

WORLD DAY TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION 2012

Events around the world

The slogan for the 2012 World Day to Combat Desertification is “Healthy soil sustains your life: LET’S GO LAND-DEGRADATION NEUTRAL.” See how different stakeholders celebrated the Day and what events and activities took place in different parts of the world.

BHUTAN

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan, has organized the following activities in observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification: Sending out a message on the importance of the day in the newspapers releasing an MTV on the importance of sustainable land management airing a spot video on land degradation and impacts of land degradation on the national television. Land management campaigns in two different districts in the eastern part of the country, where land degradation is quite severe. The campaign is to involve i.e. farmers, students and civil servants.

The video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/jribPTVNjyw> .

CASCADE

On the World Day to Combat Desertification, the CASCADE project issued a press release: “Catastrophic shifts in drylands: how can we prevent ecosystem degradation?” The answer is by making drylands more resilient with a CASCADE of new research!

People who live in drylands know that they can cope with scarcity of water up to a point, but sometimes their way of life becomes just too difficult to continue. It is the same with natural and agricultural ecosystems. Plants and animals need water and also tend to depend on one another to some extent. If environmental stresses become too much they may die back.

- Are some types of vegetation cover more resilient to change than others?
- What characteristics improve resilience?
- How easy is it to restore degraded land?

A series of experiments in different sites across dryland Europe will help to give some answers. One important tool to combat desertification is to maintain and improve biodiversity in drylands. The greater the numbers and types of plants and animals, the more likely it is that they can act together to protect the land from erosion and degradation. The United Nations Conventions to combat desertification, on biological diversity and on climate change are all closely linked, and the CASCADE Project will provide new insights on these links. In the landscape is reduced and the soil is not protected from potential erosion, land degradation and desertification may result. Sometimes the resilience of landscapes is stressed to a tipping point

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and adverse changes then follow quickly. At the moment little is known about the connections between environmental stresses and catastrophic shifts.

Drylands cover about 40% of the land surface of the globe, and are home to over two billion people, so it is important to protect people's livelihoods. The CASCADE Project will help towards a better future. We know quite a lot about how plants and animals live together, but we need to know more about the thresholds that determine whether ecological communities can survive or not in drylands. Are some

The CASCADE experiments will look at different spatial scales, from small plots to landscapes and the results will be shared with local people and policy makers. If these people like the CASCADE scientific recommendations for protecting their land, there is a good chance that their neighbors will also accept new ideas and want to try them for themselves. For those who can access the internet an online information system called CASCADIS will be built, giving details of the experiments, the results and the recommendations that will help to prevent ecosystem degradation.

CHILE

The LAC Regional Coordination Unit and the UNESCO Environmental Education Programme in Chile jointly organized a celebration of the World Environmental Day (5 June) and the World Day to Combat Desertification (17 June) for a very special audience in a Technical School in Santiago of Chile: 800 school girls. The Liceo A – San Miguel is a Technical School dedicated to providing training for girls between 12 to 18 years old. The Liceo has 800 students and all of them attended the meeting. As part of the celebration Mr. Heitor Matallo, the RCU coordinator and Ms. Asterid Hollander, the UNESCO Education Programme coordinator, donated a plant to the school as a symbol of the fight against desertification and the protection of the environment.

CHINA

In the context of the World Day to Combat Desertification, China National Committee for the Implementation of the UNCCD (CCICCD) organized a seminar for French-speaking African countries. The National Press Office organized press meeting, dedicated to a release of the national monitoring results on rocky desertification. Several mainstream media outlets covered desertification. CCTV planned to broadcast coverage on combatting desertification around the day. Flash memory sticks designed and produced by CCICCD were distributed to the public. Each province affected by desertification also organized public awareness raising events for the Day.

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COSTA RICA

The National Focal Point in Costa Rica produced a video about the implementation of a pilot project, promoted by the National Advisory Commission on Land Degradation (CADETI in Spanish) in the basin of the Jesus Maria River with an allocation of USD 750.000 and funded by the GEF.

