implemented in Senegal, Mali, Ghana, and Tanzania) is a good practice that could be replicated in the energy sector for small- and medium-scale enterprise development in rural African areas.
- More efforts are still needed in the area of promoting indigenous medical knowledge. This will greatly boost rural as well as urban health care delivery.
- Diversification of employment in small cities and villages of the rural milieu and a resulting augmentation of demand for goods and services, which will benefit the whole local economy.

## IV. Land

Land is a sensitive issue in Africa. With roots in the scramble for Africa by Europe's pre-colonial powers, disproportionate areas of land were appropriated by a few powerful people, disregarding the needs of the majority peasant populations. Efforts at land and tenure reform have achieved varied results, with the most dramatic being played out in Zimbabwe where land redistribution commenced in 2000. Land-related issues in Africa have grave political, economic, socio-cultural, and sustainable development implications. Overall, land is a prime asset for general agricultural productivity. Land relations are critical for women's rights. This is so because of the centrality of land as a resource for the livelihoods of the majority of African populations. Those who control land and its resources also gain social and political power and authority.

### A. Constraints and Obstacles

- **Unsustainable land resource exploitation:** Resource exploitation has led to rapid degradation of African land. These include deforestation, erosion and pollutions linked with mining activities. Certain farming practices and reliance on fuel wood have also led to rapid denudation of the land and increased threats of desertification.
- **Conflicts:** Land pressures have led to severe conflicts and these have further degrading impacts on the land. This is often seen where there is a clash between pastoralists and farmers in their struggle for land, fodder and water.
- **Legal bottlenecks:** There are serious socio-cultural biases against women in Africa. Women are especially discriminated against in land ownership for housing or agriculture.

In some cases, there are discrepancies in the legal systems that permit inheritance under statutory law but not in other existing traditional legal systems.

- **Land reforms:** Land reforms, where not sensitively handled, could worsen the tenure uncertainties experienced by women, tenants, pastoralists and young people whose interests in land are already not very secure. To avoid this, land tenure processes must be sufficiently consultative in order to address the needs and concerns of women and other vulnerable populations.
- **Rapid urbanization** of African cities and towns, as well as the increasing number and size of slums, constitute a serious challenge for sustainable urbanisation and development in Africa. Given the critical role of cities and towns in the economic progress of the region as well as their fair share in the GDP, in the future, sustainable development in Africa cannot be achieved without sustainable urbanization.
- **Lack of formal land registration system:** Most countries in Africa do not have formal systems for registering land ownership. This often leads to conflicts, appropriation of land by the national government, and problems of inheritance and discrimination.
- Access to land in terms of road infrastructure.

## **B. Possible Approaches**

- An opportunity exists to address social inequalities in technical land reform activities on the continent with a focus on skill oriented capacity building, including the socio-cultural aspects of land administration. Lessons learned can be shared between nations and regions in order to facilitate deep land reform on the continent. A study of the ongoing processes of land distribution in Southern African countries, for example, can provide lessons on mechanisms that would facilitate appropriate land tenure reforms, restitution and land redistribution. Such processes should ensure the tenure security of social groups such as women, young persons, tenants and pastoralists.
- Development of technical capacity building on gender-inclusive adjudication as well as gender budgeting.
- There is a need to improve gender sensitivity, inclusiveness and mainstreaming at all levels, including land policy and reform, formulation and/or implementation, capacity building, security of tenure, and budgeting, as well as in the national, regional and continental land-related initiatives. The AU/ECA/AfDB<sup>15</sup> land policy framework for Africa could further steer the process of addressing gender equity as well as gaps and biases in land policy development and implementation. A gender mechanism could be a way to operationalise mainstreaming in land.
- Actions are being taken to fight against land degradation by enhancing community forest management in the implementation of projects like **Kyoto: Think Global Act Local**, through Environmental Development Action in the Third World (ENDA).
- The Africa Centre for Holistic Management, Zimbabwe, has demonstrated significant results in mitigating land degradation on rangelands by enhancing livestock management and improving livelihoods and food security of agricultural producers.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> African Union/Economic Commission for Africa/ African Development Bank

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.holisticmanagement.org/n7/Regions/Africa/africa1\\_07.html](http://www.holisticmanagement.org/n7/Regions/Africa/africa1_07.html)

### **C. Mobilizing for Further Action**

- Civil society groups must be fully mobilised for popular participation in land reform processes.
- In response to the Malawian National Land Policy (2003), civil society groups in the country formed the Civil Society Task Force on Land and Natural Resources to advocate for pro-poor land rights. The taskforce worked in close consultation with grassroots organisations and groups. A Land Coalition has also been set up in Ghana for similar purposes.
- In Senegal, where there is a national push for biofuels production, rural communities are calling for action to secure land ownership and management with, food security as a top priority.

