



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultancy: Policy Brief on the Land, Drought and Health Nexus

Consultancy reference number: CCD/24/C/46

Background

Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity were identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The Convention seeks to support countries to address Desertification, Land Degradation, and Drought (DLDD).

Land provides several different ecosystem services and benefits and is vital for life on earth including human health and well-being. The degradation of land and ecosystems is a global problem affecting at least 3.2 billion people, particularly those living in vulnerable conditions including people with low-income especially poor women, children, elderly persons, indigenous communities. Land degradation can lead to water and food insecurity, conflict and migration, unemployment and gender inequality. All the consequences of DLDD on ecosystems can directly or indirectly affect human health and wellbeing, which can be exacerbated by climate change¹:

- 1) **Water** is vital for human health. Land degradation can have an impact on water supplies. Drought can affect the quality and quantity of freshwater through mismanagement, damage to water infrastructure, supporting the growth of pathogens, as well as increasing the concentration of contaminants, salinity, stagnation. A lack of water quality and quantity as well as access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) can increase exposure to or cause several diseases including infectious and parasitic diseases, non-communicable diseases, as well as diseases caused by chemicals, other pollutants and algal blooms.
- 2) DLDD also impacts **Food** supply causing food shortages and reducing the quantity and quality of nutrient intake increasing malnutrition and mortality. The contamination of water and soils can also lead to food-related exposures.
- 3) **Air:** The degradation of land, drought, increased soil erosion and wildfires caused by heatwaves can intensify sand and dust storms and increase exposure to airborne dust pollution, particulate matter and other toxic substances, which can have an impact on human health. Dry and dusty conditions as well as sand and dust storms (SDS) can contribute to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases (including lung cancer, and pneumonia – amongst others), eye infections, skin irritations, as well as meningococcal meningitis.
- 4) **Soil** is not just responsible for 95% of food production, it also serves an important role in filtering contaminants. If soils are eroded, this filtering function is impaired and can lead to contaminants entering water systems and the food chain with significant risks to agricultural productivity, livelihoods, food security and human health.²

Furthermore, zoonotic infectious diseases can emerge wherever human and animal habitats overlap and where humans intervene in natural putting them in contact with wildlife and upsetting ecosystem health.

¹ Sena, A.; Ebi, K. When Land Is Under Pressure Health Is Under Stress. *Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health* 2021, 18, 136. <https://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18010136>

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The loss of biodiversity can affect the likelihood of zoonoses, especially if humans intervene in natural landscapes for example by clearing forests to create pastureland or through urban sprawl.³

Objective of consultancy

The ultimate goal of the consultancy is to produce a report and a policy brief that highlights the interconnections between land degradation, drought, and health, and provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to address these issues effectively. The policy brief should serve as a valuable resource for informing decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels.

Duties and responsibilities

Under the overall supervision of the Chief of the Global Policy, Advocacy and Regional Cooperation (GPARC) Unit and in close cooperation with GPARC and UNCCD Secretariat colleagues, the consultant will be responsible for conducting comprehensive research and analysis on the nexus between land, drought, and health. Specific duties include:

- Reviewing existing literature, reports, and policy documents related to DLDD and human health impacts.
- Analyzing the relationships and mechanisms linking DLDD conditions, and human health outcomes.
- Identifying key stakeholders, policies, and interventions aimed at addressing these challenges.
- Assessing case studies on the nexus between DLDD and health and outline best practices from diverse geographical regions on how nexus-related challenges were identified and addressed.
- Identifying evidence gaps and research needs related to DLDD-related human health effects to support a stronger, and needs-based, evidence-base for policy and programming.

Providing recommendations for policy interventions and strategies to mitigate the effects of DLDD on human health.

Deliverables

The following are the expected outputs/work assignment:

- Develop an inception report in consultation with relevant officers of the UNCCD, including (a) a conceptual framework and methodological approach for development of the study (b) a work programme, and (c) a tentative schedule;
- Undertake a scientific and grey literature review of most recent scientific literature, key papers, reports and other documents, related to the impacts of DLDD on human health to inform the consultancy.
- Compile innovative case studies, in annotated form, of a broad range of recent evidence-based case studies and good practice examples, from high, medium and low-income countries, documenting how DLDD related health impacts can be identified and addressed. These cases should include on-the-ground and good practice examples from a wide variety of sources and countries.
- Based on the above, develop guidance that can be used by countries in their policy-making processes.
- Produce a zero draft of detailed report and policy brief (around 10 pages) on the design of policy options to address DLDD-related health concerns.

³ Charite (n.d.). Research project coordinated by Charité aims to better gauge zoonosis risks. https://www.charite.de/en/service/press_reports/artikel/detail/how_much_does_biodiversity_loss_contribute_to_the_spread_of_new_infectious_diseases/



- Organize and conduct an online stakeholder consultation workshop focused on the zero draft of the report and policy brief to consider the portfolio of options and emerging recommendations.
- Produce a first order draft of the report and policy brief and ensure their independent scientific review.
- Produce the final draft of the report and policy brief including a succinct executive summary, glossary of key terms, key messages, and any recommendations that could lead to more effective integration of the policy options in national policy making processes.

Contractual terms

The service of the selected consultant is estimated to be 40 days between 01 July and 31 September 2024. This contract is home based. All products resulting from this contractual arrangement are the exclusive property of the UNCCD.

The consultant must be in possession of all the equipment and software necessary to conduct this work. The UNCCD will not purchase any equipment. Candidates are kindly requested to specify in their applications the software and equipment that will be used to carry out this assignment.

Requirements

- An advanced degree in environmental science or public health and previous experience on topics related to climate change and health are desired.
- A minimum of 10 years working experience related to environmental science and public health.
- Knowledge of the UNCCD or related Conventions. Experience in working with UNCCD stakeholders in the country an asset.
- Knowledge about health systems' operations.
- Knowledge about DLDD and its impacts on health.
- Experience in data collection and analysis.
- Strong professional and academic writing skills.
- Strong research, problem-solving and organizational skills.
- Excellent writing skills and fluency in English is required.

Special notice

Only individuals who can act as independent, individual economical operators are qualified to apply. Individuals who can provide their services only on account of an institution or enterprise are not eligible under this procedure.

Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations Secretariat and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultant and individual contractor is responsible for determining tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.

Submission of application

The following documents should be sent to staffing@unccd.int as **one document**: UNCCD Personal History Form⁴ /CV and cover letter, specifying the following in the email subject line: **CCD/24/C/46**.

⁴ UNCCD P-11 form in electronic fill-in .pdf OR .docx format available: <https://www.unccd.int/about-us/secretariat/vacancies/applying-unccd>



The deadline for applications is **28 June 2024**. Only applications submitted by the deadline and with complete documentation will be taken into consideration.

Due to the volume of applications received, receipt of applications cannot be acknowledged individually. Please address your application as indicated above and please do not address or copy your application to an individual at the Secretariat or Global Mechanism. Candidates who do not receive any feedback within three months of the deadline should consider their application as unsuccessful.

Date of issuance : 14 June 2024