

CONCEPT PROJECT

Building Capacity and Combating Desertification in Eritrea

Description: Dry lands are inhabited by approximately 2 billion people globally accounting for nearly 40% of the world's population. Approximately 54 million sq.km or 40% of the land area can be classified as dry lands. Regions wise, Africa is relatively driest of the continents. The second largest number of population is concentrated in the dry lands with Africa having 41% of its total population.

Eritrea is located in Northeast Africa and is bordered on the northeast and east by the Red Sea, on the south by Ethiopia, and on the northwest by Sudan. It lies between latitudes 12° and 18°N, and longitudes 36° and 44°E.

Land is the most precious and the most pervasive natural resource Eritrea has. Some 80% of the Eritrean population derives its livelihood from it. Eritrea's total land area is taken to be 124,320 km² (12,432,000 ha). The cultivated cropland or arable portion of the landmass, *circa* 3.5% (*circa* 439 thousand ha), is the key resource which needs to be protected from encroaching desertification or land degradation. This is by far the greatest environmental challenge which the people of Eritrea face. 4,234 ha (34.1%) of its total land area is Barren Land and 7000 ha (56.3%) of its total area is Grazing Land. According to these data it is clear that most of its lands are under threat of land degradation and desertification.

Also there are clear indications that the land degradation and desertification due to ecological and drought factors has reached high levels. This considerable deterioration of the high degree of land degradation and desertification, which characterized the country, is an immense loss for its communities.

Objectives: The primary objective of the project is developing and implementing strategies to reconcile the importance of sustainable land management and conserving key areas such as Barren land and Grazing Land which face land degradation and desertification with those of human use. Second objective is building capacity and expertise to develop and implement effectively studies which prevent soils of Eritrea against land degradation and desertification by technical implements that use to protect soil such as afforestation, erosion control works.

Justification: Eritrea has a complex series of landscape and climatic features characterized by vertical zonation, which go from semi-desert to high-mountain environments, and with a wide range of land uses. Though no reliable current land-use data exist grazing land and barren land dominant land use in Eritrea, which together add up to *circa* 90% of the total area. Land currently under cultivation (rain-fed and irrigated) constitutes only (*circa* 3.5%). Roughly 80% of the people of Eritrea earn their living from economic activities related to the exploitation of land. The demands for arable land and lands for grazing, forestry, wildlife, tourism, and urban development are becoming more pressing every year. The cropland of Eritrea is under heavy pressure owing to increasing population densities and soil erosion.

- (a) The net rate of soil loss from croplands is estimated at 12 tonnes/ha/year. Crop yields are declining at the rate of *circa* 0.5%/year owing to soil erosion
- (b) During the period of colonial domination, Eritrea's arable land was under threat. Unrealistic exploitation, excessive removal of vegetation, and heavy extraction of woody biomass resulted in a significant reduction of the land's productivity.
- (c) Failure of traditional conservation measures: Traditional conservation measures have remained stagnant while socio-economic conditions have changed dramatically
- (d) Livestock population increases, together with improved veterinary services, led to a rapid increase in the numbers of livestock. Between 1905 and 1946 the number of cattle increased by 300% while the number of goats and sheep rose by over 200

As mentioned above there are many reasons to explain why Eritrea has to protect her lands.

Also According to results of Questionnaire prepared and presented by Turkish delegations to Niger's Participation at meeting of UNCCD COP 10 in Republic of Korea, there are important issues such as soil protection, Afforestation techniques, Combating Desertification, Water Harvesting, sand stabilization, Rural Development that both country could have coordination, collaboration, sharing experiences each other.

Focus: The project will focus on the following broad areas:

- (a) Assessment of conservation threats to land, including over-grazing, deforestation and Crops and Barren Lands
- (b) Capacity Building in these areas including natural resource management; conservation; .
- (c) Institutional Strengthening - the capacity of relevant institutions, such as the related ministries, agencies and bodies with responsibilities for conservation would be strengthened. This will involve land managements, development of communications and outreach materials and the development and distribution of relevant toolkits, handbooks, manuals and other materials to enable the institutions function effectively.
- (d) Environmental Awareness and Information – raising awareness on better management of the natural resources and protection of the environment. Series of activities will target provision of awareness programs and information materials.
- (e) Mainstreaming gender issues in all policy dialogues on combating desertification.
- (f) Creating national capacity to monitor, assess, and evaluate land degradation
- (g) Protecting Eritrea's 439 thousand ha of cultivated land from further degradation

