



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international

Combating Desertification

BUILDING BRIDGES

CANADA'S SECOND REPORT TO
THE UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION
ON ACTIVITIES WITH DEVELOPING-COUNTRY PARTNERS

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International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Jeunesse du Monde (NGO)

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USC Canada (NGO)

CIDA photo: Roger LeMoynes

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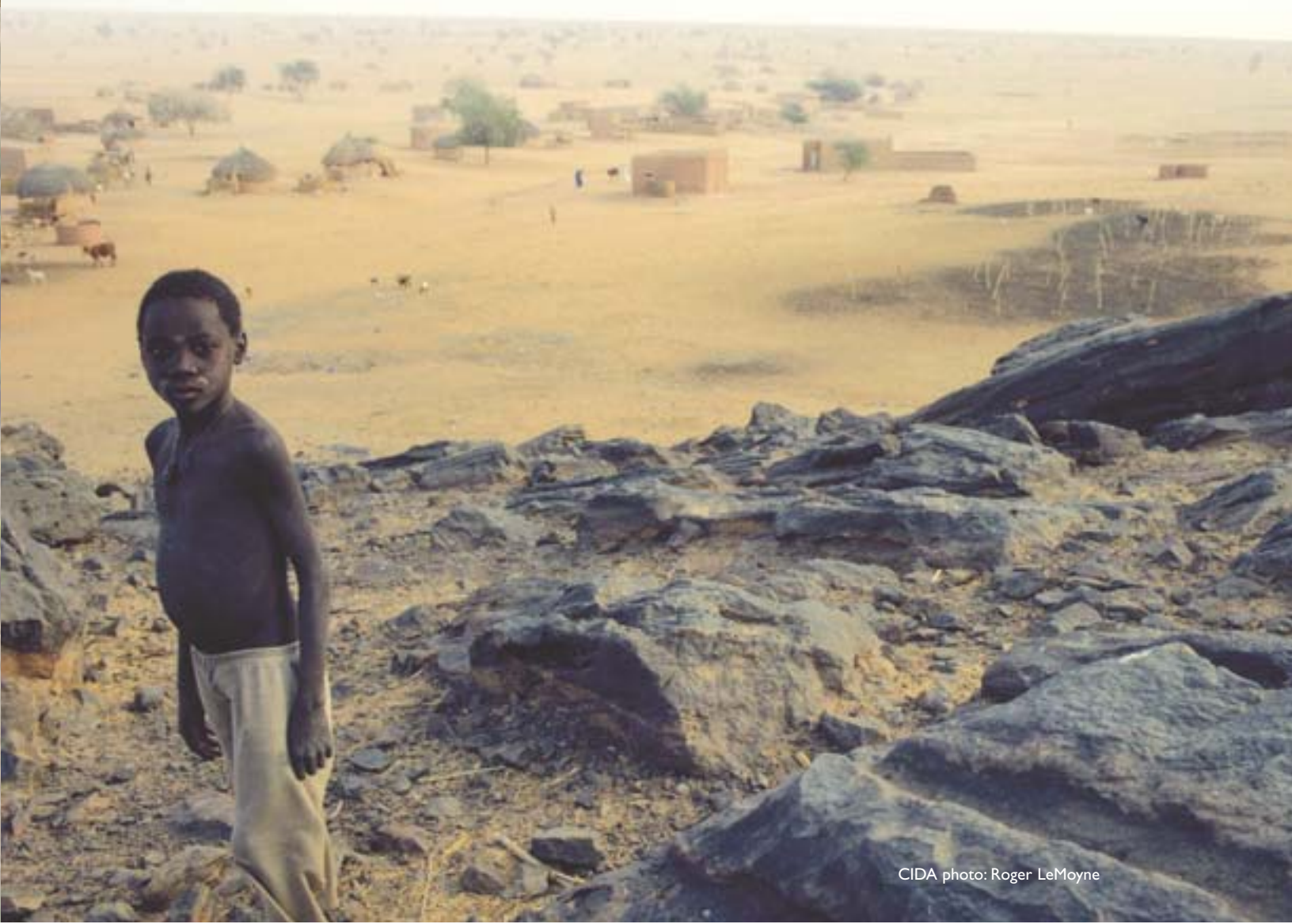
CIDA photo: Roger LeMoyne



foreword

The past three decades have seen many initiatives in international cooperation dealing with environmental issues, starting with the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, and culminating in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Chief among these initiatives are the three major global conventions — on climate change, conserving biological diversity and combatting desertification. As these conventions are now being implemented, there is a realization that development inequalities can undermine these efforts: many countries, plagued by poverty and faced with a number of competing priorities, lack the capacity to effectively resolve environmental issues.

Although much progress has been made in the past decades toward reducing poverty, much remains to be done. Official development assistance (ODA), the traditional tool for development cooperation, is entering a new phase in which its effectiveness for resolving the many interconnected issues that affect progress on development is slowly emerging as a key driver of cooperation. In the past five years, a consensus among donor countries has emerged that has led to a re-assessment of aid principles, priorities, goals and methods. The links between development, economic prosperity and the environment are no longer simply theoretical: addressing them in a harmonized way is in fact the biggest challenge.





CIDA photo: Nancy Durrell-McKenna

The concept of sustainable development offers a unique opportunity to respond to this challenge. Sustainable development is about enhancing the quality of human life while preserving the complex interactions between human activity and the natural environment. It is about making enlightened long-term, individual and collective choices, rather than short-term decisions based on self-interest. Poverty works against sustainable development by limiting available choices and leading individuals and communities to engage in unsustainable behaviour.

In many developing countries, particularly those whose populations depend on natural resources to meet their most basic needs, local environmental degradation is exacerbated by poverty. Desertification is a vivid illustration of this relationship, whereby local environmental degradation gradually becomes a global problem. This perpetuates the deterioration of affected people's living conditions, and continues to narrow the spectrum of available choices.