### **V. Drought**

Droughts have been one important cause of crop failures and of food shortages in Africa. Strictly speaking, drought is not an absence of water but rather a situation where there is a marked lack of rainfall leading to hydrological imbalance and water shortage. Sahelian<sup>17</sup> Africa is very prone to drought. The mix of population growth, increase in livestock and other economic pressures and inadequate policies has escalated the impact of drought in this region, and this is manifesting in the increased desertification of the area.

#### **A. Constraints and Obstacles**

- Climate change is a major contributor to distorted weather patterns and increasing incidents of drought in Africa.
- Rising water temperatures will also lead to a decrease in fisheries resources.
- Droughts have remained a major challenge here. The worst droughts were recorded in the 1910s, and they affected both East and West Africa. After that spell, negative trends were observed again from 1950 onwards, culminating in West Africa in 1984.<sup>18</sup> In recent decades droughts have been recorded in Southern and Eastern Africa, with South Africa declaring six provinces disaster zones with risk of food shortages due to drought in 2004.<sup>19</sup>
- Only 7% of agricultural land is under irrigation.<sup>20</sup> The high level of dependence on rain-fed agriculture exposes farmers to a high degree of vulnerability due to rainfall variability. Crops like millet, sorghum and maize are particularly vulnerable.

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<sup>17</sup> Southern fringe of the Sahara Desert

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/sustdev/EIdirect/EIAn0004.htm>

<sup>19</sup> South Africa's Review Report for the Sixteenth Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-16), November 2007

<sup>20</sup> Harmeling, Sven, et. al. (2007): Climate Change and Food Security in Africa, in *Africa Can Feed Itself*, (Aksel Naerstad, ed), The Development Fund, Oslo.

- Pastoralists are heavily impacted also, having to search over larger areas for grazing and water for their animals and risking conflicts with the land owners.
- There has been insufficient action to entrench water conservation and other drought mitigation measures, and develop and strengthen local coping strategies.

## **B. Possible Approaches**

- African countries need improved early warning systems to predict occurrence and severity of droughts.
- More research is needed on how to optimize yields and obtain the potential yield in an environmentally and economically sustainable way in dry areas and during droughts.
- More investment is needed in water harvesting techniques that are adapted to the local conditions and needs of the local people.
- Develop and implement specific emergency aid for pastoralists in times of drought, and further investigate coping strategies.
- More collaborative work is needed between research institutions and NGOs.
- Specific technical work to understand the gender and climate change nexus in the context of Africa is needed.

## **C. Best Practices**

- South Africa's National Action Programme (NAP), within the UNCCD framework, implemented from 2005, is a good step. It is an integrated action programme that combats desertification while mitigating the effects of drought. Other measures taken by the government, including the Disaster Management Act of 2002, encourage local participation and thus add value to the process. Many countries have good NAPs, but the degree and quality of their implementation varies.
- The Water Management Programme in Senegal for hydro-agricultural purposes is a good example based on water retention basins to develop off-season market gardening, create local incomes and alleviate poverty.

## **VI. Desertification**

Desertification is land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities.<sup>21</sup> The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) called upon the General Assembly to set up an inter-governmental committee to prepare for a legally binding instrument that addressed the problem of desertification, and in June 1994 the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in Paris. The UNCCD later entered into force in December 1996, and serves to manage the fight against desertification as a global issue, with a special focus on Africa.

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<sup>21</sup> UNCCD, Article 1.

The UNCCD should be seen as unique in the way that it links environment and development with the ultimate goal of increasing food security and alleviating poverty in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas around the world. The convention creates a framework for national and international work in promoting development in drylands with a special focus on securing the livelihoods of the most marginalized people. There is a yawning gap in terms of finances needed to go full throttle in efforts to combat desertification. Such efforts would include, among others, integrating indigenous knowledge systems in land and natural resource management systems and linking these actions in rural areas, developing policies for sustainable development in rural areas, strengthening and supporting local coping mechanisms, and engaging in research and development activities in collaboration with local people.

#### **A. Constraints and Obstacles**

- Human activities such as bushfires, overgrazing, mining, unsustainable cultivation practices, housing development, and improper use of agro-chemicals are the major factors aiding desertification.
- Other factors include the vulnerability of Africa to the impacts of climate change.
- In spite of the efforts being made by many African governments to combat desertification, some of these programs rely heavily on donor funding, so they become stifled when funding support is affected.
- In general, desertification is not taken into consideration within the countries' development programmes.
- Very limited access to energy and overdependence on fuel wood for energy.
- Lack of technologies to harvest renewable energy sources (solar, wind, etc). Related problems include technology ownership and up-front cost of access to technology.
- Lack of interest and investment by Northern donors in desertification and land degradation issues, and development in dryland areas in general.