View videos at <https://youtu.be/644FDx7OcCY> and <https://youtu.be/2WapXUIsh6s>

DESIRE

The DESIRE project celebrated the World Day to Combat Desertification with the second version of their short documentary about the DESIRE project and what the project does and has done about fighting desertification. The first version of the film shows what the global problem of desertification is all about and states what the EU-funded DESIRE project (2007-2012) will do about this global problem. Recently, a film crew visited some additional DESIRE field sites and shot footage about what this global project has accomplished. In this second version also project leader Prof. Coen Ritsema and researcher Dr. Simone Verzandvoort comment on the feats of the project.

View the documentary "The DESIRE project – the challenge and the results" at <https://vimeo.com/44124906>.

ECUADOR

The following events were organized in the observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification in Ecuador:

On 15 June, expo-event: "Forests and Sustainable Development" in Riobamba (Ministry of Environment, Chimborazo, ESPOCH).

On 22 June, Colloquium: "The fight against desertification, land degradation and drought" in Machala (Ministry of Environment, El Oro, Technical University of Machala, and National University of Loja).

On 21-22 June, the Zonal Forum: "The Protection of Dry Forests as a Strategy to Combat Desertification in Ecuador", Zapotillo (Ministry of Environment, Loja, MAGAP, SENPLADES, NCI, Commonwealth Dry Forest, Zapotillo GAD).

On 25-26 June, workshop: "Use, management and soil conservation in areas affected by desertification in the province of Chimborazo" in Riobamba (Ministry of Environment, Chimborazo, FAO, JICA, Provincial Council of Chimborazo, ESPOCH)

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ERITREA

On 16 June, the National Focal Point representative Heruy Asgedom and Forestry scientist from the Ministry of Agriculture and CST member Hadgu Gebrendrias had spoken about the role of healthy soil in one-hour radio interview. They highlighted the relationship between desertification and food security, international and regional cooperation, interrelation between climate change, biodiversity and desertification.

GHANA

Friends of the Earth Ghana together with several communities and their community based organizations working in the dry lands zones of the northern savannah planned a number of activities between 16-26 June as part of observing the 2012 World Day to Combat Desertification, including discussions with press and media in order to raise awareness on the Day and importance of combatting desertification. At the national level, Ghana shifted the official WDCD celebration to 25 June because of the attendance by the Ministries and departments of the Rio+20 conference and related events. On this day, community groups will take part in the national event in the northern region of the country. On the same day, FOE-Ghana will organize a school community education in a coastal savannah community. This course will inform school children about the causes of desertification and the impacts as well as national and international processes ongoing to deal with the problem.

HONDURAS

In the context of the World Day to Combat Desertification, the following events were organized in Tegucigalpa, Honduras: "Drought and Desertification Symposium" (June 20) and the Workshop "Conserving Land and Water, Preserving our Common Future" (June 21-22).

HUNGARY

On 18 June, the Ministry of Rural Development organized an expert meeting, which was opened by Péter Kovács, Deputy State Secretary in charge of water issues. Introduction of the preparation of the Hungarian Drought Strategy and Irrigation Strategy was made by Gábor Kolossváry, Head of Department. The evaluation of a recent drought in Hungary was made by prof. Imre Pálfi. The meeting was attended by Hungarian experts and stakeholders. The afterword was delivered by Dr. József Gayer, Global Water Partnership Hungary.

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INDIA

India celebrated the World Day to Combat Desertification with awareness-raising campaigns on issues and challenges to drylands ecosystems and people; experience sharing and engagement of multiple stakeholders in activities related to land degradation. The Information Education Communication was based on the theme for the year - "Healthy soil sustains your life- LET'S GO LAND-DEGRADATION NEUTRAL". Honorable Minister of Environment & Forests, Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan and Honorable Chief Minister of NCT Delhi Smt Sheila Dikshit flagged off the 'Science Express –Biodiversity Special (SEBS)' on the World Environment Day, 5 June 2012.