As an agency primarily concerned with international development, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) strives to integrate efforts to combat desertification into the mainstream of its cooperation with affected developing countries, to increase the effectiveness of its initiatives and to achieve synergy. But Canada, too, is affected by desertification and drought: most of the country's agricultural land is dryland, which faces increasing pressures. In order to share Canada's experience with other countries that have ratified the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Canada submitted its first report as an affected country to the fourth Conference of the Parties in 2001. This report, entitled *Desertification: A Perspective on Canada*, was the result of close collaboration between CIDA and its domestic partner, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

The following pages constitute Canada's second official report to the UNCCD on activities that contribute to combatting desertification in developing countries. Many of the initiatives cited in this report cut across a variety of sectors and involve a wide spectrum of partners, including the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in both Canada and developing countries.

Canada believes that the Convention to Combat Desertification is a true reflection of what sustainable development is all about. In Canada's view, addressing human development and environmental problems in an integrated way represents the future of international cooperation for sustainable development. It is hoped that the World Summit on Sustainable Development will provide the much-needed impetus to cooperation efforts and that renewed partnerships will contribute to overcoming the challenges on the road to sustainable development.



introduction

Desertification is a problem that demands urgent action on every continent. According to United Nations estimates, it threatens the well-being of about one billion people worldwide. Unchecked, it can destroy livelihoods, render land useless, wipe out the habitat of animals and people, generate conflict, prompt migration, and contribute to global warming.



CIDA photo: Roger LeMoynes

Each year, close to 10 million hectares of land are permanently degraded. Mainly because of overgrazing, overcultivation, deforestation and poor irrigation. Desertification threatens some 70 percent of the world's drylands currently used for agriculture, and is damaging almost 30 percent of the planet's total land surface.

Desertification is not so much the relentless advance of existing deserts, as often imagined, but rather the deterioration of drylands, creating desert-like dead zones that can spread and merge. It afflicts 110 countries, a majority of which have limited means to

restore degraded areas. Close to 70 percent of Africa is desert or dryland, and some three-quarters of the continent's agricultural drylands are already degraded. Although Africa is considered more vulnerable, no region is immune: in North America, close to three-quarters of the continent's drylands are affected by desertification.

The United Nations estimates that desertification causes affected countries to lose US\$45 billion in income each year. Behind this figure lies the very real suffering that accompanies desertification — the food and water shortages, and accompanying malnutrition, degeneration of human health, and resulting conflicts and mass migrations. Each year, millions of people living in affected regions throughout the world are caught in this vicious downward spiral of desertification, declining agricultural productivity and poverty.

Since the process is driven in part by human misuse of land, plants and water; it can also be corrected by changes in behaviour. In certain parts of the world, people have successfully managed drylands for millennia. Action to combat desertification is not only possible, but in order to protect economic, political and food security, it is also in everyone's long-term interest.

CANADA'S LONG-STANDING COMMITMENT TO THE UNCCD

Canada has been a strong supporter of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) from the start, playing an active role during negotiations and being prompt to ratify it in December 1995. In 2001, Canada was proud to take on the role of President of the fifth Conference of the Parties, a two-year mandate. CIDA's Senior Vice-President Charles Bassett fulfils this role for Canada. The objective during this presidency is to raise public awareness about desertification and its links to poverty, and to mobilize political support for the success of the Convention.

Canada is fully involved in the challenges posed by desertification and in the global response to it. Although Canada is also an affected country, its participation in the Convention is mainly as a donor. For this reason, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was identified as the lead agency to negotiate and implement the Convention on behalf of the Government of Canada, in cooperation with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and in consultation with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) and Environment Canada.

At home, although Canadians are not among the most threatened people, portions of Canada's three Prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) are at risk of desertification. A century of experience provides Canada with significant expertise in making large-scale dryland agriculture sustainable. Much of this knowledge is located in Prairie farming communities and government institutions, such as AAFC's Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA). The PFRA works closely with provincial governments, as well as the private sector, farmers and their associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote conservation and the sustainable management of Canada's natural resources. Canada's efforts to combat desertification are also supported by continuous investments in science, provided through regional research facilities located in vulnerable areas, such as AAFC's Semi-Arid Prairies Research Centre. These facilities contribute valuable knowledge about the management of dryland soils and water resources.



In the developing world, Canada has a long tradition of helping countries and communities combat desertification and related problems through the official development assistance (ODA) program. In addition to directly supporting developing-country governments through bilateral aid, CIDA supports more than one hundred partners — international, Southern and Canadian NGOs, universities and colleges, companies, municipalities, and community groups — as well as a wide range of multilateral and regional organizations. Through development cooperation, CIDA implements a wide array of desertification-related activities, ranging from dune stabilization and market gardening in West Africa, to water management in Central Asia, agroforestry in India, and soil conservation in Latin America.

This is Canada's second report on its efforts to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification with developing countries. The report paints a broad picture of Canada's many and varied activities over the past year — from continued support through various projects and programs, to new efforts in policy and donor coordination to maximize the impact and effectiveness of Canada's contributions.

To help coordinate Canada's desertification-related efforts in developing countries, the Desertification Convention Office (DCO) was placed under the responsibility of CIDA's newly established Multilateral Environmental Agreements Unit. The DCO is tasked with ensuring that Canada meets its obligations under the Convention, including financial contributions to the Convention and required reporting. The DCO acts as the Canadian focal point for issues related to desertification and the UNCCD.



CIDA photo: Roger LeMoynes

Within CIDA, the DCO works to promote substantial ODA investment in drylands programming by providing advice on mainstreaming desertification into programming and on designing projects and programs to combat desertification in the world's drylands. The DCO also explores innovative ways for Canada to contribute to the implementation of the Convention in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

The imperatives of combatting desertification are inherent in CIDA's policy for environmental sustainability and are clearly articulated in the Agency's mission to support sustainable development. There are also strong links between combatting desertification and the Agency's social development priorities: in affected areas, the promotion of health and nutrition, basic education and child well-being must take into account the challenges posed by desertification. Canada remains committed to the ideals and principles of the UNCCD, recognizing that efforts to combat desertification are essential if basic human needs are to be met and if we are to reach our global poverty-reduction goals.

