



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification



WSDS 2018 Thematic Track *Civil Society Engagement in Land Degradation Neutrality*

Date: 15 February, 2018 | **Time:** 10:50-12:30
Venue: Silver Oak, IHC Complex, Lodi Road, New Delhi

ABSTRACT

A rights-based approach to sustainable land management (SLM) and restoration is necessary to improve the stewardship of land resources and the achievement of the land degradation neutrality (LDN) target featured in the Sustainable Development Goals. An estimated 1.2 billion people currently live without secure tenure, i.e., without rights or access to land resources. When local communities have secure tenure, they tend to invest in the long-term health of the land and use resources more efficiently through the adoption of SLM practices. In order to achieve LDN, many countries will need to take measures that promote and protect land tenure and resource rights, especially for women, the poor and vulnerable, through appropriate policies and institutions, including the right to inherit. This session will bring together leaders of civil society organizations (CSOs) and government representatives to highlight the role that they can play in up-scaling SLM practices and ensuring the safeguards required to meet the LDN targets.

BACKGROUND

In the last half century, civil society organizations (CSOs) have made their mark on a wide range of important societal issues, from democracy to development. CSOs have been contributing national and global decisions on land, climate change and biodiversity. The livelihoods of two billion people are under direct threat from desertification, land degradation and drought. Climate change is eroding the precious life-support systems, the land and the ecosystem services we all depend on. CSOs are vital and strategic partners in the efforts to improve the conditions of the most vulnerable land-dependent people.

Many governments lack the means to provide for the basic needs of their citizens. CSOs are a critical lifeline for many poor rural populations to improve food security, protect human rights, and enhance resilience in the face of a rapidly changing world.

Investing in the 500 million small-scale farmers has a clear economic rationale. It could turn these farming families into stable and reliable food producers and consumers of the future while creating employment opportunities for the rural poor. By supporting and investing in the over 1.3 billion people currently living on degrading agricultural land to move towards more sustainable small-scale production, partnerships with civil society could help protect their livelihoods and that of their children.

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

A rights-based approach to sustainable land management (SLM) is necessary to improve the stewardship of land resources and make progress towards the achievement of the land degradation neutrality (LDN) target. The role of CSOs can prove to be essential:

- Local communities and CSOs that work very close to the land are a primary resource for the innovation, experimentation and adaptation needed to find new pathways and solutions around the world.
- The establishment of partnerships across government, civil society, investors and donors to overcome constraints related to land rights and to take advantage of the related opportunities will be important in achieving the LDN target.
- Governments, CSOs, local communities and other interested stakeholders can work as partners to help mobilize resources and increase efforts to protect rural livelihoods.
- Secure rights to land and other natural resources is a primary factor in achieving LDN and the associated improvements in food, water, and livelihood security.

A rights-based approach to SLM and restoration is necessary to improve the stewardship of land resources and the achievement of the LDN target featured in the Sustainable Development Goals. An estimated 1.2 billion people currently live without secure tenure, i.e., without land user rights or access to land resources. When local communities have secure tenure, they tend to invest in the health of the land, use resources more efficiently through the adoption of SLM practices. In order to achieve LDN, many countries will need to take measures that promote and protect land tenure and resource rights, especially for women, the poor and vulnerable, through appropriate policies and institutions, including the right to inherit.

Civil society actors are recognizing their potential to bring about change. Improving standards and practices at every stage of the supply chain is an effective way to tackle poverty and empower local producers. By investing in sustainable food production/processing for job creation and capacity building, CSOs demonstrate that they are critical to efforts to eradicate poverty. CSO success in these areas is increasing their credibility and influence on both global and national policies. Through the UNCCD, for example, CSOs can influence global policy decisions and monitor the success of policy implementation through the national reporting process.

The impacts of land degradation and climate change are primarily felt at the local level by communities, households and individuals. We need a simple approach that everyone can understand and follow. Adaptation powered by the land is a good starting point because everyone can relate to it. We have simple and affordable techniques that can stop land degradation in its tracks and support the health of entire ecosystems and make them resilient to climate shocks. Replicating these practices on a large-scale would have a global impact creating desirable employment in rural areas and transforming once unproductive lands into fields of opportunity.

However, many policies aimed at protecting the environment and local peoples' access to land resources are unfortunately not fully implemented due to various factors. Over the last decade, the CSOs that work on the implementation of the UNCCD has been working to demonstrate that secure land tenure can help address a number of challenges, including sustainable land management, agricultural productivity, secure livelihoods, participation of communities in decisions making processes, and rule of law. In this regard, they have designed tools to promote sustainable land use practices, support the prevention, avoidance and reduction of land degradation as well as to support the recovery of degraded lands.

CIVIL SOCIETY DIALOGUE

This session will bring together leaders of CSOs to discuss the role that they can play in up-scaling SLM practices and ensuring the safeguards required to meet the LDN target.

APPROACH

CSO representatives from around the world will interact with WSDS participants on various aspects related to the role of the civil society in creating the enabling environment and administrative infrastructure for protecting and rehabilitating land, including:

1. How civil society could partner with the government to align priorities in terms of LDN?

2. What are the challenges that the most vulnerable groups (e.g., indigenous peoples, youth, women) are facing when working on the land?
3. What is the relationship between land rights, including land user rights and land degradation?
4. Why ensuring appropriate land rights and tenure will be fundamental to ensure LDN?
5. How does land tenure security contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable livelihoods?
6. How can civil society organizations and government cooperate to contribute to LDN targets?

REFERENCES

UNCCD CSO Panel (<http://www2.unccd.int/convention/stakeholders/civil-society-organizations>)