

INTERNAL BRIEF FOR UNDP SENIOR MANAGERS

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Sustainable Land Management

Eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities, and advancing inclusive growth are directly linked to how we manage our planet's terrestrial ecosystems and the goods and services they provide. Sustainable Land Management (SLM) helps integrate land, water, biodiversity, and environmental management to meet rising food and fiber demands while sustaining ecosystem services and livelihoods.¹ The earth's soil provides over US\$16 trillion worth of ecosystem services each year.² Land is a social, environmental and economic asset. Sustainable land management, improved access to land and tenure security can help achieve sustainable development to reduce vulnerabilities and improve the lives of people.

The well-being and livelihoods of rural communities and indigenous peoples depend heavily on the health and productivity of the land. In many countries, land degradation and weak management practices are compounded by exposure to

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Strengthen capacity at all levels for sustainable land management and rehabilitation**
2. **Leverage the catalytic potential of SDG 15 with multiplier effects on other Goals**
3. **Promote a land-degradation neutral model of economic development**
4. **Champion legal empowerment for the land rights of women and men in poverty**

droughts, landslides, and floods. Globally the world is losing up to 5 percent of agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) due to land degradation, costing some US\$490 billion per year.³ Two thirds of land in Africa is already degraded to some degree affecting at least 485 million people – 65 percent of the entire African population.⁴ Moreover, to meet the food security needs of the growing population estimated to stabilize only at over 10 billion, efforts are needed to halt land degradation and to restore land already lost or degraded.

Increasing grabs of highly fertile lands by foreign investors and competition for land are factors that intensify conflict between people and wildlife. Access to and use of arable land and rangelands is also challenged by environmental and social pressures including deforestation, biodiversity loss, pesticide and chemical use, climate change, loss of soil cover, changing tenure regimes and conversion of farmland for urban and sub-urban centers as populations expand.

Trends and Figures

- ❖ 40% of the world's degraded lands are found in areas with the highest incidence of poverty.
- ❖ 74% of the 1.5 billion+ people dependent on degrading land are women and men in poverty.
- ❖ Global annual losses of ecosystem services from land degradation are over USD 6 trillion annually
- ❖ Women's equal access to and control over resources including land's highly variable, despite being a prerequisite for gender equality, agricultural productivity and inclusive growth.
- ❖ Though many indigenous peoples enjoy rights to ancestral lands, they often face competition and challenges to full enjoyment of these rights, e.g. in the face of extractive industries.

Given the scale of these challenges (see Trends and Figures box⁵) a shift is needed in how and for what objectives we manage and value land. All uses are not equal and some interests are predicated on basic survival. These challenges are largely recognized in the commitment, by 2030, *to ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance* (SDG 1.4). Sustainable Land Management is pivotal to the achievement of many Goals, including SDG 15 (terrestrial ecosystems), SDG 2 (food security), SDG 5 (gender equality), and SDG 11 (making settlements and cities inclusive).

Policy Recommendations

- **Strengthen capacity at the individual, institutional and systemic levels for SLM and rehabilitation.** Successful SLM requires proactive approaches that nurture home-grown food production and incorporate productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for women and men living in poverty, and to reduce conflicting land uses in productive landscapes. Multi-focal initiatives that mobilize global benefits alongside national and local benefits deliver better, attract more resources, lead to new business and livelihoods opportunities, and make communities true partners in development. They also work more effectively when supported by context-specific governance arrangements. Poorly constructed and discriminatory institutional frameworks

¹ The World Bank (2006): Sustainable Land Management. Challenges, Opportunities, and Trade-offs. Washington, DC

² Background document: Degradation and Drought: Methodologies and Analysis for Decision-Making, UNCCD 2nd Scientific Conference 2013

³ <http://www.climatechangenews.com/2013/09/15/un-targets-global-land-degradation-deal-in-2015/>

⁴ <http://www.borgenmagazine.com/desertification-causes-starvation-deaths-africa/>

⁵ Source: UNCCD, 2013, Background Document: Multiple including Economics of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought: Methodologies and Analysis for Decision-Making & the Economics of Land: The Value of Land

often do not serve the real needs for change. For example, frameworks that focus exclusively on private ownership of land exclude people living in legal regimes where communal “user” rights prevail, such as in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa (customary tenure), Latin America (indigenous territories), and India (scheduled tribes). Recent literature in international development practice links this to a strong case for a focus on tenure security⁶ and not just ownership.