Partners in the global fight against DESERTIFICATION

The interconnectedness between desertification and other development priorities calls for an integrated and coordinated effort to combat desertification, together with other development activities. Canada's approach to combatting desertification in developing countries emphasizes poverty reduction, capacity development and participatory initiatives, and takes place at all levels of intervention — involving people and institutions from the community to international levels.

Development cooperation is more than just transfers between governments. It involves the full range of skills and resources found at all levels of society. Drawing on the knowledge, experience and grass-roots know-how of NGOs, as well as the scientific and educational capacity of Canada's universities and research institutions, Canada has been sharing its expertise with countries throughout the world for more than half a century.

NGOs have been particularly active in the continuing process of negotiating, supporting and implementing the Convention to Combat Desertification. Since 1994, NGOs have been coordinating their actions through the Réseau international d'ONG sur la desertification (RIOD). In 2001, the NGO community entrusted Solidarité Canada Sahel (SCS), a Montréal-based umbrella NGO, with the RIOD Secretariat for a period of two years. SCS members, working together with the Canadian delegation, contributed significantly to the negotiation of the Convention and are now helping to implement it through a broad range of projects in affected countries. Many other Canadian NGOs are involved in grass-roots projects to help the people of the developing world in the fight against desertification and poverty.

Canada also contributes to a large number of multilateral institutions. Chief among these are the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the World Bank, regional development banks, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) — all of which implement a wide range of activities to help combat desertification.

Some of these institutions have specific mandates to help implement the Convention to Combat Desertification — for example, the IFAD houses the UNCCD's Global Mechanism, which mobilizes resources to help countries combat land degradation, and the UNDP's Drylands Development Centre, which promotes sound dryland management and development. CIDA works closely with these institutions on a number of key issues.

CIDA has also invested in the establishment of partnerships with key, like-minded institutions, ranging from NGOs, such as the World Conservation Union (IUCN), to multilateral organizations and other donors, such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency. These partnerships allow us to pool resources, to achieve coordination in the delivery of aid initiatives and, in the end, to do our work better.

The Nile Basin Initiative

The Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) illustrates new trends in development cooperation. The initiative is led by and includes all 10 Nile countries (Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Democratic Republic of Congo) and provides an agreed upon, basin-wide framework to fight poverty and promote socio-economic development in the region.

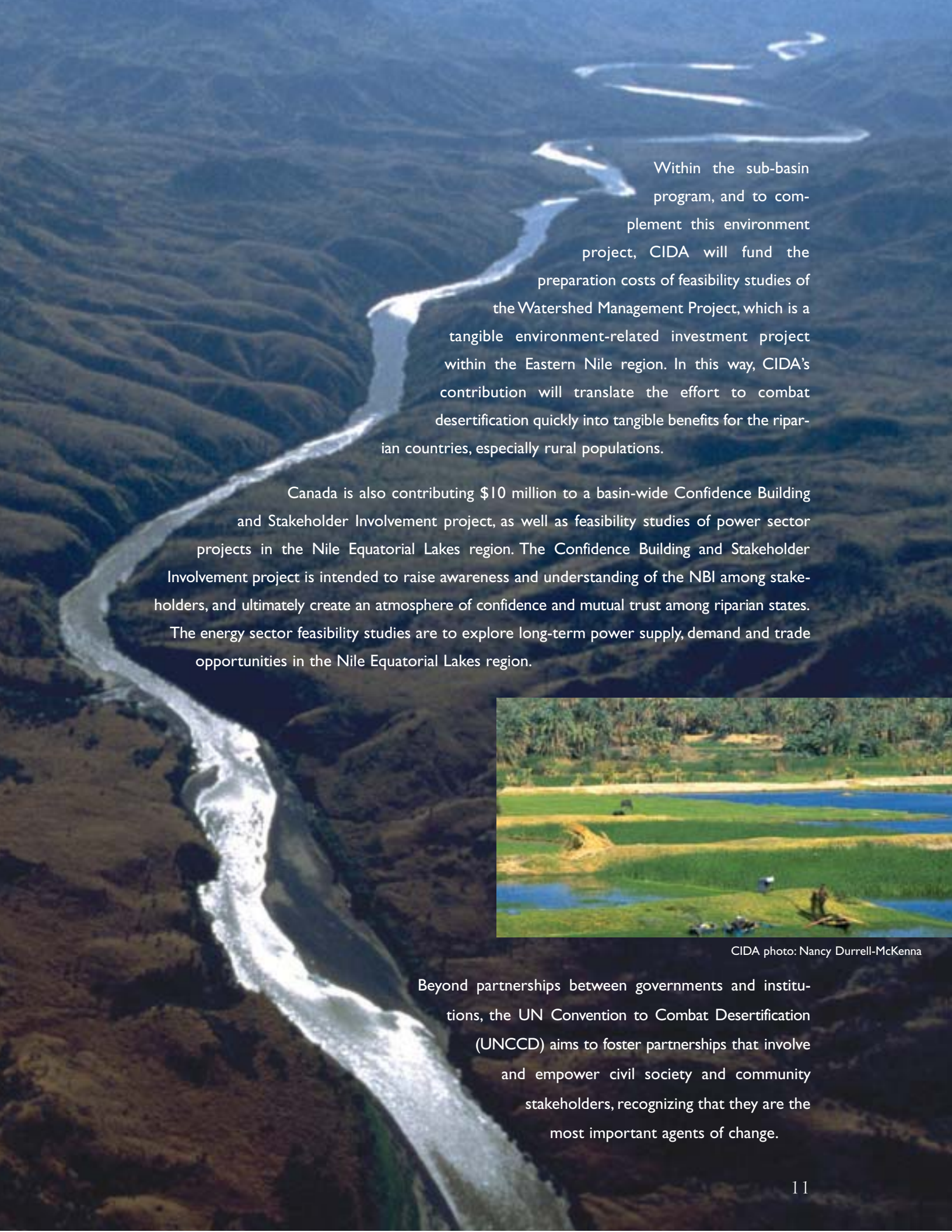
Recognizing the tremendous benefits that can be reaped from cooperation, yet fully aware of the challenges ahead, the Nile countries embarked on a remarkable journey that culminated in the creation in 1999 of the NBI. CIDA, which has been supporting regional cooperation among Nile riparian

countries since 1993, has committed \$26 million to support a number of the NBI's thematic areas: environment, confidence building and stakeholder involvement, and the energy sector.

