

Creating lands of opportunity:

Transforming Livelihoods through Landscape Restoration in the Sahel

SUMMARY

The project aims to support three countries in Africa to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 (Life on Land) and specifically its target 15.3. The project seeks to strengthen communities' resilience to climate change and desertification through the provision of incentives to invest in the rehabilitation of degraded lands in the Sahel region. As a consequence, it will contribute to slowing the rural exodus and subsequent migration to Europe exacerbated by desertification, land degradation and drought by rehabilitating lands and through the creation of land-based income and job opportunities in communities in three selected countries in West Africa Sahel.

The project will also contribute to achieving the bold vision of the Great Green Wall Initiative in supporting local communities to adapt and build resilience to climate change, as well as boost food security and spur economic growth.

The project will support countries in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) through addressing underlying vulnerabilities and build resilience to future shocks (climatic and conflict-related). This implies avoiding further land degradation, mitigating and therefore compensating unavoidable land degradation due to agricultural and urban development needs and restoring as much as possible already degraded land.

This project will induce transformational change. It is designed to prove the relationship between how land is managed and a number of highly politically relevant policy areas, including the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, climate change adaptation and mitigation, security and migration, poverty reduction and job creation; food security and drought.

The project will deliver measurable and immediate co-benefits in terms of poverty reduction through increased economic opportunity; improved governance; and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Overall objective

The overall objective of the project is to make a significant and sustainable contribution towards landscape restoration in the Sahel while creating income generating activities for local communities in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Niger.

Specific objectives

1. To promote landscape restoration and facilitate the sustainability of these actions through the creation of land-based jobs and income-generating opportunities for rural populations across the Sahel, particularly benefiting women and youth
2. To promote and strengthen the enabling environment for leveraging investments for landscape restoration benefiting local communities in selected countries in the Sahel
3. To improve the livelihoods of rural communities by establishing sustainable production of high-value drylands products to connect local producers to international markets

1. CONTEXT

Land is the foundation of our societies and the engine of economic growth for much of the world. With population rapidly expanding and expected to reach at least 9.5 billion by 2050, ensuring the availability of sufficient healthy and productive land to provide food, energy and water for all has become a pressing concern. In this context, the continued degradation and desertification of land is a crisis with the potential to destabilize communities worldwide. An estimated 12 million hectares of land are lost entirely from production each year with climate change accelerating the rate of land degradation in vulnerable areas, notably in Africa.

The mismanagement of land has negative effects that can quickly propagate beyond the initial areas of land degradation to have a global impact: In a situation of inappropriate land use practice and falling productivity compounded by climate change, farmers and other land users initially move to the next available piece of productive land, often forest – driving deforestation - or urban slums. At the same time, land-driven food security crises, distressed environmental migration, poverty and conflict are at the center of key global challenges.

But land is also at the center of ongoing community-driven initiatives to create new opportunities for vulnerable populations through integrated initiatives, called “landscape approach”, aimed at achieving economic, social and environmentally sustainable livelihoods anchored on the restoration of degraded lands. Successful landscape restoration requires linking activities that increase eco-system services to the livelihoods of the vulnerable communities living in degraded areas. Only in this manner, a “virtuous” cycle is generated whereby local populations become the long-term stewards of their land.

Following this approach, the UNCCD is designing - jointly with international and local partners - projects in countries of the Sahel and adjacent areas (Ghana, Burkina Faso, Togo, The Gambia, Benin, and Niger) that promote landscape restoration to transform the livelihoods of local communities through an integrated approach considering environmental, social, and economic issues. These initiatives aim to restore lands through the creation of land-based jobs, empowerment of women through their involvement in decision-making and productive activities, addressing key infrastructure bottlenecks (particularly renewable energy), and linking rural populations to global value chains through the promotion of dryland products. By investing in techniques that improve soil fertility and agricultural productivity and giving special attention to the production and promotion of food products from agricultural and forest biodiversity, these projects will contribute to improved sustainability of ecosystems, environmental services, and biodiversity. Furthermore, these projects will also contribute directly to achieve broader development objectives to which these countries have committed, including the Sustainable Development Goals and, particularly, the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets that the countries seek to achieve by 2030.

