



GREAT GREEN WALL



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



Land restoration. Source: World Bank Photo Collection

THE GREAT GREEN WALL IMPLEMENTATION STATUS AND WAY AHEAD TO 2030

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

1. INTRODUCTION

The Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) is an African response to the challenges of desertification, land degradation and climate change. The GGWI represents the political will of the Heads of State and Government of the Sahelo-Saharan States and was first expressed in 2005 in Burkina Faso (during the 7th ordinary session of the Heads of State and Government of the CEN-SAD). The idea of the "green barrier" advocated was conceptualized as the "Great Green Wall Initiative" endorsed in 2007 by the African Union (AU) (Declaration 137 / VIII / 8th ordinary session, Ethiopia).

The Initiative aims to restore and sustainably manage land in the Saharo-Sahel region. In accordance with the Convention establishing the GGW Pan-African Agency as the coordinating body of the initiative, the intervention zone dedicated to the Great Green Wall is located between the isohyets 100-400 mm and spans a length of at least 7000 km between Dakar and Djibouti.

The Initiative started with pilot activities spanning 15 km in the intervention area of each of the member states, with the scaling of activities to be included in the fringe between the isohyet 100 and 400 mm of average rainfall in the Sahel in eleven founding countries.[1] Beyond its initial goals, the initiative has evolved into a comprehensive integrated ecosystem management approach that aims to restore 100 Mha of currently degraded land, sequester 250 MtC and create 10 million green jobs (UNCCD), contributing towards the implementation the Rio Conventions and the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Today, the GGW Initiative is in its second decade and receiving increasing spotlight in the context of renewed international commitments to land restoration.

The objective of the GGW Implementation Status and Way Ahead Report is to provide an overview of the status and implementation progress of the GGW Initiative,

accounting for land restoration progress made on the ground as well as for financial resources allocated to the Initiative. The Report provides the big picture that brings together information and data collected from individual countries, NGOs, stakeholders and organizations that are part of the GGW ecosystem.

The Report presents the findings of the stocktaking exercise and impact assessment of the GGW implementation at several scales. It presents:

- 1.results based on data reported by the eleven countries to the Pan African Agency for the GGW
- 2.findings of an impact assessment on country activities, providing estimates for environmental, socio-economic and other impacts of land restoration under the GGW
3. additional information on GGW-related activities and actors in the wider region, based on the reports by donors and NGOs.



2. THE GREAT GREEN WALL IMPLEMENTATION STATUS AND WAY AHEAD TO 2030

The Pan-African Agency of the GGW 2011-2017 Achievements Report indicates that the eleven GGW countries have collectively restored approximately 4 Mha of land in the GGW intervention areas, with Ethiopia accounting 2.3 Mha, according to data available on progress towards the 2030 targets. However, other sources indicate a total restored area of almost 17.8 Mha in the wider GGW region, which takes into account the massive restoration effort of Ethiopia as well as other regional interventions. These activities have resulted in a series of environmental and socio-economic co-benefits.

1. The continued successful implementation of GGW existing measures by 2030 will sequester over 250 MtCo₂eq in the woody biomass and through the soil in the GGW intervention areas and up to 500 MtCo₂eq in the wider GGW region.
2. The GGW activities have created many job opportunities for rural people and helped reduce poverty through income-generating activities, reaching approximately 11 million beneficiaries. Revenues from income-generating activities amounted to approximately USD 90 million across all eleven countries. In addition, a total of 335 000 jobs were created in the implementation of land restoration activities and the production and sales of non-timber forest products.
3. At a transboundary level, international projects mobilized a total of USD 870 million for the implementation of the GGW. At a national level, countries reported receiving a total of USD 149 million in external funding, whereas the reported individual Member State contributions amounted to around USD 54 million.

3. CHALLENGES AND INVESTMENT-RELATED FINANCING BARRIERS TO GGW IMPLEMENTATION

The report finds that the GGW projects often face challenges including;

- 1.a lack of consideration in national environmental priorities;
- 2.weak organizational structures and processes for the implementation;
- 3.lack of mainstreaming of environmental change and action into the respective sector strategies, policies and action plans,
- 4.insufficient coordination, exchange and flow of information at the regional and national levels.

Monitoring, Reporting, Verification (MRV) is perceived as a major bottleneck to the implementation of the GGW Initiative. In particular:

- 1.monitoring and evaluation expertise is missing in general, hampering adherence to the internationally established standards;
- 2.environmental finance and related project monitoring and reporting standards have become demanding, often overwhelming the government institutions and project developers; and
- 3.insufficient allocation of funding for developing MRV capacities leads to weak implementation as well as difficulties in raising and allocating financial means for implementation and monitoring activities.