#### **B. Possible Approaches**

- Collection of data on state of land degradation in dryland areas and of success stories and best practices in terms of natural resource management and coping strategies.
- Investment in awareness creation on factors that lead to desertification and building of capacities for monitoring and protecting vulnerable zones.
- Development and support to local coping strategies: in light of climate change, the focus should be on identifying, further developing and supporting local coping strategies for people living in dryland areas, such as farmers and pastoralists.
- Least developed countries (LDCs) could use the results of NAPA (National Adaptation Plan of Action) to select the best activities for mainstreaming desertification and climate change.
- Development and implementation of policies and economic mechanisms for the sustainable development of drylands: structural, economic and political changes need to be carried out in order to allow for sustainable development in drylands. These changes and the actions suggested need to be backed by economic investment, and should stem from field-based research in collaboration with local communities.
- Development of renewable energy alternatives, including biomass energy efficiency.

- Massive deployment of improved woodstoves to reduce deforestation occasioned by the quest for fuel wood.
- Enhancing conservatory activities in forest reserves and protected areas for sustainable forest management.

### **C. Best Practices**

- Management strategies for greening and maintenance of vegetative cover is very crucial for the maintenance of a humid microclimate, reduction of surface run-off, checking erosion and siltation, and regulation of stream flow in combating desertification in vulnerable areas.
- The Energy Management Programme in Senegal ‘PROGEDE’, supported by the World Bank, has an integrated strategy on both demand- and supply-side management, including participatory management of forest resources and rational use of biomass energy.
- The ENDA-SYSPRO Programme is an NGO initiative for land protection based on hedge plantations to help soil regeneration and produce biomass resources.

## **VII. Water and Sanitation**

Water is one of the basic needs of life, and also a key component in human development. But in most cases accessibility to clean water has been a mirage to the masses in Africa. Deprivation linked to water is a source of poverty, of inequality, of social injustice, and of great disparities of living conditions. Water is a human right.<sup>22</sup>

Rapid urbanization places immense pressure on the world’s fragile and dwindling fresh water resources and over-burdened sanitation systems, leading to environmental degradation. In Ghana, for example, the poor continue to pay very high amounts for water either directly or indirectly. This high cost does not necessarily guarantee that every one of them is going to get enough safe water that will help them to live a healthy, dignified and productive life. The 5% capital cost contribution required of rural communities towards the provision of water service is unfair, discriminatory, and should be abolished.

### **A. Constraints and Obstacles**

- Sea level rise and ensuing salination of fresh waters and agricultural land pose real challenges to low-lying coastal regions such as the Niger Delta. It is not clear to what extent African countries have been assisted in mobilizing resources for adaptation needs occasioned by climate change.
- Capacity to manage water as a public good. About half of Ghana Water Company’s daily production of 120 million gallons, for example, is unaccounted for, lost through leaks and unpaid bills.
- Privatization of water at the behest of international finance institutions.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.cohre.org/water>

- Rural communities' access to potable water is often sabotaged by pollution from oil and mining industries. These communities largely depend on natural water bodies for their water needs.
- Africa still has relatively weak capacity in environmental legislative policy, especially in the areas of enforcement of environmental impact assessment (EIA) laws. This is an indication that the targets of the JPOI have not received concrete support/action. Improvement in this sector would enhance protection of water resources.
- Lack of inter-sector planning that integrates actions between areas such as land use planning, water resource management and involvement of local communities in the processes.

## **B. Possible Way Forward**

- To create value in urban and peri-urban agriculture, despite the health and environmental risks associated with this practice, Governments must educate the public on the use of waste water and also encourage households to practice water harvesting to reduce the use of treated water for agricultural purposes and other household activities.
- Inappropriate agricultural systems also impact negatively on water quality and health of the people.
- Governments and donor institutions should provide some form of financial resources to encourage research on the use of wastewater and innovative ways of realizing optimum water and sanitation schemes.
- All stakeholders must be involved in the development of appropriate strategies at all levels aimed at providing universal access to safe drinking water by the year 2015.
- Privatisation of water should be halted and institutions such as the World Bank should channel their support away from privatisation of this common good, and rather invest in efficient public supply systems. The current management problems can be resolved other than through the privatization of water. Civil society groups in Africa have continued to push this alternative position.
- A lot still needs to be done in the area of hygiene education, improved sanitation and waste management.

## **C. Best Practices**

- The Government of Ghana's effort to expand the Weija water supply to meet the water requirements of residents of the Accra metropolis is expected to provide an additional 15 million gallons of water supply when completed. In addition, about 850,000 residents of some distressed communities like Madina will benefit from this project.