The continued degradation of the Sahelian landscape is jeopardizing rural livelihoods and economic development in the region. Agriculture, livestock and forestry provides the income and employment for more than 80% of the population of this region, and land-based activities generate most of the wealth. However, in the Sahelian countries, land degradation leads to an annual decline of nearly 3% of agricultural production, compromising food security and increasing the vulnerability of millions of people, in particular in rural areas. With an annual average population growth of 3%, the population of the Sahel is projected to increase from 100 million today to 340 million in 2050. The situation will also be aggravated by the impacts from climate change, including increasing droughts and floods. Fortunately, countries are taking action to not only arrest land degradation, but to reverse and meet the challenges to ensure the wellbeing of their growing populations. As part of this process, the UNCCD has worked with three Sahelian countries in a detailed diagnosis of their land degradation patterns:

In **Burkina Faso**, between 2002 and 2013, 51 600 km² representing 19% of the country's area, were degraded according to the national LDN report. This degradation results mainly from the loss of forest area and their conversion to other units of land use (mainly "shrubs, grasslands, etc."). In 11 years, Burkina Faso has lost more than 24 870 km² of forest covering 9% of its territory. LDN indicators also revealed that 9.3% of the territory in 2013 showed trends of negative productivity (productivity decline or first signs of decline). These negative trends are mainly found in "shrubs, grasslands," (5.5%) and "cultivated lands" (3%). Degradation "hotspots" were identified allowing to locate priority areas for restoration and reforestation. These hotspots are mainly located in (i) the Oursi and Gourouol region in the Sahelian zones; (ii) the Matiakoali, Nakambé and the forest corridor in the Sudano-Sahelian zone and (iii) the Ouô-Sidéradougou, Kéné Dougou and Boussoukoulaen in the Sudanian Zone.

Land degradation trends in **Ghana** show that over 880 km² of forest was lost during the preceding decade (2000-2010), representing a 1.2% decline in forest cover since 2000¹. The Northern, Upper East and Upper West regions, which constitute the regions with the highest incidences of poverty and unemployment and are located in Ghana's Sahelian belt, accounted for the highest cumulative decline in forest cover during this period. The expansion of cropland and grasslands for livestock are the primary causes of deforestation, but declining productivity and inadequate land management practices further exacerbate land degradation, contributing to increased and recurrent incidences of poverty and food insecurity.

Niger has experienced chronic and recurring food crises (2004, 2008 and 2012) due to the severe effects of recurring droughts, climate variability and desertification². With historically

¹ Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (2017): Republic of Ghana Land Degradation Neutrality Targets country commitments.

² Cabinet du Premier Ministre (2017): Engagement du Niger à mettre en œuvre la Neutralité en matière de Dégradation des Terres d'ici à 2030.

low yields and food deficits, declining or stagnant productivity and limited land suitable for cultivation and livestock rearing, farmers and pastoralists have increasingly relied on expanding production by clearing existing forest areas. This has resulted in highly productive and biologically diverse areas of the country declining sharply in the past four decades. Forest land, which has historically covered a relatively small area in Niger, has experienced a 66% decline since 1975, while the Nigerien Sahelian savanna has decreased by almost 27%. Conversion to agricultural land is the primary cause of deforestation; cropland has almost doubled in under a generation, from 13% in 1975 to 25% in 2013. Despite this, productivity remains low, aggravated by drastic climatic conditions and other factors, such as conflict, and has resulted in the migration of farmers and pastoralists and the rural exodus to urban centres and neighboring countries.

This project proposal is part of the response that these countries are developing to these challenges and it seeks to test scalable, innovative approaches linking land restoration to sustainable rural livelihoods.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Overall objective

The overall objective of the project is to make a significant and sustainable contribution towards landscape restoration in the Sahel while creating income generating activities for local communities in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Niger.

Specific objectives and related activities

1. To promote landscape restoration and facilitate the sustainability of these actions through the creation of land-based jobs and income-generating opportunities for rural populations across the Sahel, particularly benefiting women and youth
2. To promote and strengthen the enabling environment for leveraging investments for landscape restoration benefiting local communities in selected countries in the Sahel
3. To improve the livelihoods of rural communities by establishing sustainable production of high-value drylands products to connect local producers to international markets

Expected Results

1. Restoration of an estimated 20,000 hectares of degraded lands
2. Enabling environment in place to facilitate investments in landscape restoration in selected local communities in the Sahel

3. New sustainable sources of income generation with associated social impact supporting an estimated 300,000 beneficiaries, with a particular attention to vulnerable groups including young people and women.