Countries indicated two overarching funding challenges:

- 1.An overall insufficient, unpredictable and insecure funding situation. The Report notes the difficulties of most GGW countries in establishing the required governance and project structure for attracting, managing and reporting on finance flows, in addition to challenges in absorbing a large amount of funding.
- 2.Going beyond traditional grant-based and short-term development funding is challenging for many governments. Complex and often demanding requirements set by environmental financial institutions create major hurdles. These include requirements for putting together funding proposals, applying respective rules and standards, preparing co-finance or blending financial instruments, and payment based on results or delivery of environmental services, among others.

Finally, financing land restoration faces scale issues and investment risks inherent in many land use projects. From a financial perspective, many of restoration projects are not profitable, generating returns too low to attract private investors. GHG mitigation/offsetting projects in the land use sector are often associated with governance issues relating to control over land, or the risk of false expectations with regard to revenues from carbon sequestration. Lastly, community ownership requires more sophisticated engagement strategies for more efficient local involvement and for attracting private investors.



4. WHAT IS NEEDED TO REACH THE 2030 OBJECTIVES?

The GGW needs to scale up land rehabilitation and restoration activities with a view of reaching the 2030 targets. To reach a total area of 100 Mha by 2030, it is necessary to raise the current pace of land restoration to 8.2 Mha annually. This is estimated to cost between USD 3.6 billion and USD 4.3 billion per year, reaching a total of between USD 36 billion and USD 43 billion up to 2030.

Improve GGW Governance and Institutions:

1. The GGW Initiative needs to revisit its scope and scale in order to renew a shared vision and a joint understanding of the Initiative. This should include building consensus on what the Initiative can do and support, and what are the means for doing so.
2. Renewing high-level political support and willingness at the national level is required to establish the respective mandates to facilitate operation and maintenance of functioning structures and processes required for GGW implementation.
3. The GGW focal agencies need to mainstream GGW actions and finance into the relevant sector strategies, policies and action plans. For this, regional level and national level coordination and knowledge management are needed, and should be based on clearly established terms of references. A facilitation mechanism or platform could be developed to this end

Continue Advocacy and Global Awareness Raising: Further and continued global awareness raising is crucial for the international community to better understand the issues and their consequences and generate a willingness to act and contribute.

Accelerate and Scale Up Project Generation: The generation of new, bankable projects requires dedicated, professional and targeted support, through

1. analysis of the potential for environmental development projects in the region;
2. analysis of how to improve the design of projects;
3. review of relevant types of projects that have been successful in other arid areas
4. categorization and preparation of a catalogue of project types; and
5. inclusion of other relevant project types such as rural energy projects.

Strengthen MRV and Establish an Integrated MRV System: Establish national coordination and knowledge management/information sharing units that will

1. support the identification of available monitoring and evaluation expertise, and;
2. integrate cutting-edge international monitoring and reporting standards, including RBM/RBF approaches.

Create a Structured Approach to Mobilizing Finance: A structured approach is necessary to reinforce Member State's allocations and attract external funds.

4. HOW CAN THE OBJECTIVE BE REACHED BY 2030?

This will entail

1. strengthening the follow-up and monitoring of projects and documenting the costs associated with their implementation as part of a dedicated MRV system;
2. ensuring that the financial resources are allocated in a transparent manner;
3. enhanced capacity building of national actors, and;
4. establishing a structured option for greater mobilization of financial resources and planning.

The envisioned Structured Approach would enhance the effectiveness of finance use and allocation. It will require

1. appropriate characterization of available funding sources;
2. potential development of vehicles to assist with the provision of finance to the projects on the ground (for example, a dedicated Trust Fund or an investment facility) and;
3. creation of a central mechanism/platform that will act as an intermediary between the project developers and funding sources and provide relevant technical support.





GREAT GREEN WALL

The Great Green Wall Implementation Status and Way Ahead to 2030 Climatekos gGmbH © UNCCD 2020. All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-92-95118-26-3 (English e-version)

Produced in English and French

Disclaimer

This report was prepared by Climatekos gGmbH (www.climatekos.com) with the financial support by the Government of Ireland. The report constitutes an advanced version of a landmark report on the “State of the Great Green Wall”. Current issues linked to the COVID19 pandemic have prevented a proper data collection and meant that this report does not include most recent data. It does, nonetheless, represent an important collection of information and is able to provide the reader with an adequate picture of this very large scale and ambitious initiative of the Great Green Wall. A final complete version of this report will be made available in the second half of 2020.

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by the UNCCD in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

The views expressed in this report are purely those of the writers and may not in any circumstances be regarded as stating an official position of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification