

Great Green Wall for the
Sahara and the Sahel initiative



The African
wall



An African partnership to tackle desertification and land degradation

Desertification affects millions of the most vulnerable people in Africa, where two-thirds of the land cover consists of drylands and deserts.

Contrary to popular perception, desertification is not the loss of land to the desert or through sand-dune movement. Desertification refers to land degradation in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas resulting from factors such as human pressure on fragile eco-systems, deforestation and climate change.

Desertification and land degradation have a strong negative impact on the food security and livelihoods of the local communities in Africa's drylands, home to the world's poorest populations.

In 2007, African Heads of State and Government endorsed the *Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative* with the objective of tackling the detrimental social, economic and environmental impacts of land degradation and desertification in the region.

The initiative aims to support the efforts of local communities in the sustainable management and use of forests, rangelands and other natural resources in drylands.

It also seeks to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well improve the food security and livelihoods of the people in the Sahel and the Sahara.



From the initial idea of a line of trees from east to west through the African desert, the vision for a Great Green Wall has evolved into that of a mosaic of interventions addressing the challenges facing the people in the Sahel and Sahara.

The overall goal of the Great Green Wall initiative is to strengthen the resilience of the region's people and natural systems with sound ecosystems' management, sustainable development of land resources, the protection of rural heritage and the improvement of the living conditions of the local population.

Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative

Long-term solutions to the pressing challenges of desertification, land degradation and drought

A mosaic of integrated interventions tackling the multiple challenges affecting the lives of people in the Sahel and Sahara

Good local practices in environmental management and sustainable development

An urgent call to development actors and policy makers to invest more in the development of Africa's arid zones



A harmonised strategy

The first step towards the Great Green Wall was set with the development of a harmonized strategy under a €1.75 million African Union project launched in September 2011.

The strategy has set the following main objectives:

- Improve the living conditions of people in the arid zones of Africa and reduce their vulnerability to climate change, climate variability and drought
- Improve the state and health of ecosystems in the arid zones of Africa and their resilience to climate change, climate variability and drought
- Mobilize resources for the implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative through the establishment of efficient partnerships between national and international stakeholders

Supported by the EU, FAO and the GM-UNCCD, the African Union Commission works with thirteen countries and other partners on the development of national action plans and on project portfolios at country and trans-boundary levels using a multi-stakeholder approach.

The partner countries are: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and the Sudan.

Meanwhile, capacity development and communication strategies and plans are put in place, as well as a partnership and resource mobilization platform, facilitated by the GM-UNCCD.

A learning and networking platform will be established for the sharing of knowledge and best practices, for the transfer of technology, and for the promotion, assessment and monitoring of activities and results among the partners involved in the Great Green Wall initiative.



A mosaic of partners

The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative is an African Union programme bringing together more than 20 countries from the Sahelo-Saharan region, as well as regional and international organizations, including:

- African Forest Forum (AFF)
- African Union Commission (AUC)
- Association for the promotion of education and training abroad (APEFE)
- Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)
- Community of Saharan and Sahelian States (CEN-SAD)
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- European Union (EU)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (GM-UNCCD)
- Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa (IGAD)
- MDG Center for West and Central Africa (MDG-WCA)
- Pan African Farmers Organization (PAFO)
- Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall
- Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)
- Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS)
- Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD-Secretariat)
- United Nations Development Programme - Drylands Development Center (UNDP-DDC)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC)
- Walloon Region of Belgium
- Wallonie-Bruxelles International
- World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)
- World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT)
- World Bank



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