A total of \$16 million has been granted to support two environment sector projects. Within the Shared Vision Program, CIDA is allocating the larger part of its available resources to the Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project. Co-financed with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and earmarked for the Land, Forests and Water Conservation component, this contribution reflects Canada's particular interest in maximizing opportunities to combat desertification within the NBI framework.



Photo (inset and background): Nevada Wier

An aerial photograph showing a wide, winding river flowing through a deep, brownish valley. The river's path is highly irregular, with many meanders and oxbow-like curves. The surrounding terrain is rugged and appears to be a semi-arid or desert environment. The river's water is a light, milky color, contrasting with the dark brown of the valley floor.

Within the sub-basin program, and to complement this environment project, CIDA will fund the preparation costs of feasibility studies of the Watershed Management Project, which is a tangible environment-related investment project within the Eastern Nile region. In this way, CIDA's contribution will translate the effort to combat desertification quickly into tangible benefits for the riparian countries, especially rural populations.

Canada is also contributing \$10 million to a basin-wide Confidence Building and Stakeholder Involvement project, as well as feasibility studies of power sector projects in the Nile Equatorial Lakes region. The Confidence Building and Stakeholder Involvement project is intended to raise awareness and understanding of the NBI among stakeholders, and ultimately create an atmosphere of confidence and mutual trust among riparian states. The energy sector feasibility studies are to explore long-term power supply, demand and trade opportunities in the Nile Equatorial Lakes region.



CIDA photo: Nancy Durrell-McKenna

Beyond partnerships between governments and institutions, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) aims to foster partnerships that involve and empower civil society and community stakeholders, recognizing that they are the most important agents of change.

COMBATTING DESERTIFICATION TO REDUCE POVERTY

In northern Ghana, as everywhere, food security is dependent on weather and soil fertility. With erratic rainfall and only marginal soil fertility, the region's food production is no longer sufficient to feed the growing population. Poor soil management practices, increasing soil erosion and deforestation are decreasing the productive capacity of land that is already overused. To help increase food security in the region, CIDA has committed \$40 million over the next five years to helping farmers and local communities. Under the framework of this program, CIDA is planning to focus its assistance on agricultural extension and research, community development, soil and water management, agribusiness, and the development of farmer-based organizations. Canadian

expertise is being paired with Ghanaian expertise to help decentralize agricultural support services and to integrate the region's agricultural and environmental policies and practices.

In Mali and Senegal, USC Canada has been working with communities to improve food security, develop the capacity to sustainably manage local natural resources, and empower local populations through improved community organization. Recognizing that natural resource degradation in the Sahel's fragile ecosystems is exacerbating poverty in the region, USC Canada works together with researchers, farmers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to achieve these objectives. In the Sahelian regions of Mopti in Mali and Podor in Senegal:





CIDA photo: Pierre St-Jacques

- wells now provide for more than 30,000 inhabitants and their livestock;
- at least 30 people have been trained to manage tree nurseries;
- more than 5,000 hectares of degraded land have been reclaimed;
- community-run indigenous seed and gene banks have been established;
- environmental surveillance brigades have been strengthened; and
- women's groups have created vegetable gardens to reduce female outmigration.

In addition, more than 30 village development committees have been strengthened throughout the region, and are now in charge of planning and managing for local sustainable agriculture, livestock management, environmental conservation and food security.

In the Tigray region in northern Ethiopia, the regional government has recognized that water is the most critical variable for improving food security. Through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, CIDA is providing assistance to the Tigray region through the Water Harvesting and Institutional Strengthening in Tigray (WHIST) project. The purpose of this project is to help the Ethiopian government reduce the impact of drought and move toward food self-sufficiency through a new water development and management agency. Canada's input will be provided in short-term

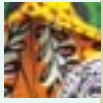
intervals. The emphasis will be on institutional strengthening based on the establishment of good professional practices, with senior specialists in various disciplines related to water resource and irrigation development acting as mentors to Ethiopian staff.

In Haiti, land is extremely degraded, mainly because high levels of poverty in rural areas force people to cut down massive tracts of forests. This results in soil degradation and erosion, further exacerbating poverty in the region. Through a \$5-million rural development project, Oxfam-Québec is helping reclaim agricultural land in the Nippes region through agroforestry and improved water and soil management. Reforestation of the region using multi-use species that provide fruit, fuelwood and lumber ensures income by directly creating employment. The plantations, together with existing forests, are managed by adapting agroforestry principles to local needs. And so that local communities can continue to sustainably manage their own resources after completion of the project, they are being encouraged to participate in the strengthening of community institutions.



Photo: PFRA

Desertification is a serious threat to human well-being. As the land's capability to support people, agriculture, and livestock decreases, there is increasingly less to work with — and difficulties grow. Degraded agricultural lands lead to food, water and fuelwood shortages, along with malnutrition and related health problems, poverty and, ultimately, migration and increased conflict. Much of Canadian development assistance is targeted at promoting social development, including helping people meet their basic needs. Within this context, taking steps to combat desertification can help people avoid the downward spiral of environmental degradation and poverty.