Activities

The following activities will be undertaken in the **project inception phase**:

- Identification of communities to be supported by the project. This should leverage existing i) initiatives implemented by national stakeholders and international partners as well as ii) national plans, including those developed under the Rio Conventions such as the LDN Targets and Baselines or National Adaptation Plans. As part of the LDN target setting process supported by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, all three countries have already identified priority areas for intervention (the land degradation “hotspots”) based on the area of land affected by degradation and the subsequent socio-economic impacts this has on the local communities.
- Establishment of linkages with buyers of the products that are prioritized by the communities to ensure a sufficient level of demand is guaranteed early on. The UNCCD will leverage on experience in this regard from other areas of the Sahel. This may include global purchasers of agricultural or non-timber forest products, national private companies sourcing from the Sahel or national-level export intermediaries. Ideally, at this stage there may be formal agreements guaranteeing the underwriting of future production and hence long-term sustainability after the project cycle.

Specific Objective 1: To promote landscape restoration and facilitate the sustainability of these actions through the creation of land-based jobs and income-generating opportunities for rural populations across the Sahel, particularly benefiting women and youth

- Create economic opportunities in occupations that rehabilitate the productive capacity of forests, farmland, drylands, protect biodiversity and essential environmental services provided by these restored lands, so that jobs created contribute to a cycle of increased sustainable productivity
- Provision of renewable energy to local communities for basic household electricity needs as well as communal and production needs. Experiences in countries in the region show that reliable availability of renewable energy can be a pre-condition for sustainability of land restoration activities as otherwise communities may rely on wood as source of energy and agricultural productivity may remain low due to lack of, for example, water pumping technologies

- Activities could include, among others, tree nurseries, nutritional gardens (e.g. moringa production), land rehabilitation to improve agroforestry, integration of animal husbandry and animal corridors, and forage production.

Specific Objective 2: To promote and strengthen the enabling environment for leveraging land-based investments benefiting local communities across the Sahel

- Review of national “enabling environment” that ensures sustainability of actions. This may include: identifying obstacles and proposing solutions to ensure access to imported items for the project, restrictions that may hinder exports of agricultural products, and linkages with existing agricultural or rural community programs
- Detailed design of interventions to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation combining technical feasibility studies with community consultations in a participatory process. An Integrated Land-Based Development Plan (ILDP), including land use planning, is generated for each community.

Specific Objective 3: To improve the livelihoods of rural communities by establishing sustainable production of high-value drylands products to connect local producers to international markets

- Capacity building will be undertaken in the communities, with women’s cooperatives, young entrepreneurs and farmers, on issues such as:
 - Land rehabilitation activities;
 - Installation of renewable energy sources to support communal infrastructure (e.g., water pumps, mobile phone chargers, electricity of households, storage facility and community center);
 - Training in sustainable agricultural techniques including those needed to ensure the quality standards of value chains are met;
 - Improvements in production techniques to enable increased capacity and quality standards, including regional storage facilities and other community level infrastructure,
 - Entrepreneurship skills of local producers to gain access to new markets for dryland products
- Activities linking smallholder producers with private sector buyers

Project approach

Projects of this nature must be adjusted to the needs of each community and ecosystem characteristics. In the project inception phase, the detailed interventions and activities in each community will be designed under the leadership of the national governments as project counterpart and in collaboration with the project partners, including selected local implementation partners. The proposed project would target selected communities in Ghana, Burkina Faso and Niger over a three-year implementation period.

The project activities will be defined through a rigorous participatory and gender-responsive stakeholder approach. The project will be implemented in key degraded landscapes of the 3 countries, considering the assessments carried out during the LDN target setting process.

Using a landscape approach, the project will be implemented involving multiple land types (e.g., within a watershed), as well as sectors and jurisdictions/administrative boundaries that include different land tenure governance (communal, private and public land). A land use planning exercise will be undertaken to promote landscape restoration within the project area by implementing an optimal mix of measures designed to (a) avoid, (b) reduce and/or (c) reverse land degradation in order to achieve a state of no net loss of healthy and productive land. Such LDN approach aims to balance anticipated losses in land-based natural capital and associated ecosystem functions and services with measures that produce alternative gains through approaches such as land restoration and sustainable land management.

