

The Project

West Africa: Promoting sustainable land management in migration-prone areas through innovative financing mechanisms

Challenges in the region

Land degradation and migration

In West Africa, many countries are adversely affected by the effects of desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), with climate change also increasingly making an impact on local livelihoods. The most visible consequences are a loss of soil fertility and a reduction in agricultural productivity, which can lead to food and social crises and, consequently, to increased poverty. Furthermore, farmers are often forced to exploit the land to its maximum capacity in order to obtain good yields and to avoid the risk of famine. This often increases pressure on natural resources to the point where land is no longer productive and places no longer habitable.

In the absence of viable alternatives, some people are forced to move to other less degraded areas within their own countries or indeed to relocate to other countries. Indeed, West Africa counts the highest number of international migrants in the entire African continent. It is estimated that one third of Africans in the region, some 300 million people,

live outside their village of birth, and 3 per cent, about 10 million people, outside their country of origin.

According to the Sub-Regional Action Programme to Combat Desertification in West Africa, adopted in September 2013 by the Ministers of Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the intensification of the rate of intra- and inter-state migration is a result of "inclement climatic conditions in Sahelian areas ... that have led to [conflicts, political crises and] the intensification of population movements and transboundary transhumance (from the Sahel towards the forest zone). This massive influx of humans and animals in the wetlands of neighboring countries are a pressure on natural resources and lead to various problems including (i) soil and environmental degradation, and (ii) the increased frequency and aggravation of conflicts among farmers on the one part, and among farmers and pastoralist on the other part, for access to these resources".

In light of these considerable challenges, the Project aims to:

1. Analyze the interrelations between migration and the environment and their effects on food security and sustainable development in West Africa;
2. Identify the policy options to effectively address the migration-DLDD nexus.



Securing land

Investing in sustainable land management to ensure security at the regional level

Sustainable land management (SLM) is at the heart of the challenge of development in order to promote sustainable agricultural production and minimize the adverse effects of DLDD. Development aid is no longer enough to secure sufficient finance for SLM and stop and reverse land degradation while adapting to climate change.

In addition to the various 'traditional' funding sources, such as national budgets and development partner support from development partners, countries also increasingly need to mobilize 'non-traditional' or 'innovative' sources of finance. These include co-financing mechanisms (trust funds, payments for environmental

services, etc.), pre-financing mechanisms (subsidized loans, co-financing investments, etc.), insurance schemes or mechanisms for debt-for-nature swap – all potential opportunities to enhance conservation and development efforts.

These innovative financing mechanisms aim to increase public or private financing that complement official development aid and favour private investment, for example, by covering a part of the associated risks.

Among these innovative financing mechanisms, remittances and diaspora investments could play a crucial role in promoting SLM and land rehabilitation.

Given the effects of DLDD in West Africa, the Project:

3. Analyzes the opportunities to increase investments in SLM and land rehabilitation in West Africa;

4. Facilitates the application and testing of innovative financing mechanisms in migration-prone areas in Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal.

Migrant remittances

An opportunity for sustainable land management

It is becoming increasingly clear that diaspora investments could represent an important source of private capital for development. 2012 marked a significant year in this regard with remittances – money sent home by migrants – for the first time becoming the primary source of external financial flows to Africa.

Indeed, diaspora have a major role to play in the development, recovery and reconstruction of their countries of origin in the aftermath of natural disasters or conflicts. Many households

have family members that migrate with the intention not only of seeking better opportunities, but also as a way of diversifying income that acts as an 'insurance strategy' to face increasing threats, such as land degradation and drought. At the same time, households that receive remittances have proven to be more resistant to external stresses, through improved consumption and the ability to make long-term investments, including investments those to increase resilience and adapt to climate change.

In light of this, the Project:

5. Mobilizes diaspora –especially in Italy– and offers support to migrant entrepreneurs willing to invest in SLM and land rehabilitation in their countries of origin;

6. Supports governments in designing incentives to attract diaspora investments.

The Project

Increasing investments to prevent land degradation and restore degraded lands

The three-year project (2014 – 2016) provides support to West African countries, especially Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal, to:

- integrate the SLM-migration nexus into their development and budgetary policies;
- increase economic opportunities and improve the investment climate for SLM in specific geographic areas subject to desertification and migration; and
- disseminate best SLM practices in West Africa and their funding in pertinent international fora.

The project is implemented by the Global Mechanism (GM) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The project is funded by the Government of Italy through the General Directorate for Development Cooperation, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

The main partners of the project are (i) ECOWAS and the Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS); (ii) the governments of the three countries involved; and (iii) the diaspora networks and migrant associations in the destination countries.

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