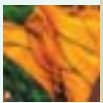


CIDA photo: Roger LeMoynes

Combatting desertification also means addressing inequalities. Because they have been perceived as unproductive, drylands have long been excluded from the benefits of national and international development efforts. Desertification and its related threats of food insecurity and rural poverty represent tremendous costs to developing societies in terms of economic and social potential. Consequently, within a given country, dryland populations have been more vulnerable to climatic shocks and poverty. But this vulnerability is also felt differentially at a local level: women and children often bear the brunt of land degradation.



Particularly in times of crisis, inequalities prevent women and children, especially girls, from taking up opportunities that would increase their chances of pulling out of poverty. Women are particularly vulnerable in areas affected by desertification. Not only are they exposed to higher stress by the ever-diminishing supplies of food, fuelwood and other household necessities, but they are also often required to be breadwinners in addition to their domestic and caregiver roles, particularly in response to male outmigration.



The UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) places strong emphasis on ensuring a special role for women in the fight against desertification, by promoting their involvement in decision making and in the implementation of concrete rehabilitation activities. CIDA's policy on gender equality also reflects this concern, and all of CIDA's projects and programs integrate a consideration of gender issues.

CIDA photo: Roger LeMoynes



EASING THE PLIGHT OF WOMEN

Alternatives, a Canadian NGO that works for social justice in developing countries, is helping combat desertification in the region of Palmarin, Senegal. By helping women organize themselves collectively to become more financially independent, Alternatives is improving the social and economic well-being of the region as well as women's abilities to make more environmentally sustainable choices.

In Northern Brazil, where intensive agriculture has robbed the soil of much of its nutrients, most of the men have left to seek employment elsewhere. This has left the women to eke out a living for them-

selves and their families, all the while falling deeper into poverty. Thanks to a little ingenuity and cooperation, all of this has changed. With the help of Alternatives and Brazil's Terrazul Institute, the region's 275 women have collectively established a viable alternative at minimum financial and ecological cost. Using technology provided by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the women have begun deriving commercial products, such as juice and flour, from a wild fruit that grows in abundance in the region. The final step is to create a cooperative to market their new commercial products.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGY

The UNCCD recognizes that there is still much to learn about the causes and effects of desertification. It also recognizes that land degradation can be minimized with both new and traditional technologies, ranging from satellite monitoring to the terracing of steep hill slopes. For these reasons, the Convention encourages strengthening international cooperation among scientific researchers, emphasizing that science and technology must respond to people's needs.

Canada's commitment to the integration of science in development is exemplified by the work of IDRC, a public corporation created in 1970 to help researchers and communities in developing countries find solutions to their social, economic and environmental problems.

A key partner in the implementation of the UNCCD, International Development Research Centre (IDRC) plays a critical role in helping combat desertification in developing countries. IDRC has three decades of experience helping developing countries apply science and technology to their environment and development problems, including desertification. Over the past two years, IDRC has contributed more than \$35 million to desertification-related research throughout Africa, as well as in the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Southern Africa, where rapid population growth is exacerbating resource scarcity and hence competition for shared resources, IDRC is looking for ways to improve transboundary natural resource management. In Mali, "live fences" are being used to help increase farm-family and community welfare, while reducing both the degradation of the natural resource base and conflicts within and between communities. Links between gender and agriculture are being studied in Uganda and Zimbabwe. In the Nagaland region of India, new technologies and indigenous agricultural systems are being integrated to improve natural resource management and the livelihoods of farmers. And in Mongolia, researchers are looking into ways to sustainably manage the region's grasslands and common natural resources.

CANADIAN DEPARTMENTS SHARE THEIR EXPERTISE

In Egypt, where water is in scarce supply, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's (AAFC) Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration is helping the Egyptian government develop an effective and coordinated system for sustainable water management. CIDA's \$20-million contribution to this project complements a \$12.5-million investment by the Egyptian government. The project has already led to improvements in water quality, water management and sustainable use. Long-term goals include improving Egypt's water management policies to ensure the integrated management and sustainable use of all water resources.

CIDA is contributing \$3.5 million to a project in China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region involving collaboration between the Canadian and Chinese departments of agriculture. In this project, CIDA is working with China to establish four sustainable agriculture demonstration sites. Two sites will demonstrate approaches used on the Canadian prairies to rehabilitate denuded grasslands and sustain rangeland for livestock production. The other two sites will demonstrate minimum tillage techniques

developed in Canada but adapted to China through an earlier CIDA project in Hebei Province. Ultimately, Chinese trainers will learn how to use the latest tillage, forage, grazing and extension technology so they can share the knowledge with farmers and herders.

Natural Resources Canada is helping African countries establish a digital geo-referenced database on land cover:

By preparing the basic geographic information needed for existing and future natural resource programs, the Africover project will reinforce national and sub-regional capacities to establish, update and use geographic information obtained primarily through remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Funded by the FAO, this project is being developed by and for all of Africa, in response to national requests for assistance.

The Canada Centre for Remote Sensing (CCRS), together with other international associations, is contributing to the development of the Global Geospatial Data Infrastructure. By making Canada's numerous databases of geographic information accessible through the Internet, Canada is helping geospatial users worldwide to monitor and evaluate the occurrence of dryland degradation, among other things. CCRS is also working with South Africans on a Canadian-led working group to develop international standards for geographic information and geomatics.

CCRS also participates in the GlobeSAR program, which was initiated in the early 1990s to provide training in radar remote sensing to African and Asian countries, using Canada's RADARSAT satellite. The first phase of the program demonstrated the satellite's usefulness for monitoring soil degradation in zones affected by desertification. The second phase of this Canadian-funded program, which is jointly coordinated by CCRS, the University

Photo: Canada Centre for Remote Sensing (CCRS) & Canadian Space Agency (CSA)



Coastal Kenya RADARSAT image. Satellite images monitor potential changes in the terrain, soil moisture, and vegetation.

of Sherbrooke, and several Canadian companies, is extending this expertise to 11 Latin American countries. Recognizing the central role of universities in training the next generation of remote-sensing users and educators, a key component of GlobeSAR-2 is university-based training in the participating Latin American countries.