The project will also provide local communities with the means to use renewable energy as a way to change their lives, not just to turn on the lights. Four main types of interventions will be supported in the participating countries:

- At the household level, these include: providing solar ovens and lighting, charging for cell phones and other electrical equipment,
- At the scale of small sustainable enterprises, it is necessary, among other things, to: develop basic training to facilitate the creation or multiplication of the number of small craft enterprises and services,
- In terms of sustainable agriculture and land rehabilitation, this includes, for example: Providing the necessary tools and building capacities to restore / rehabilitate degraded lands, provide solar pumps and develop small irrigation infrastructure,
- In terms of community health and education infrastructures, these include: developing lighting and the construction of basic infrastructures, latrines, etc.

The project will also include an investment component that leverages private sector mobilization and will foster activities that incentivize income generation and job creation for the communities in the project intervention areas. This might include the launch of potential certification schemes and global sourcing challenges targeting a shortlist of the Top 100 food and cosmetic businesses in the world, with a view to gaining commitments to working with ingredients that are sourced from small scale producers in the Sahel.

The project will be supported by cross-cutting activities including public awareness, education, capacity-building campaigns, sharing knowledge and lessons learned that are tailored to the specific needs and social behaviors of both women and men, and aligned with existing national strategies, programmes and knowledge management systems.

The project will apply innovative locally adapted technologies, tools, and techniques that consider context and target group specificities including, for instance, local knowledge and traditional practices. Science-based or proven best practices for restoration and Sustainable Land Management / Forest Management will be scaled up. The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD (GM) and the implementing partners will provide support access to evidence based best practices, including WOCAT³, SFM Toolbox⁴, Agro-ecology⁵, and the VGGT⁶. Innovative tools for effective land monitoring and planning such as Collect Earth or Trend Earth will be used to link local knowledge with globally available data.

Moreover, the project will go beyond restoring productive landscapes and improving livelihoods by creating new land-based green jobs opportunities and generating new income for local communities on the long run.

Country ownership is considered as central to successful project implementation. The implementation of the project will thus need to be characterized by a high degree of flexibility and transparency, and activities should be adapted according to national and local contexts as well as stakeholders' capacities and preferences. It is expected that this approach will allow both the integration of country-driven priorities and the provision of valuable elements to enhance relevant international policy dialogue processes, in particular the implementation of the SDGs.

Environmental, social and economic multiple benefits

The project will generate environmental, social and economic multiple benefits, consistent with national development priorities, and sustained over long term by the national and local government institutions and at different levels. These multiple benefits at various levels will be achieved through landscape restoration and improved sustainable land management, translated into enhanced food security and nutrition, and livelihoods development.

Environmental benefits include:

- Restoration of degraded landscape and increasing ecological resilience of production landscapes and natural capital;
- Improved provision of agro-ecosystem and forest ecosystem goods and services;
- Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including agrobiodiversity, in production landscapes;
- Mitigated/avoided greenhouse gas emissions and increased carbon sequestration in production landscapes.

³ <https://www.wocat.net/en/>

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/en/>

⁵ <http://www.fao.org/agroecology/home/en/>

⁶ <http://www.fao.org/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

Social benefits include:

- Enhanced sustainable livelihoods (food security, nutrition, market access) for rural communities;
- Increased social resilience of rural communities;
- New employment opportunities in agriculture, particularly for women and youth.

Economic benefits include:

- Creation of land-based green jobs;
- Development of new income sources;

Risk and mitigation measures: environmental and social safeguards

As in any project, the envisioned interventions in the proposed project can induce both environmental and social negative effects within and beyond the project sites and mitigating measures will be proposed.

