

2019 Land for Life Award winners' presentation

The session “Decades of impact” was moderated by Caroline Galipeau, coordinator of the Land for Life Programme. Ms. Galipeau reminded that the Land for Life Programme was launched at COP 10 in the Republic of Korea, as part of Changwon Initiative. Through awareness raising and knowledge support, it aims to demonstrate that Land Degradation Neutrality is compelling and achievable. Every two years, the programme offers the Land for Life Award, recognizing outstanding projects and individuals dedicated to land restoration and contributing to build a fair and sustainable future for all.

Since UNCCD is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, the 2019 Awards were attributed under the theme “Decades of Impact”. The winners have made outstanding contributions to Sustainable Land Management (SLM) for 25 years or longer. The Award ceremony was held during the Kubuqi International Desertification Forum, in Inner Mongolia, China, on 27 July.



Mr. Betru Nedessa Beyene (National Coordinator, MERET Project of Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopia)

Ethiopia is large country and degradation is one of the major factors undermining productivity and food security causing vulnerability. The Ethiopian government launched a massive Land Restoration program in the 1970s to tackle this issue. The project is based on innovative approaches and partnerships. Accordingly, various Water Harvesting (WH) and Soil and Water Conservation (SWC) structure such as

Contour Trenches, micro basins, and ponds have been implemented in the past decades. Through the MERET project, many degraded lands which were barren, devoid of any vegetation, rocky and gullied lands were converted in to productive lands and green environment. Degraded farmlands became very productive in Amhara region, South Wollo and Sahara region. The massive LRI, particularly the WH and SWC, restored hydrological balance, increased ground and surface water yields and availed access to water for domestic use. As a result, over 2.5 million hectares of degraded lands were rehabilitated and became productive lands. The impact study by the consulting firm TANGO in 2012 confirmed that 66% of MERET beneficiary farmers successfully escaped poverty thanks to the project.



Mr. Mathieu Ouédraogo (Founder and President of Réseau MARP, Burkina Faso)

The Agroforestry Project (PAF) was established in 1978 in Yatenga. The PAF has carried out action research with farmers on the different management techniques in their own fields. They tested different techniques: the contour stone bunds and the zaï planting. The North was strongly affected and degraded, leading many people to leave, reaching southern and western regions, where they could

find food. Water and Soil Conservation became an integral component in all rural development projects (Project GTZ/PATECORE and Project FIDA-CES/AGF) and still is today.

Land for Life... years later

Former Land for Life winners were then invited to take part to a discussion about the impact of the recognition on their respective projects, the progress of their actions and their aims for the next decade.



Dr. Marcella D Souza, Director of the WOTR Centre for Resilience Studies (W-CReS) and former Executive Director of Watershed Organization Trust (WOTR) – 2017 winner: Now is the time to think about land degradation and water availability at the same time. Indeed, land degradation is not the only concern, water availability is also a major issue. We need to use water in a way that we also

spare water for nature. We need to look at the people and their needs, as well as considering the land as a whole to address the problem. We must look at the local agrobiodiversity and consult local communities for better policy making and to build better infrastructures. The agriculture production system which helps in soil fertility management should also be considered. Applied research is required and we have to learn from each other as we cannot do it alone. It means that governments, industrialists and communities should collaborate.

Regarding her views on the economics of land degradation, biodiversity, SLM and water management, she said that there is a need to look for a holistic approach and ways to enhance the knowledge of skills, methodology and applied skills. She further added that it is not the work of a single sector. It requires both the contribution of the public and private sector for its success.

Mr. Awadalla Hamid Mohamed Osman (Environmental Conservation Manager and Deputy Area Coordinator, Practical Action Sudan) – 2017 winner: We need to provide LPG to rural communities, to prevent cutting trees for sole cooking purposes. We need a bottom up approach so that we can work with most of the communities. And it also aims to combat land degradation, develop rainwater harvesting and overcome desertification by using different techniques.

On Practical Action Sudan, Mr. Hamid, explained that the organization was strengthened with the help of the communities from the very beginning. It has now reached the remote areas. Monitoring and survey activities have been implemented. Practical Action Sudan grows bigger and stronger.

Jagdeesh Rao (Executive Director, Foundation for Ecological Security) – 2013 winner: Village people are not provided any alternative to cope with floods or other natural threats destroying their homes and challenging their livelihood. It is time, more than ever, to act on a large scale. Whatever has been done until now should be scaled up. We need to discuss and implement a new policy., focusing on the importance of sustainable management. Thus, there should be a recognition for the villages and their technologies, and help provided to introduce a new and better ways to transform the degraded environment with various techniques.

***SPECIAL EVENT: High Profile Presentation by Practical Action Sudan
“Wadi Elku communities challenging vulnerability through Integrated
Water Resource Management in Darfur.”***



Ms. Muna Eltahir, Country Director

Ms. Eltahir invited the audience to watch the presentation video titled ‘Ingenuity can beat poverty’. She introduced the session and invited the speakers to present an overview of The Wadi EL-Ku Report.

Ms. Siham Osman, Agriculture and DRR Programme Manager

Sudan is the 3rd largest country in Africa, with an estimated population of 40 million. The people are generally sedentary farmer pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and urbanites. The complex problems faced in Sudan are climate change impacts, poverty and land tenure conflicts. Around 46% of Sudan is in poverty due to inefficient development plans and strategies, reducing public expenditure on public services. The erosion of land and natural resources as a result of climate change also accounted for the poverty in Sudan. The main reasons for degradation of natural resources are scarcity of resources due to climate impacts, internally displaced population which increased the demand on land and water, periodic drought and cultural resource-based conflict. The increased demand on land and water has decreased the fertility of land and hence the livelihood of people is weakened and threatened.

Mr. Awadallah Hamid, Environmental Conservation Manager & Deputy Area Coordinator

Wadi El-Ku is the most important watercourse in North Darfur, with a catchment area of about 25,000 km sq. Innovative ideas have been implemented such as NRM (Natural Resources Management) and DAMs construction which are the sources of irrigation. The food production is transformed by adopting FFS (Farmer Field Schools) which disseminate to share knowledge to the communities and increase crops diversification.

The land is limited, and population is increasing, so the land is under pressure and it also affects the climate at a large extent. So, the climate change adaptation has also been taken up. Desertification impact is fought by implementing community forests. So far, 25 community forests have been implemented thanks to the involvement and dedication of women. Another way is to provide alternatives like providing access to LPG through micro-finance credit system to improve the cooking stoves.