Canadian and developing-country universities and research institutions are also active partners in efforts to transfer knowledge and technology to developing countries, from exploring new natural resource management models to developing soil fertility enhancement techniques.

For example, as part of this collaboration, Canada is working with McGill University toward the establishment of a Water Management Training Centre in Central Asia to target several of the key tension points identified around water scarcity in the region. CIDA is contributing \$1.8 million to this project, which focusses on various levels: *policy*, through study tours by high-level government officials; *management*, through seminars and short courses that promote integrated water management and cooperation; and *technical*, through courses that address the specific needs of technical staff, such as ecosystem management, on-farm water management, water pricing and cost recovery, water users' associations, and water laws.

Enhancing effectiveness through mainstreaming

The Convention to Combat Desertification stresses the importance of improving the effectiveness of official development assistance (ODA) flows. To this end, it seeks to engage donors and recipients in an enhanced partnership — one that ensures that programs are better coordinated, that funding is based on the needs of the affected countries, and that recipients reap maximum benefit from available resources. This partnership is premised on improved communication and coordination. This means that agreements should be built through consultative processes that start within the affected country.

One major lesson of years of development cooperation is that supportive policies are key to the effectiveness of activities to promote sustainable development and in particular to combat desertification. Without a policy framework that is conducive to sustainable natural resource management, even the best-planned projects can go awry. As discussions at the fifth Conference of the Parties of the UNCCD have shown, it is now becoming evident that policies must be harmonized at the national level, and that the issue of combatting desertification should be integrated into a country's overall development agenda. This is reflected in the UNCCD, which emphasizes the need to coordinate desertification-related activities with both research efforts and strategies inspired by related concerns.



CIDA photo: Patricio Baeza



CIDA photo: Roger LeMoyne

MAINSTREAMING DESERTIFICATION

CIDA also recognizes the need to help its program officers and partners better understand the issues surrounding desertification, and how to program to combat desertification. To facilitate this process, CIDA's Desertification Convention Office has developed a *Desertification Tool Kit* that provides a succinct summary of relevant background and geographic

information; elaborates the linkages between desertification, development priorities and global issues; and contains a how-to section on programming and coding, as well as links to related sources of information. After its initial internal release, the tool kit will be made available to a wider audience, both on-line through CIDA's Web site and in hard copy.

An example of Canada's response to the need for policy integration is the support provided to the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) since 1992. A high-level, non-governmental consultative organization, CCICED strengthens cooperation and exchange between China and the international community on environment and development issues. In the 2002–2007 period, CCICED is expected to consist of approximately 40 eminent members (20 Chinese and 20 international), each capable of providing China's leadership with sound policy advice of relevance to China's environmental challenges in the early years of the 21st century. To enable Council members to collectively maximize their potential as an independent environmental advisory body to the government of China, CIDA's CCICED III project will contribute \$8 million to CCICED over the next five years, and additional contributions will be provided by the government of China and other donors. CIDA's contribution to CCICED is managed by the David Lam Centre of Simon Fraser University and the Council's Secretariat is housed in China's State Environmental Protection Administration.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Developing countries consistently express concern about lacking the capacity to fulfil their obligations to implement the Convention to Combat Desertification as well as other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). In light of this, CIDA has undertaken considerable policy research in the past year on how to help developing countries improve their capacity to implement the various MEAs, recognizing the synergies and commonalities between the agreements.

This has involved the development of a *Primer on Capacity Development for the Implementation of*

MEAs, which explores the principles of capacity development in the context of environment sustainability, and elaborates several of the major MEAs and their capacity development requirements. The primer provides an excellent introduction to the key issues surrounding capacity development in the context of MEAs. Subsequent work has examined prior CIDA programming in capacity development for environmental sustainability, its focus and its influence in meeting overall MEA objectives.

SPREADING the NEWS

A radical departure of the UNCCD from other conventions is its emphasis on a bottom-up approach with strong local participation in decision making. Communities and their leaders, as well as NGOs, specialists and government officials, are expected to work closely together. For this innovative and complex process to work, awareness campaigns are needed to inform people about the opportunities presented in the Convention.

RAISING AWARENESS

The Developing Countries Farm Radio Network works in partnership with rural radio broadcasters to fight poverty and food insecurity by distributing much-needed, practical information to small-scale farmers and rural communities in more than a hundred countries. In South Africa, the women of Luphisa reclaimed a gully and turned it into a green, fertile place. In Fiji, farmers make drylands more productive with planting pits. One recent script highlights the particular effects of deforestation on women's health — further to walk for firewood, leading to chronic injuries, and fewer hot meals, leading to malnutrition — and suggests actions that women could take to combat desertification. Elsewhere, farmers use money and a little labour to prevent soil erosion using half-moon ditches.

A CIDA-funded initiative to help Haiti reclaim degraded land informs farmers about more appropriate farming techniques and practices, through a series of booklets, *Machete Verde*, with simple text and pictures. These booklets, also available on CD-ROM, include information on soil conservation and

other aspects of farm management, such as pesticide use, animal husbandry, fire control and agroforestry. This initiative replicates a successful Canadian project in Central America, and is being distributed through local organizations and schools.

Canada also supports activities to raise awareness among Canadians about the problem of desertification in developing countries. Since September 2001, a Canadian NGO, *Jeunesse du Monde*, has developed a series of activities designed to sensitize Quebec youth to the global importance of water use and conservation in the world's drylands. By playing a puzzle game, *Water: A Global Game*, youth build on the knowledge obtained through *Jeunesse du Monde*'s long-standing partnership with Burkina Faso to simulate an international water summit, participate in discussions about water use in developing countries, and prepare a youth position statement on global water use for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, among other activities.

(right) CIDA photo: Pierre St-Jacques



ACHIEVING SYNERGY

In recent years, there has been much activity promoting the advantages of creating and exploiting synergies, not only between the various global environmental agreements, but also among efforts made toward social and economic development and environmental protection at all levels — from local to international.