The potential risks that have been identified, from project design to implementation, are as follows:

- The project design risk could be considered as moderate. Indeed, on one hand, the project will build on past experience and lessons learned from ongoing projects; and, on other hand, the gender-responsive participatory approach will be key to support the achievement of the expected results in the targeted geographical areas. However, the coordination of all the stakeholders involved in the project design and implementation could represent another substantial risk. Strong dialogue between all stakeholders will be key to get consensus and reinforce co-creation in project design and cooperation in project implementation.
- A substantial risk is related to security-related matters and conflicts between land users that could affect the countries' economic performance. To mitigate security-related matters, the location of project sites will be chosen to ensure sustainability of the activities over time. To mitigate potential land users' conflicts, a particular attention will be done to ensure that LDN activities protect the rights of legitimate right holders, be they collective or individual rights holders. As recommended in the LDN Scientific Conceptual framework, the project will ensure that all stakeholders, public and private, pursue LDN responsibly by working in partnership with relevant levels of government and local land holders, doing no harm, ensuring that planning processes are transparent and participatory, providing spatial systems to record individual and collective tenure rights, and safeguarding against dispossession of legitimate tenure right holders, environmental damage, and other threats and infringements.

- The social risks related to the activities of the proposed project should be minimal or non-existent. Agricultural resource users and producers (including women and youth) will benefit directly from various investments aimed at rehabilitating their natural resources, creating new economic opportunities and growth, and strengthening their technical and managerial capacities. Small and medium-scale physical investments (including local utilities, small water catchments, etc.) will have a very limited impact on project affected people relative to resettlements, land acquisition or economic displacement.
- From an environmental point of view, the activities to be financed by the proposed project will have limited negative impacts on the human and biophysical environment (including potential pollution of water, air and noise during the construction of the facilities, and production of solid and liquid waste).

To mitigate all these risks, the project will implement corrective measures based on dedicated environmental and social assessment / impact studies and will apply environmental and social safeguards to mitigate as much as possible any potential negative impact arising from investments in large-scale projects. Emphasis will be on gender-responsive community outreach and awareness (including on land tenure and rights of natural resource users), identifying and implementing a gender-responsive transparent, inclusive and participative local development land use planning and actively supporting the required policy reforms. A dedicated team should closely monitor the progress of project activities, particularly given the length of procurement processes and the innovative participatory approach.

Gender equality and empowerment of vulnerable groups, including women and young people

Women are key players in both the agricultural and pastoral production processes. They are the primary natural resource managers, providers of food security, and repositories of knowledge and expertise on indigenous plants, medicines, food and water. These are crucial roles when dealing with soil fertility and crop failure in degraded and drought-prone areas. The project will ensure the active engagement of women organisations in the development of capacity building activities as well as in relevant policy dialogues and stakeholder platforms.

The project will address existing gender gaps through solid gender analysis and gender-responsive project design, covering women's access to productive assets and natural resources, services and employment opportunities; and will invest in women's technical and leadership skills, ensuring their equal participation in the project's benefits. Special measures will be taken to increase women's access to sustainable water management practices, storage and processing technologies and to reducing their work burden. The project will focus on women's and youth empowerment through the diversification and sustainable intensification of production and will aim to unlock the potential of underutilized crops value chains with focus on selected medicinal/cosmetic plants, food crops and perennials.

The project will take concrete steps to ensure inclusivity in project design and implementation including participation of women in land use decision and planning and activities. Moreover, the monitoring-evaluation system will include disaggregated indicators by sex and age and give special focus groups and outreach to vulnerable groups, including women and youth populations to ensure their participation to ensure the following inclusivity results:

- At least 50% of beneficiaries are women and 50% are youth;
- At least 50% of beneficiaries in public decision-making processes are women and 50% be considered youth in order for decisions taken to be official.

Beneficiaries

The project will ultimately benefit rural poor populations and local communities through improvements in agricultural production, food security, livelihood development and growing resilience to climate change.

The project will engage with a variety of actors at the national level:

- National UNCCD Focal Points
- Development partners of each country active in the land sector
- Government officials in relevant line ministries (environment, agriculture, interior)
- Representatives of local communities
- CSOs
- Private sector companies

Public Policy Assessment

The project will help countries in achieving LDN and contribute to frame and sharpen national ambitions and efforts in reaching the global goal for sustainable development, in particular goal 15 (SDG 15)⁷. The objective of land degradation neutrality is to maintain or improve both the biological and economic productivity of land resources for future generations, i.e. reverse the current negative trends. At the heart of LDN is a focus on the integrated management of soil, water and biodiversity to improve the health and resilience of communities and ecosystems. LDN also embraces the restoration and rehabilitation of degraded natural and semi-natural ecosystems that provide vital services to people

⁷ Sustainable Development Goal 15 states: *Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.* Target 15.3, specifically, states: *By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world.*

and working landscapes. The SDG targets are global and aspirational in nature. To be effective they need to be translated into national targets. Target 15.3 can therefore also be expressed as “a world where nations individually strive to achieve land degradation neutrality”.