- **Promote a land-degradation neutral model of economic development.** Large-scale structural shifts such as climate change, urbanization, population growth, large scale natural resource extraction, commercial agriculture, amongst others, intensify the pressures on existing land resources. To counteract these trends, land degradation neutrality is a positive aspirational goal which entails: a) adopting sustainable land management policies and practices to minimize current, and avoid future land degradation; and b) rehabilitating degraded and abandoned lands. This could effectively increase the pool of land resources available while reducing the detrimental impacts from environmental degradation on health, livelihoods, and well-being.
- **Champion legal empowerment for the land security of women and men in poverty.** Women and men living in poorer rural communities and indigenous groups often have limited access to land, credit and technology and related opportunities to make the land more productive. Urban bias in policy-making has also tended to undervalue small farming in favour of production of food for export. Enhancing the power of rural communities to better compete and negotiate with foreign investors and other interests, promoting equitable legal reforms, including gender-sensitive reforms, and promoting better land administration, are all critical for reversing land and inequality. At the same time, these efforts can contribute to durable economic growth.
- **Leverage the catalytic potential of SDG 15 with multiplier effects on other goals.** Evidence from countries as diverse as China and Ethiopia show that low-cost, community-based and labour-intensive activities can lift millions out of poverty while delivering environmental and economic benefits. Smart investments in SDG 15, including landscape and climate resilient approaches can deliver results across a number of 2030 goals, including for poverty, equality, health, and food security.

UNDP Support

UNDP supports government and stakeholders to develop plans and strategies, secure resources, and implement programmes that advance sustainable land management. Working with multiple public, private and civil society actors at all levels, UNDP has supported more than 30 countries to strengthen the policy framework for and management of over 43 million hectares. UNDP has also ensured that appropriate safeguards are in place to avoid, manage and mitigate potential harm to people and ecosystems from development activities by applying UNDP’s Social and Environmental Standards and accountability mechanisms. UNDP’s mission to secure livelihoods, food, water and health, enhance resilience, conserve threatened species and their habitats, and increase carbon storage and sequestration is met by:

Policy and Technical Advisory Services

Capacity Development

Combining and Sequencing Innovative Environmental Finance

- UNDP’s support for the “Programme Oas Sud” (POS) in **Morocco**, has led to the elaboration of a national Country Strategy Investment Framework, as well as investment in agro-food processing and ecotourism generating income and employment for women and men.
- Support to the Kafue/West Luangwa Protected Area System in **Zambia**, include UNDP-GE assistance in the establishment and formal recognition of 25 Village Action Groups with clear resource use rights, use zones, and management structures. More than 1,60 households are benefitting from improved conservation farming.
- UNDP is tasked with the responsibility to deliver **BES-Net**, the capacity building initiative for the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES) this component. Hosted by the Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification, BES-Net, provides a bridge or interface between science-policy and practice in this area.
- Through community-based adaptation programmes supported in **SIDS and Mekong and Asia Pacific** contexts since 2013, over 100,000 community members have adopted sustainable land and forest management approaches.
- **The Equator Initiative** is a UNDP-led partnership that brings together multiple stakeholders to raise the profile of local efforts to reduce poverty through sustainable natural resource management. The Prize for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) brought together prize winners for peer-to-peer learning at UNCCD COP 12 in 2015. Seed funding will be granted for post-COP activities.
- Over the last 20 years, the **GEF Small Grants Programme** has supported more than 3,300 SLM projects with an investment of over USD 96 million in grants and USD 110 million in co-financing.

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⁶ <http://landpost2015.landesa.org/resources/land-rights-an-essential-global-indicator-for-the-post-2015-sdgs/>