The increase in, often overlapping, conventions, agreements and agendas — on desertification, climate change, biodiversity and pollutants, as well as various aspects of economic and social development — has become overwhelming. There are, however, many opportunities to build synergy among the activities undertaken in support of these various commitments. And focussing on these synergies makes sense, among other things because of the interdependence between plants, animals and humans, soil, water, and air. When Canada cooperates to combat desertification, it is helping to ensure food security and sustainable development, as well as mitigating and adapting to climate change, while at the same time preserving the planet's rich biological diversity.

For many dryland countries, climate change could mean the intensification of drought and desertification. As the global climate warms, higher rates of evaporation will cause drier conditions, increasing the frequency of droughts and vulnerability to desertification. On the other hand, desertification may also exacerbate climate change by reducing surface soil moisture and thereby increasing air temperatures in affected areas. Behaviours associated with land degradation, such as deforestation and fuelwood burning, not only contribute to climate change by releasing carbon stored in the soil and vegetation, they also reduce biological diversity. In addition, desertification makes affected people more vulnerable to climate changes.

Dryland ecosystems are particularly vulnerable. As home to many endemic animal, plant and microbial species, which evolved over centuries to survive such harsh conditions, dryland degradation inevitably leads to the destruction of a unique ecosystem. Conversely, habitat conservation and restoration helps prevent land from becoming degraded, while at the same time maintaining a more stable climate. The conservation of biological diversity also helps an ecosystem withstand climatic shocks such as droughts or floods.

Although there is now a large body of scientific evidence pointing to the linkages between climate change, desertification and loss of biodiversity, the challenge lies in identifying the synergies and implementing them locally for the benefit of affected and vulnerable people.

Recognizing these clear linkages, CIDA is actively working to identify ways to implement the three conventions that came out of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment Development (UNCED) — climate change, biodiversity and desertification — in a synergistic way. Synergies create multiple benefits: by strengthening

the effectiveness and cohesiveness of efforts in support of the conventions, unnecessary duplication is avoided, maximizing financial and human resources.

As part of these ongoing efforts, CIDA has focussed significant energy and resources on promoting synergies between the desertification and climate change conventions.



Photo: IDRC/D. Anton

CIDA has been actively involved in the international negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). At the resumed sixth Conference of the Parties, CIDA supported the creation of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Fund and jump-started the fund with a commitment to contribute \$10 million. This fund is intended to support the work programs of LDCs, which include the preparation of national adaptation programs of action (NAPAs).

CIDA has supported the NAPA process since its inception because of its strong link to the Agency's mandate. This process, aside from being entirely driven by developing countries, recognizes the urgent situation of LDCs (including many small island developing states), which emit very little in the way of greenhouse gases yet are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Many LDCs have identified urgent adaptation needs through, for example, the preparation of national action programs (NAPs) to combat desertification or the development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans.

In terms of synergies, this means that countries elaborating NAPAs could benefit fully from their past efforts against desertification, such as in the areas of participatory planning and engagement of key stakeholder groups.

In addition to these efforts on the international front, CIDA supports a number of projects through the Canada Climate Change Development Fund (CCCCDF), which also take advantage of synergies between combatting desertification and conserving biological diversity. This five-year, \$100-million fund was announced by the Government of Canada in 2000 to provide development assistance through CIDA for technical transfer and related activities, in order to help developing countries in the global effort to respond to climate change in a manner that promotes sustainable development.

IMPLEMENTING SYNERGIES

Among the Canada Climate Change Development Fund (CCCCDF) projects that contribute to combatting desertification in developing countries is one that supports governments and people in the Sahel in their efforts to adapt to climate change. This \$5-million project supports member countries of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control (CILSS) by building the capacity of the Regional Training Centre for Agrometeorology and Operational Hydrology (AGRHYMET Centre). This project will also see the development and implementation of a series of pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in selected Sahelian countries, and will seek to develop better understanding of climate change issues in CILSS countries.

In India, Canada's International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) is working with the Indian Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) and the Centre for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo (CICERO) to assess the vulnerability of

India's agricultural sector to both climate change and economic globalization. The CCCCCDF is contributing \$600,000 to this project, which is expected to provide information and knowledge crucial for strengthening the adaptability of the Indian agricultural sector in a way that reduces poverty, enhances food security and promotes sustainable development.

And in Paraguay, the CCCCCDF is contributing close to \$375,000 to a project to build Paraguay's capacity to measure and monitor the carbon sequestration capacity of its critically endangered Atlantic forests and to integrate participatory sustainable economic development with the conservation of biodiversity. By identifying and implementing sustainable land-use practices, and enhancing the welfare of local people by promoting sustainable forestry activities, this two-year project jointly implemented by the Canadian Nature Federation and Guyra Paraguay is helping to prevent the degradation of Paraguay's forests.

Building NEW TIES

The examples above are only a few illustrations of how Canadians cooperate with developing countries to combat desertification within the broader framework of global efforts to reduce poverty. In 2001 and 2002, Canada also participated in a number of processes directly linked to the Convention to Combat Desertification. Canada's involvement in these processes, along with the lessons gathered from development experience, has enriched Canada's understanding of desertification issues and opened new doors for integrating the UNCCD into ongoing development cooperation efforts.

During the recent process to review Canada's national aid program, *Strengthening Aid Effectiveness*, it became apparent that effective development cooperation is often hampered by a lack of coordination —among donors and among policies. This challenge can be overcome, and any efforts to improve coordination will only enhance Canada's partnerships.

What does it mean to coordinate? It means more than simply exchanging information. It means analysing ongoing and planned initiatives to identify possible synergies, any unnecessary duplication and lessons learned, and then making the appropriate changes.

DONORS

Canada is involved in donor coordination in several forums at the country and international levels — UNDP donor round tables, thematic groups, and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), to name a few. Through the OECD, Canada participates in deliberations on mainstreaming MEAs into development assistance programming, which includes a focus on the links between climate change and sustainable development. CIDA is also a member of the OECD's Sahel and West Africa Club, which looks at issues of relevance to the region, including those related to desertification.