Lessons learnt, complementarity with other initiatives, and cross-cutting issues

The project is catalytic by nature, and co-financing will be provided through agreements with other bilateral agencies (in particular Ireland and Turkey) and multi-lateral (in particular the EC). Each of the project components will complement ongoing activities financed by other donors. The project reflects the important role that land rehabilitation can play towards a synergistic implementation of the three Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD), particularly with regards to building resilience of vulnerable populations.

The project will contribute to achieving the bold vision of the Great Green Wall Initiative in supporting local communities from Djibouti to Senegal to adapt and build resilience to climate change, as well as boost food security and spur economic growth. The Great Green Wall is a major African-led initiative with a bold ambition to ‘green’ Africa along a 7,775km stretch from the Atlantic Coast of Senegal to the east coast of Djibouti. Once completed, the ‘Wall’ will represent one of humanity’s greatest environmental accomplishments, and a key part of the solution to urgent global challenges, including climate change, food security and migration.

The project will also build on lessons learned from a ‘Great Green Entrepreneurs’ training programme the GM has piloted. The programme aims to spearhead the creation of ‘land based green jobs’ through the establishment of sustainable value chains for dryland products with the potential for export to international markets. The programme builds on the UNCCD’s partnership with Aduna, in the development and establishment of demand driven supply chains for baobab and other lucrative dryland products. The ‘Great Green Entrepreneurs’ training programme is developed to promote improvement of livelihoods of rural communities through the establishment of sustainable value chains for dryland products that has the potential to be exported to international markets.

Most West African countries, including Burkina Faso, Niger and Ghana, have developed their own National Economic and Social Development Plans, National Climate Change Adaptation Programme, National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and National Action Plan to Combat Desertification. They are also actively participating in TerrAfrica by defining Strategic Investment Framework for Sustainable Land Management, as well as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative whose objective is to restore degraded landscapes and help transform the lives of millions living on the frontline of climate change. Burkina Faso, Niger and Ghana are also amongst the 120 countries that voluntarily set up Land Degradation Neutrality targets (SDG target 15.3) and has committed to avoid and reduce further degradation and reverse current degradation trends through the restoration and sustainable management of degraded lands by 2030. These three countries are also participating in

the 3S “Sustainability, Stability and Security” Initiative, which aims at investing in landscape restoration and sustainable land management, while improving livelihoods and creating land-based green jobs for vulnerable groups.

All three governments are taking initiatives towards cultivating an optimal business environment for the SMEs to access international market, according to the World Bank’s Doing Business 2019 Reports. In particular, as compared to those of other Sub-Saharan African countries, Burkina Faso and Niger offer a promising environment for export-driven local business activities, similar to the model that the project envisages. Ghana, on the other hand, faces the most serious barriers when it comes to trading across borders, among the three countries. Nevertheless, the country is making efforts to lower such trade barriers by, for instance, implementing a paperless customs clearance processing system, among others.

The proposed project will also be implemented in synergy / complementarity with ongoing projects such as the “Restoration of Forests and Landscapes and Sustainable Land Management in the Sahel” project, implemented by FAO in Burkina Faso and Niger and financed by the French Global Environmental Facility (FFEM), the “Agricultural Value Chains Promotion” project implemented by IFAD, the “Promoting Climate-Smart Agriculture in West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Togo)” project implemented by BOAD. An extensive project mapping will be undertaken during the inception phase in order to scale-up best practices and identify possible synergies.

Other relevant initiatives to which these countries are contributing include: AFR100 (the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative), the Bonn Challenge, the African Resilient Landscapes Initiative (ARLI), the African Union Agenda 2063, the Sustainable Development Goals.

Box 1. LDN targets in the three countries

Burkina Faso

In order to stop land degradation in Burkina Faso, the country commits to reaching land degradation neutrality by 2030 by restoring 5 million hectares of degraded lands and by preventing degradation of non-degraded lands.

