

## SECTION 4: Challenges and constraints to meeting goals and targets



146. Despite the achievements highlighted in the previous section, the region is confronted with many challenges and constraints that have hampered progress in the development and implementation of measures to combat desertification and to mitigate impacts of drought. The main ones include the following:

147. The high level of poverty continues to be the main overarching challenge and constraint to implementation of measures to address drought and desertification in Africa.

148. Climate variability has been a major impediment to SLM activities. This will be exacerbated by climate change that is projected to have devastating impacts in the region.

149. Countries are encountering difficulties in achieving effective integration/mainstreaming of drought and desertification control plans into national development and budgetary frameworks. This contributes to the limited progress in mobilizing multi-stakeholder participation and investments for the implementation of NAPs and other SLM programs. Stumbling blocks such as poor coordination and collaboration, insufficient political will, lack of in-depth understanding and appreciation of drought and desertification especially their links with and benefits to poverty reduction, institutional limitations including those related to “turfs”, lack of tools and a danger of “mainstreaming overload” do prevail and need to be tackled.

150. There is also lack of synergies and coordination in the implementation of desert and drought related convention namely the UNCCD, CBD and UNFCCC.

151. Weak institutional capacity including poor institutional set ups and inadequate human resources capacity constrain integration of drought and desertification concerns into sectoral planning and hamper cross-sectoral and trans-disciplinary cooperation and coordination. Worthy of note is the lack of capacity by the NCBs, which are being set up specifically to coordinate the planning, and implementation of desertification control programs and activities. NCBs are reported to be lacking legislative backing; they are not situated in the mainstream policy and planning framework; and lack the required financial and human resources. The function of NCBs and other lead institutions on drought and desertification is therefore compromised to the detriment of vital services including harmonization of relevant policies and programmes, mobilization of funds, advocacy for drought and desertification programs and mobilization and liaison with a wide range of interest groups at local, national and international levels.

152. Reform and enforcement of policies and legislation to assure harmony and to guarantee clear legal ownership and access rights to land, water and other natural resources remains a daunting task. Unclear legal and ownership rights to land is one of the main reasons the poor are unwilling to invest in long-term sustainable land use practices such as reforestation, agro-forestry, and soil and water conservation measures.<sup>145</sup> Weak enforcement of relevant policies is also a constraint facing some countries in the region.

153. Inadequate funding and lack of sustainability of programs: Lack of financial resources is a systemic and one of the most pressing constraints to implementation of desertification control plans in most of the countries in the region. There is under-financing of lead institutions, policy reform processes as well as catalytic programs and initiatives needed to spur activities at local level. Resource mobilisation from various sources including the private sector is a challenge. Resource users especially the local people do not have access to affordable credit facilities to acquire funding, which they could profitably invest both in tackling land degradation and to sustain their livelihoods. Some of the SLM programs and activities as highlighted by country reports of Togo and Democratic Republic of the Congo are largely donor dependent and ensuring their sustainability, which is key to effectively combating desertification and mitigating drought impacts, remains a big challenge.

154. Inadequate information available on drought, desertification and drylands and the difficulties encountered in accessing and sharing this information continue to hamper progress in tackling drought and desertification in the region. Among the factors responsible for this state of affairs is the inadequate capacity including lack of standardized and effective systems to collect, manage and disseminate/share information. Adequate information is needed to monitor drought and desertification, as well in identifying, prioritising and reinforcing activities at various levels, to mitigate drought impacts and combat land degradation. Without information, it has been difficult to justify investments in SLM and to demonstrate their outcomes. Country reports highlight inadequacy of contextualised information and poor information delivery methods as hindrances to effective dialogue and discussion between the community on one-hand and policy and decision makers on the other. For instance in the Gambia information concerning land degradation/desertification, its causes, extent and consequences and remedial strategies has not been adequately disseminated particularly at the local level.<sup>146</sup> The report urges more scientific research into desertification, as policy formulation “has been hindered by the lack of concrete data about rates and extent of desertification,”

155. The development, management and implementation of processes that are genuinely participatory, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder is a still a challenge. In this context the reports highlight the need for effective involvement and participation of local communities especially women and youth, civil society organizations and the private sector in the design, implementation and monitoring of programs on drought and desertification.

156. Limited development of economic and social infrastructure and services in drylands as result of low levels of investments, hampers access to drylands and does not provide incentives enough to attract and sustain other investments needed for SLM in these areas. In this context dryland populations have little access to affordable credit facilities as well as lucrative markets for their products.

157. Technology options that empower communities remain largely inaccessible and unaffordable particularly to a majority of rural populations and the urban poor. There is poor access to agricultural

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<sup>145</sup> The Gambia country report, 2006

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inputs and continued high reliance on inefficient biomass fuel technologies. Most of the poor do not use solar technology due to limiting initial investment, especially in the face of lack of affordable credit facilities. In addition some of the systems installed in rural households have low capacity, limiting their usage for income generation.

158. High rates of HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases prevalence in some countries of the region pose a challenge to addressing drought and desertification in the affected countries. These epidemics erode human capital as well as financial resources required for investment in poverty reduction, disaster risk management and SLM.

159. The political instability and conflicts faced by some countries in the region breed conditions such as displacement and concentration of populations, destruction of natural resources and infrastructure, which favour land degradation and/or hamper implementation of programs to reduce poverty and address drought and desertification. Reports from countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) indicate a number of programs related to drought and desertification control that have not been implemented due to the conflict and the economic situation of the country.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Democratic Republic of Congo country report, 2006