The SEBS is an exhibition on tracks developed as a partnership between the Ministry of Environment & Forests and the Department of Science & Technology. The SEBS has as eight coaches, dedicated to showcasing the biodiversity spread across the bio-geographical zones of the country, including the Desert & Semi-Arid Zone. The coach on deserts and semi-arid zone focuses on range of biodiversity, critically endangered species (IUCN Red list), biodiversity hotspots; domesticated biodiversity (agriculture, animal husbandry); biodiversity & livelihoods, bio-culture; threats/challenges (climate change, other anthropogenic); conservation measures; success stories/experiences/ unique stories. The train will be travelling across the covering more than 100 plus stations over the next 2 years. The train SEBS will be stationed at Hyderabad during the UNCBD COP11 to enable over 10,000 dignitaries and delegates to visit the unique display of India biodiversity.

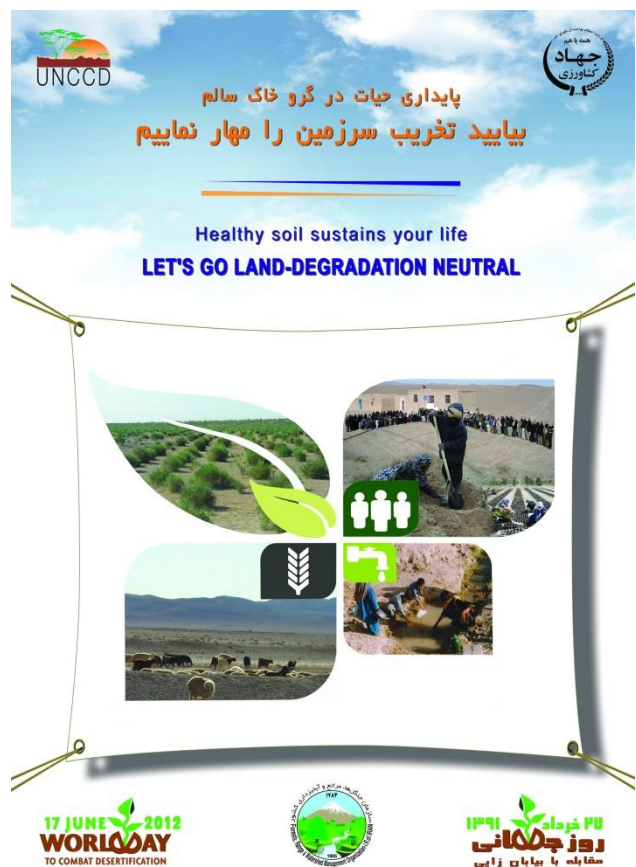
The train will be reaching Dibrugarh, in the northeastern state of Assam on the 17 June 2012 and activities are being planned that will engage multiple stakeholders, particularly school children through the Ministry's National Environment Awareness Campaign (NEAC) and National Green Corps (NGC) programmes. A Seminar on the WDCD theme is organized by the SLEM- Technical Facilitation Organizations at Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE) at Dehradun that will engage experts, government officials and SLEM programme partners. The Minister of Environment and Forests sent official letter to the state governments, requesting them to commemorate the WDCD on 17 June 2012 in a befitting manner. Programs and activities are being planned at the state level and will have a multi-stakeholder participation.

INTERNATIONAL WATER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

International Water Management Institute ran a special feature on soil erosion on its website.

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IRAN



On 16 June, the Forests, Range and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) organized a ceremony in its headquarters in Tehran. The ceremony included speeches from the UNDP, FAO, FRWO, local communities' representatives. Mr. Owrangi, Vice minister and FRWO – UNCCD NFP head could not attend because of his participation in Rio+20. MENARID (UNDP/GEF project) translated a documentary film on desertification, which was screened during the second national working group. On 17 June, FRWO organized a field trip to a project site, showcasing combating desertification in the vicinity of Tehran capital. On the occasion of the World Day to Combat Desertification, Tehran University organized a national desert conference on 16-17 June. Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, FRWO, Iranian Scientific Association of Desert Management and Control (ISADMC), Iranian Association of Solar Energy, Iranian Association of Watershed Management and UNESCO supported the event.