More specifically, the country commits to reach the following targets:

- Put an end to deforestation by 2030;
- Improve the productivity of 2,5 million hectares of savannas and cultivated lands that show productivity decline;
- Improve carbon stocks in 800.000 ha to reach a minimum of 1% of organic matter (achieve 5T of organic matter (OM) per hectare every 2 years);
- Retrieve 300.000 hectares of bare land from a total of 600.000 hectares.

Ghana

All listed targets should be accompanied by sustainable management of the resource and envisaged to be achieved by 2030.

- Reforest 882.86 km² of converted forest into other land use/cover types, and rehabilitate/restore all abandoned legal and illegal mineral mining and sand winning sites by 2030.
- Improve productivity and soil organic carbon stocks in 18475.96 km² of cropland by 2030.
- Rehabilitate/restore 5107.70 km² of degraded forest, including abandoned legal and illegal mineral mining sites for enhanced productivity by 2030.
- Rehabilitate/restore and sustainably manage 4593.39 km² of degraded shrubs, and sparsely vegetated areas for improved productivity and reduction in bush/wild fires by 2030.
- Reduce conversion of 45079.72 km² of remaining forest to other types of vegetation, and halt all illegal mining activities by 2030.
- Increase the soil organic carbon of degraded croplands and rangelands by 66 % (i.e., 1.20 % to 2.0 %) by 2030.

Niger

Niger commits to achieving LDN by 2030 and reducing the area of degraded land from 9% to 5%. This, with the aim of increasing vegetation cover from 17% to 19% and sustainably improving the living conditions of people.

More specifically, necessary actions will be taken to:

- Restore 44% (4,440,500 ha) of the 10,761,076 ha of degraded land in 2010;
- Reduce to 2% (252,101 ha) the area of cultivated lands showing negative trends of net primary productivity;
- Reduce from 1% (100,074.3 ha) to 0% the annual rate of forest/savanna/wetland conversion into other types of land;
- Halt sand encroachment and water erosion (gully erosion) along the Niger river;
- Sequester 292,000 tons of carbon in the ground and/or biomass through good agroforestry practices (windbreak system, hedges, assisted natural regeneration, forage bank, food bank, etc.).

Communication and visibility actions

This project is designed to contribute to prove the relationship between how land is managed and a number of highly politically relevant policy areas, including the Global Goals for Sustainable Development, climate change adaptation and mitigation, security and migration, poverty reduction and job creation; food security and drought. With this in mind, the communication and visibility strategy will be built strongly around the evidence gathered by the monitoring framework.

Three target groups and strands of communication activities have been identified in that regard:

1. **Policy and decision makers in target countries.** The project approach will be to mix policy and political outreach with key decision makers through regular debates and hearings coupled with one-on-one presentations and the placement of media articles and opinion pieces in well-respected peer-reviewed technical and non-technical publications.
2. **General public.** The approach will be to communicate best practice and lessons learned from the project through a global public awareness campaign, which promotes international visibility on the inter-linkages between land degradation and migration and the value of upscaling the project to other Great Green Wall countries. This will include a concerted social media drive, mass media placement and development of online communications channels, which will in turn strengthen the ability of local authorities to effect behavioural change and citizen science.
3. A specific communications strategy will be defined for **project beneficiaries**. Communities will be asked to document their own experiences and a number of inspirational stories can be expected to emerge from the exercise which will be used to humanize the project.

Project visibility will be supported by several concurrent platforms including, but not limited to:

- The Great Green Wall central web platform through the posting of key progress with the project, including lessons learned and best practices
- The GM corporate website through the posting of news items, events announcements
- E-newsletters to key stakeholders
- Targeted publications – e.g. State of the Great Green Wall

3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The indicative operational implementation period of this project, during which the activities described in section 2 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 36 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement, including an inception phase of a duration of six months. The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD will engage political, technical, research, business and implementing partners with long-term established know-how, while the technical and fiduciary oversight will be assured by the GM of the UNCCD. Implementation arrangements will take place in accordance with UN standard rules and procedures applied by the UNCCD Secretariat, including an open, competitive selection of implementation partners. The GM of the UNCCD and its partners will provide fiduciary management and procurement for all project activities and will implement the project in close collaboration with existing institutions at the national and local levels, including public and private stakeholders.