Under the framework of the UNCCD, efforts to facilitate donor cooperation have been undertaken by the Convention Secretariat and the Global Mechanism, namely by exploring the role of chef-de-file. The chef-de-file is a donor who takes on a coordination function to assist the host country in rallying national and international support for combatting desertification. Canada was proud to take on this responsibility for Ghana at the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and is now actively working to find ways to assist the Ghanaian government.

DEVELOPING-COUNTRY PARTNERS

In the hope of generating more genuine partnership with developing countries, and in light of Canada's growing involvement in combatting desertification in Ghana, CIDA recently participated in the National Validation Forum in Accra, which is the last step in a series of public consultations on the National Action Plan. This experience provided CIDA staff with key information and contacts, which have proven useful for the elaboration of concrete programming initiatives, as well as with a first-hand view of Ghana's commitment to combatting desertification.

CIDA photo: Roger LeMoigne



Canada has initiated a similar partnership with China. In 2001, CIDA contributed \$30,000 through the UNCCD's Global Mechanism to the organization of a partnership coordination meeting in Beijing that brought together Chinese government officials, donor nations, UN agencies and NGOs. The meetings revealed significant, cost-effective opportunities, both at the macro-policy level and at the field level, to enhance Canada's support to China's efforts against desertification.

Through these efforts, CIDA has also developed strong ties with the Global Mechanism, which has acted as a broker for a number of initiatives, and has enabled Canada to reach new partners.

For example, together with German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Canada has joined the Strategic Partnership Agreement spearheaded by the Global Mechanism in support of Central Asian countries. Canada's contribution to this partnership will focus on the synergy between climate change and desertification through funding opportunities presented by the South Europe/Central Asia Climate Change Support Fund, especially in the areas of adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change and carbon sequestration.

A similar partnership framework is being used to channel Canada's support to the implementation of the UNCCD within the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Canada has a long history of working bilaterally with virtually all of the Southern African countries. Canada's overarching Southern Africa regional programming framework specifically addresses environment as a crosscutting theme, emphasizing areas such as transboundary water management. Although all SADC countries have ratified the Convention to Combat Desertification, only four countries in the sub-region have active NAPs.

CIDA recognizes that the knowledge and experience gained by countries moving forward in implementing NAPs would provide lessons learned that could benefit countries that were lagging behind in this process. Thus, in 2001, CIDA provided support for the Global Mechanism to organize a partnership-building workshop that led to the establishment of the Sub-Regional Support Facility for Southern Africa (SSFSA).

The SSFSA is funded by multilateral and bilateral donors to provide assistance to mainstreaming desertification in development efforts in the region. The SSFSA is used to facilitate the development and implementation of NAPs, as well as a Sub-Regional Action Programme (SRAP) to address transboundary desertification and land degradation issues. It enables countries to identify needs and creates opportunities to match needs with available resources. Canada has contributed \$95,000 to this facility to support activities such as technical support to SADC governments, policy dialogue, project formulation, environmental impact assessment, training and communications.



CIDA photo

Charles Bassett, CIDA Senior VP at the signing ceremony of the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Global Mechanism, the ADB, the GTZ and Central Asia Republics, in Geneva, October 2001.

CIVIL SOCIETY

In addition to supporting governments, this initiative supports the integration of efforts by civil society. In September 2001, representatives of Southern African desertification NGOs belonging to the Réseau international d'ONG sur la désertification (RIOD) network gathered to develop a three-year strategy. In support of this initiative, the Global Mechanism established an NGO and Civil Society Funding Window under the SSFSA. This NGO funding window, to which Canada contributed a further \$35,000, acts as a financial mechanism specifically for implementing projects in the SADC sub-region.

Finally, Canada contributed an additional \$205,000 through the Global Mechanism to help South African civil society implement environmental agreements and prepare for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Activities include the organization of a legislators' conference which will provide the opportunity for policy dialogue about poverty and land degradation, and the instruments available to address them. Among the expected outcomes, participants will develop guidelines for legislators on the implementation of the UNCCD and the integration of desertification issues into policy and decision making.

Other activities include workshops and presentations intended to encourage a more active network of NGOs in Southern Africa. Although the UNCCD emphasizes the participation of local populations, many local organizations in the region lack the capacity to effectively represent local concerns at the national and international levels. By involving local populations in the sharing of information and ideas that respond to shared objectives of the three UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) conventions, it is also hoped that participants will increasingly establish links between the issues during their discussions on how to reverse desertification, stem deforestation, strengthen early warning systems, improve agricultural management of soils and reduce poverty.



conclusion

Combatting desertification is primarily a problem of sustainable development: it is a matter of addressing poverty and enhancing human well-being, as well as preserving the environment.

Both a cause and a consequence of many social, economic and environmental problems, such as food insecurity, rural poverty, the loss of biological diversity and climate change, desertification is at the heart of the complex web of challenges faced by many developing countries.

Canada's response to the imperatives set out in the Convention to Combat Desertification has relied on the active participation of a wide range of partners from all sectors of society, in Canada and in developing countries. Over the past year, Canada has taken large strides to enhance its commitment to combatting desertification by exploring new ways to channel support more effectively and by seeking to integrate the fight against desertification into the mainstream of development cooperation.

Looking ahead, the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to take stock of the progress made in promoting sustainable development. It is also an opportunity to renew Canada's commitment to the principles of Agenda 21 and to establish new partnerships in the pursuit of common goals. As President of the fifth Conference of the Parties to the UNCCD, Canada will be taking the messages of the Convention to Combat Desertification to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

(left) CIDA photo: Pierre St-Jacques



CIDA photo: Pierre St-Jacques



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La version française est aussi disponible sous le titre
Partenaires dans la lutte contre la désertification
© Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2002

ISBN 0-662-32369-6
Catalogue No. E94-324/2002E

Printed and bound in Canada
Design: Acart Communications Inc.

Cover photo: CIDA/David Barbour