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IRAQ



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ITALY



On 14-15 June, Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA) organized a workshop "Development and conservation of ecosystem services to combat drought and desertification" in Rome. "Ecosystem services" are, as defined by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA, 2005), "the multiple benefits provided by ecosystems to humankind." These benefits play a major role in society: conservation and development of ecosystem services are essential to generate the life support operating system on Earth. The degradation of services contributes to vulnerability to natural disasters such as floods, droughts also undermining the cultural heritage of communities. Often these services are placed at risk from desertification and land degradation.

Land degradation is a threat at all latitudes, and in dry areas, the risk is further increased by the fragility of the man-environment ecosystem. To overcome the difficulties encountered so far in combating desertification, the workshop aimed to explore existing experiences and opportunities of conservation and development of ecosystem services combining bio-physical and social science knowledge. The workshop will consist of three sessions on the following topics: scenarios and models to support plans, programs and strategies; status and trends of ecosystem services; new technologies and traditional practices for the rehabilitation of ecosystems; strategies and policies to combat desertification.

KENYA

The World Day to Combat Desertification has been marked in different locations in Kenya since 1995 and the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) coordinates these activities in collaboration with its stakeholders and development partners. This year, the host of the celebrations was Tana River County, which is generally dry and prone to drought.

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KYRGYZSTAN

The Minister of Agriculture, UNCCD National Focal Point and UNCCD Science and Technology Correspondent of the Kyrgyz Republic prepared and published an extensive article on the World Day to Combat Desertification, where the progress on implementation of the UNCCD in the country was reported.

LESOTHO

The Kingdom of Lesotho through the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation UNCCD Focal Point, celebrated the World Desertification day at Holy Cross in the Moleleke's Hoek District.

MADAGASCAR

The national celebration of the Day in Madagascar took place at Toliara, the Atsimo Region of the country, at the French Alliance premises on 24 and 25 July. The celebration focused on communication and awareness-raising activities through exhibitions and conferences on specific themes in relation to the implementation of the UNCCD. During the opening ceremony the regional executives from the ministry of environment and forest and the local authorities made speeches.

MALI

The Day was celebrated in the overall framework of the 13th edition of the 15-day environment dedication held from 4 to 18 June 2012. The statement was made on the Day by the Minister of Energy, Water and Environment. On 14 June, a scientific day was organized for scientists, CSOs and professional practitioners on the theme of green economy. During the event, presentations included on green economy, sustainable land management and conflicts and natural resources management.

MAURITIUS

On 17 June, Anupam Jain, a radio DJ on Best Fm in Mauritius promoted the World Day to Combat Desertification and the importance of soil in the special segment of his morning radio programme.

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MOLDOVA

On June 15, the State Hydrometeorological Service (SHS), Chisinau held a press conference marking the World Day to Combat Desertification 2012 with slogan " Healthy soil sustains your life: LET'S GO LAND-DEGRADATION NEUTRAL ". SHS staff members, Ministry of Environment, Institute of Ecology and Geography of the ASM, Forest Research Institute, Institute of Pedology and Agrochemistry "N. Dimo ", NGO" Bios ", delegates from other institutions, including the media took part in the press conference.

NIGERIA

On 17 June, "Nigeria Goes Green" organized the awarding ceremony for His Excellency, Alhaji Sule Lamido, and Executive Governor of Jigawa state. Lamido introduced a desertification controlling measure, which enabled increased production of food and poverty reduction. The venue was the Lagos Sheraton Hotel Ikeja.

PAKISTAN

Community-based NGO "Search" circulated a text message on the World Day to Combat Desertification among activists, CSOs representatives, students, journalists and government representatives. National Assembly Speaker Dr Fehmida Mirza stressed the need for coordinated and stringent measures for combating the looming threat of desertification and drought. In her message, issued on the World Day to Combat Desertification, she called for immediate measures for saving the livelihoods, well-being and development of large number of population around the world. Ms. Mirza said that desertification and land degradation not only affect the earth's surface but also threaten the livelihoods, well-being and development of a large number of population around the world. Consequent to that, desertification also induces migration of the population, drought and famine and deepens poverty. She said that if the desertification goes unchecked, it would further deepen the miseries of the masses in the coming years.

