



Reducing vulnerability to climate change, land degradation and drought

The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative

“The Green Wall should be seen as a metaphor for the coordination of a variety of international projects, for economic development, environmental protection, against desertification, and to support political stability in the heart of Africa.”

*Boubacar Cissé,
Africa coordinator, UNCCD Secretariat*

EU Partners

- African Union Commission
- Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the UN
- Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Facts and figures

EC contribution: € 1.4 million
(total budget: € 1.75 million)

Duration: 2011-2013

Location: 8 countries in the Sahel region, plus 5 countries supported by a complementary FAO project

Target groups: National, regional and African institutions and participating communities



Context

Desertification and land degradation – often caused by poor land management – significantly impact food security and livelihoods in Africa's drylands. In the Sahel region, human pressure on fragile eco-systems, deforestation, and soil exhaustion threaten a way of life that remains heavily dependent on agriculture, livestock and rainfall. The region is also vulnerable to adverse effects of climate change including decreased rainfall and extreme weather conditions.

The Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative (GGWSSI), launched by African leaders in 2007, promotes the sustainable management and use of forests, rangelands and other natural resources. From the initial idea of a line of trees crossing the African desert, it now covers a range of initiatives across over 20 countries supporting sustainable, income-generating land management practices.





“The GGWSSI is a great opportunity for Africa to enter into a real medium and long-term plan for the development of the arid zones of the Sahel and the Saharan region.”

Joint declaration by civil society on GGWSSI, Ouagadougou, 2012



Objectives

GGWSSI aims to improve living conditions in arid zones of Africa and reduce their vulnerability to climate change, climate variability and drought; to improve and boost resilience of their ecosystems; and to mobilise resources through national, regional and international partnerships.

This EU-funded project helps implement the GGWSSI through technical and financial capacity-building of stakeholders, including the AU Commission, the Community of Sahel-Saharan States, the Pan-African Great Green Wall Agency, and the eight partner countries.

Impact

- Formulation and adoption of a regional harmonised strategy for GGWSSI.
- Development and adoption of 8 National Action Plans.
- Nine concepts identified for cross-border projects, and another under development.
- Pilot projects for capacity-building in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali; launch of an ecotourism project in Senegal; two workshops on building resilient forest landscapes in drylands.
- Capacity-development strategy elaborated and workshops held on resource mobilisation.
- Building of a learning and networking platform for knowledge, technology transfer and partnership- building.
- Approval of follow-up projects (with FAO and GM-UNCCD) for promoting civil society and local authority involvement in 10 francophone countries; and for boosting resilience in fragile ecosystems in ACP countries.

A wall of many pieces

Rebuilding the Great Green Wall in Senegal started in 2009, and the dusty scrubland of Tessékéré, a 600-hectare pilot site in the north of the country, is now dotted with acacia trees. As a source of gum, extracted from the bark, these trees are more valuable standing than felled. They also provide shade, meaning the ground loses less water to evaporation.

The GGWSSI educates local farmers and supplies them with resilient seeds, technical assistance and a forum to share information with other villages. Restoration has brought other benefits too, as Elimane Diop, Chief Lieutenant of the nearby village of Widou explains: “Wildlife has returned to the site. We have seen antelope, hyena, porcupine and guinea fowl here.”