Agreements with implementation partners, in particular for Component 1, will be identified for each country during the inception phase of the project.

Potential partners in the project may include the following: National government representatives and regional bodies (e.g. African Union Commission, ECOWAS, CILSS, European Commission), technical partners (e.g. UNV, WFP, IRENA, FAO, IUCN, AfDB), CSO representatives (e.g. CARI, TreeAid, WWF), local and international businesses and private sector (farmers organization, trade associations, cooperatives, producers).

Steering Committee

A project steering committee will be established, in consultation with Italy, to oversee the overall implementation of the project. The steering committee may call upon the expertise or partner organizations to participate in the meeting, when it will be considered relevant for the smooth running of activities.

The steering committee, given its decision-making role, is deliberately restricted to key project stakeholders. A first meeting of the steering committee will be organized during the project inception phase in order to define priorities for action and design detailed annual work program for each country. This meeting will mark the official launch of the project.

Performance monitoring, reporting and evaluation

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of the project will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partners' responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partners shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the project.

Monitoring will be carried out primarily by the implementing partner in each country, under the supervision and coordination of the GM. It will include a quantitative measurement of the rate of progress of delivering the planned commitments: reviews of budget allocations/spending and the status of output delivery.

Regular progress reports on each country will be elaborated every six months, and final reports at the end of each country project. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and direct outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix. They will also assess risks and other constraints for delivery and determine what lessons can be learned from implementation experiences. The reports shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

A sound gender-responsive monitoring-evaluation system will be set up to ensure successful project implementation, including support for financial management, procurement, environmental and social

safeguards, gender-responsiveness and youth and women's participation, as well as monitoring and evaluation of project activities, consistent with national LDN targets and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, particularly SDG 15.3 and its indicator 15.3.1 on LDN. A Results-Based Project and Monitoring & Evaluation Plan will be designed during the inception phase.

A mid-term and a final evaluation will be carried out for the project and its country components by independent consultants contracted via the Global Mechanism. They will assess, as systematically and objectively as possible, the design, implementation and results of the project. They will look at each country project – through the records and documents concerning activities in each country, summary reports of the information provided by the 'community monitors' and further surveys and interviews of project stakeholders - and assess the overall achievements of the project. The evaluations will determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project.

4. PROJECT BUDGET

| Budget category | Total costs (In EUR) |
|--|----------------------|
| SO1 | |
| Create economic opportunities that support sustainable landscape restoration: Land restoration activities, establishment of nurseries and/or small public works necessary to initiate productive activities, capacity building, agricultural and other types of inputs including small equipment (e.g., water pumps) | 2,200,000 |
| Provision of renewable energy to local communities for basic household electricity needs as well as communal and production needs. | 800,000 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | <u>3,000,000</u> |
| SO2 | |
| Review of national "enabling environment" that ensures sustainability of actions (solutions to ensure access to imported items for the project, restrictions that may hinder exports of agricultural products, and linkages with existing agricultural or rural community programs) | 100,000 |
| Detailed design of interventions to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation combining technical feasibility studies with community consultations in a participatory process. An Integrated Land-Based Development Plan (ILDP), including land use planning, is generated for each village. | 700,000 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | <u>800,000</u> |
| SO3 | |
| Capacity building in the communities, with women's cooperatives, young entrepreneurs and farmers | 300,000 |
| Activities linking smallholder producers with private sector buyers, including certification and standards assessments to gain access to global markets | 570,000 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | <u>870,000</u> |
| Mid-term and final evaluation | |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | <u>50,000</u> |
| Knowledge management, communication and visibility | |
| Outreach and visibility | 100,000 |
| Marketing of dryland products | 200,000 |
| Dissemination of lessons learned to UNCDD parties and identification of approaches to scale-up project | 200,000 |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | <u>500,000</u> |
| Financial management, procurement and technical oversight of project (direct incremental costs) | |
| <i>Sub-total</i> | 270,000 |
| SUB-TOTAL | 5,220,000 |
| Overhead and contingencies (13%) | 780,000 |
| TOTAL | 6,000,000 |