PERU

The Ministry of Environment of Peru, focal point to the UNCCD, organized several events with support of the "Sustainable Land Management in Apurimac" project and other stakeholders.

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PORTUGAL

On 15 June, the National Authority to Forest organized two national events, in the Auditorium of the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas / Universidade Nova de Lisboa: a closed meeting of the National Commission of the NAP with the revision and alignment of the NAP on the agenda and the seminar: "Portuguese Initiatives to Combat land Degradation in the Susceptible to Desertification Areas".

ROUTLEDGE

In the observance of the World Day to Combat Desertification, Routledge, a global publisher of quality academic books, journals and online reference have selected a collection of top articles on the key themes of Desertification and Drought and made them free to access online. This day is a unique occasion to remind the audiences that desertification and drought can be tackled and solutions are possible.

SRI LANKA

In the context of the World Day to Combat Desertification, the Saviya Development Foundation organized a programme, including planting trees, campaigns to raise awareness among community and school children, workshops and national level competitions. The arrangements were made to celebrate the Day with the participation of Hon. Minister for Agriculture Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, parliamentarians, provincial councilors, government and non-governmental officers.

ST. LUCIA

The following events were organized in Saint Lucia: 1) Panel Discussion on CHOICE TV with Timothy Poleon, Michael Andrew, Kemuel Jn Baptiste/Extension on 13 June; 2) Straight Up with Claudius Francis on 13 June with David Lewis, Michael Andrew, Barry Innocent/Extension and 3) Creole Program on Radio St. Lucia with Lawrence Adonis on 13 June. On 17 June, range officers have identified areas for planting trees.

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SYRIA

The Ministry of State for Environment Affairs in Syria organized a field trip to the Al Nasiriyah natural reserve, which was established in 2010 in order to fix sand dunes (70 km north of Damascus). The trip aimed to raise awareness about the risks of desertification and the role of soil conservation, alternative means of generating income for local communities especially environmentally friendly products. The UNCCD national focal point published a brochure and poster about the importance of organic agriculture and its role in soil conservation, brochure about the problem of dust storms in Syria and distributed T-shirts stamped with the logo of World Day to Combat Desertification 2012.

TURKEY

During the week 11-17 June, the first "Soil Festival" was held in an effort to get more people interested in the importance of protecting soils. The festival was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food. Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion (TEMA) is one of the main partners and co-organizers of this week. The Ministry is organizing a workshop on 14 June and we are a contributing partner to the workshop as well as the awareness rising activities. TEMA hosted film screening of "Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time" during this festival.

The Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey, the Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) and the UNCCD secretariat organized a training course on "The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Combating Desertification" from 13 June – 18 June in Ankara and Konya. The event gathered over 50 representatives from civil society organizations from several regions to discuss possible ways of combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought. Participants also visited tree nurseries, agriculture research centers, reforestation and afforestation projects as well as desertification and erosion control initiatives undertaken by the Ministries of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey and Agriculture, Konyaşeker and local authorities. The civil society participants adopted a Declaration final docx requesting increased efforts for addressing the challenges of desertification, land degradation and drought, which highlighted the need to further involve the civil society in this process.

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UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

On 20 June, the Dubai Municipality organized awareness programs under the title 'Preserve Soil for Sustainable Living' to mark the World Day to Combat Desertification. An exhibition presenting the effects of desertification in human life was organized in the Al Tawar Centre of the municipality. The event in association with the Public Parks and Horticulture Department and Environment Control Section was open to public from 10am to 1pm. On June 21, an awareness programme for children will be held at the Dubai Women's Club.

VENEZUELA

The Ministry of the Popular Power for the Environment of Venezuela produced a poster to commemorate the 2012 World Day to Combat Desertification.