Beneficiaries

The main beneficiaries and target groups of this project will include Government officials, parliamentarians, academicians, civil society (such as women and youth groups), community-based organizations, private sector, and regional administrations

Results: The expected results include:

- (a) Strengthened institutions,
- (b) Increased effectiveness in implementation in particular to protect soil
- (c) Enhanced capacity and expertise of government officials, and other stakeholders in sustainable land management,
- (d) Increased public participation, access to information Land matters;
- (e) Increased Public awareness and information.
- (f) Mobilizing and empowering civil society to address land degradation effectively
- (g) Realized Small –scale Income Activities

Outputs:

- a. At least 60 officials of related ministries and other stakeholders trained in Land Application Techniques
- b. At least 100 officials of the civil society, women groups, community based organizations, etc empowered to participate in development of sustainable land management
- c. At least 6 manuals, toolkits, and other materials on Land Application techniques
- d. At least 6 pilot projects on afforestation developed and implemented;
- e. At least 60 experts trained in the protection Implementation areas to supply sustainable;
- f. At least 1 mid-term and 1 final evaluations of the project undertaken and reports produced

Activities: The following are activities to be carried out under the project:

- a. Train government officials, including sectoral ministries and other stakeholders on improving skills and knowledge base in Land conservation and sustainable land management;
- b. Assess And strengthen the institutional structure of the government bodies responsible for natural resources management and protection of the environment;
- c. Develop pilot project for the preventing soil loss at place which under threat of erosion undertake capacity building for risk management (preparing Erosion risk Map),
- d. Support gender mainstreaming and greater understanding of the different gender roles
- e. Develop pilot projects on afforestation programmes.
- f. Encouraging social forestry and agro-forestry and fuel wood plantation
- g. Developing community-based local land management plans.
- h. Developing Eritrea's capacity to evaluate climate variability and its implications for land degradation
- i. **Development Integrated participatory Watershad Project**

Verifiable Indicators: The verifiable indicators of the project include:

- a. The number of officials of ministries, agencies and other stakeholders trained in Land conservation
- b. The number of pilot and demonstration projects developed and implemented;
- c. The number of guidebooks and manuals on environmental law and biodiversity conservation policy produced.
- d. Creating capacity for the early warning of drought, and for devising mitigation measures.

Implementation Modalities

The project will be country-driven and participatory, involving all relevant stakeholders. It will support the regional administrations to take enabling roles, and act as regulators. There are a wide range of civil society groups that are active in supporting the development and rehabilitation of Eritrea. And there is a great scope to engage such groups as partners with evolving governance structure and reconstruction. The project will create discussion platform in which stakeholders exchange ideas and share information about the damaged and destroyed environment of the country, focusing on how to address the problem collectively.

The implementation of the project will be mainly at country level but **General Directorate of Combating Desertification and Erosion (CEM)** will provide training and technical expertise. CEM will start with the pilot project and will collaborate with TIKA, as well as local environmental NGOs that are implementing projects in the field. National (Niger) Coordinator will be identified to train on the job, if unfamiliar, to manage and coordinate all national activities. With this person, there will be a team of about 3 National Task Force who will form the base for building national capacities. They will be working closely with the coordinator. The coordinator will participate in the development of national training programmes. This core group will form the basis for sustaining the project activities when the project ends.

Partners

The key ministries and institutions in the country that can be project partners are the following:

- a) Ministry of Agriculture and other related ministries
- b) TIKA
- c) UNCCD
- d) Regional Administration, NGOs and other stakeholders

Risks and Assumptions

- a. Developing capacity for the early warning system of drought not fully establishment
- b. Inadequate baseline data, weak technical capacity
- c. Availability or assignment of competent personnel to handle the activities of the project by the Government.

Sustainability

The project is intended to provide the initial steps in building an enabling situation for sustainable land management, Land conservation in Eritrea. The sustainability of the project will be enhanced by the strong emphasis on local institutional capacity-building and strengthening of existing national institutions. Through the participatory process of the project, country ownership will be fortified.