

Opportunities to improve dryland management in Sub Saharan Africa: *Implications of international conventions and agreements*

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Introduction

The widespread droughts and famine in Africa during early 1970s captured world attention and precipitated the United Nations Conference on Desertification in Nairobi, in 1977. This conference focused on mitigation measures and, among other issues, recommended that countries combat desertification through developing and implementing comprehensive national policies for sustainable management of their arid and semi-arid lands (ASALS). Indeed, as a result of the conference specific development initiatives including setting up the Inter-States Committee to Combat Desertification in the Sahel (CILSS) for West African countries and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO). However, few Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) countries took concrete actions to formulate and implement effective policies on ASALS development.

Dryland management was addressed in various chapters of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) or the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. For example Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 focuses on strategies to combat desertification. However, the more significant outcomes of UNCED were three international conventions, which have a bearing on management of drylands namely the Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). In addition, the pre-UNCED Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) has some important implications in dryland management. Most SSA countries are party to these conventions and agreements. However, the degree of their commitment and compliance varies widely. In general, SSA countries lack the necessary capacity and sustained commitment to comply.

Convention to Combat Desertification

Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 and subsequent CCD Conferences of Parties (CoPs) have elaborated strategies and actions to be taken at the country level. For example, CCD calls for formulation and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs). However, most SSA countries lack resources to implement NAPs. A few countries have received specific support through a special window of CCD dedicated to SSA (essentially to continue support previously provided by UNSO). In addition, there are some on-going CCD related initiatives in SSA including the UNDP/GEF/UNEP regional initiative on

rehabilitation of dryland vegetation in Eastern and Southern Africa and the CGIAR desert margins research initiative in Africa.

Arising from CCD processes, some countries have formulated comprehensive and integrated policies and plans (National Action Plans or NAPs) consistent with guidelines in Chapter 12 of Agenda 21. Thus, countries like Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cape Verde and Botswana have concluded their NAPs through comprehensive participatory consultations. Others like Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe have only made pilot attempts at integrated policies and strategies.

Many SSA countries have large proportions of their land experiencing arid and semi arid climates with dry zone forests in advanced stages of degradation. These areas are under varying degrees of desertification threat. Rehabilitation of degraded forests will not only abate desertification but will more importantly improve the livelihoods of pastoral populations, who depend on them. Moreover, the countries have recognized that future agricultural and forestry production in high productivity land is limited and they have given high priority to forestry development in arid and semi arid lands (ASALS). Sustainable management of forest resources in dry zones calls for close integration with range management, wildlife management, and soil and water management. Support for rehabilitation of dry zone forests and desertification control will make great impact on the livelihoods of marginalized pastoral communities in many SSA countries.

Some promising interventions have been explored in some of the countries. These include tree regeneration studies in dry zones of Kenya and “forest closures” in Eritrea. At regional level, some of the countries have also participated in the CCD supported national surveys on desertification status and trends. UNDP, GEF and UNEP have just launched a regional initiative on rehabilitation of dryland vegetation, which also extends to southern Africa. The CGIAR organizations in Africa are also preparing to launch a desert margins research initiative.

Convention on Biological Diversity

Among the Rio Earth Summit conventions, it is perhaps the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which has attracted the greatest interest and participation in SSA. The CBD calls for formulation and implementation of National Biodiversity Action Plans and it has an international financial mechanism in GEF as executed by UNEP/UNDP. Currently, dryland biodiversity has a low priority in CBD yet biodiversity loss is most drastic.

There have been some previous initiatives in the region. These include an on-going regional project on capacity building for dryland biodiversity with its co-ordination unit at Nairobi (Kenya) with support from SIDA/SAREC, the Madagascar biodiversity programme, the FAO/UNDP/GEF East Africa Biodiversity project, IUCN Eastern Africa Biodiversity Conservation programme, FAO/GEF Biodiversity project and the Congo Basin Forest Initiative. In relative terms, this is an area which has attracted substantial

donor support in the past. These previous efforts have mainly taken the form of short-term projects by regional and international NGOs with limited direct support to national institutions. A lot remains to be accomplished to mitigate the accelerating biodiversity losses in forests and relevant national institutions remain weak in their implementing capacities.

Framework Convention on Climate Change

The Kyoto Protocol of FCCC was negotiated in 1997, under which the industrialized (Annex B) countries are expected to reduce GHG emissions by 5.5% by 2008 to 2012, over the 1990 level. The Annex B countries (with GHG emissions reduction commitment) are expected to achieve this by domestic actions as well as through Kyoto Protocol mechanisms such the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), Joint Implementation (JI) and Emissions Trade (ET).

Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol states that the purpose of CDM is “assist Parties not included in Annex-B in achieving sustainable development and in contributing to the ultimate objective of UNFCCC and to assist Parties included in Annex-B in achieving compliance with their quantified emission limitation and reduction commitments under Article 3 of the Kyoto Protocol.” Thus, CDM has twin goals: (i) promoting sustainable development in developing countries and, (ii) assisting Annex-B in meeting the GHG emission reduction targets.

Some SSA countries are signatory to the FCCC and have high hopes of benefiting from its derivative carbon trading mechanisms which are still under international negotiations. For example, there is an interesting initiative in Uganda involving the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and the FACE Foundation of the Netherlands. This particular initiative focuses on management and conservation of some forests which fall within national parks but also involving participation of, and benefit by, local communities. Again, the ultimate aim of this initiative is to benefit from carbon offset trading. Since some of the forests to be covered have been degraded, this kind of initiative has great promise as both additionality and permanence of carbon sinks can be realized in such protected areas. Indeed, there are many degraded forests within national parks throughout East Africa which could benefit from carbon offset funds.

Some substantial new investment in forestry may be realized through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the Kyoto Protocol (Poffenberger et. al. 2001). For example, in the sub-region, Kilombero Forests Limited (Tanzania) and the Busoga Forest Company (Uganda) are already negotiating to become the first carbon offsets projects, albeit with some major local and international outcry (see Box 1). Although on-going international negotiations on CDM remain unresolved issues, to date, there may be significant additional investment opportunities for forestry development in the future.

Box 1. Concern with carbon trading forests in Tanzania

In its Bulletin No. 35, the World Rainforest Movement has highlighted the growing concern with proposed carbon trading forests in Tanzania. The Escarpment Forestry Company, which is a subsidiary of Norwegian company, Tree Farms, has planted 1,900 ha. of *Pinus patula* and *Eucalyptus saligna* in Sao Hill, Mufindi and Kilombero districts, being the beginning of proposed carbon trading forests. The company is also supporting the Tanzania Greenhouse Gas Action Trust (TAGGAT). However, serious concerns have been expressed, locally and internationally, on socio-political, ecological and economic benefits of the carbon forests. For one thing, the company has paid a paltry land rent of US \$ 1.9 per ha. The negotiated 99 years land lease has important sovereignty implications. However, the most serious concern is that the operations will exploit cheap labour and will contribute to further marginalization of the rural poor.

5. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species

Many SSA countries have been party to CITES since late 1970s. CITES has already proved effective in some critical interventions, particularly in controlling trade in endangered wildlife (elephants, rhino, etc.). Interventions in trade in flora have included control of some species of aloes and mahoganies. At regional and international levels, conservation NGOs have collaborated with, and supported CITES activities e.g. IUCN Red Data Lists.

Reference

Poffenberger, M. N., M. Ravindranath, D. N. Pandey, I. K. Murthy, R. Bist, and D. Jain. 2001. *Communities and Climate Change: The Clean Development Mechanism and Village-based Forest Restoration in Central India*. Community Forestry International Inc. and the Indian Institute of Forest Management.