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The Great Green Wall Initiative

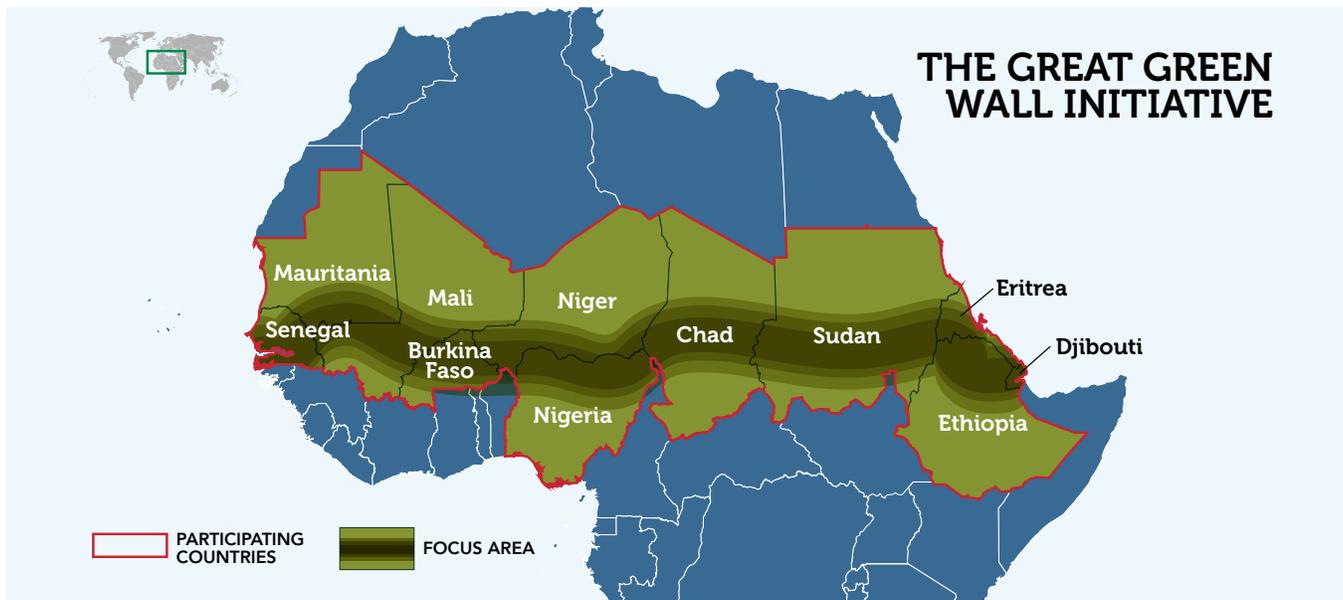
Supporting Resilient Livelihoods and Landscapes in the Sahel

Over a decade ago, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), in close partnership with the World Bank, invested in what has become a landmark project for Africa and the world—the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) in the Sahel.

Today, with the involvement of a growing number of countries, international agencies,

and local communities across the Sahel, life has started coming back to the land, bringing improved food security, jobs, and stability to people's lives.

There is an immense opportunity to build on this success by scaling-up investments for the GGWI.



Evolution of a vision

Visionary leaders in Africa began to dream of a Great Green Wall in the 1970s, when vast swathes of fertile land in the Sahel started to become severely degraded.

Perhaps no other region on Earth is as vulnerable to climate change as the Sahel. Temperature increases are projected to be 1.5 times higher than the global average and will disproportionately affect millions of people across the region. The Sahel is also one of the most environmentally degraded regions in the world, and it is characterized by political and social vulnerabilities. Because desertification and land degradation exacerbate the effects of drought, the threat of the Sahara Desert spreading south into the Sahel is considered a major challenge that no country can tackle on its own.

The Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) is a unified vision and response to these challenges. Leaders of 11 countries in the Sahel conceived the vision in 2005, and the GGWI officially launched in 2007 under the auspices of the African Union. Today, the GGWI includes 21 countries from across the continent, and the sustainable management of precious and scarce natural resources, such as water and arable land, has emerged as fundamental to maintaining stability and resilience in the Sahel.

The GGWI countries have made considerable progress in mobilizing and engaging diverse communities and partners to support their collective effort in the Sahel, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank Group, the European Union, and the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Building on the success this far will require even greater collaboration and effective coordination by all partners.

From tree planting to sustainable land management

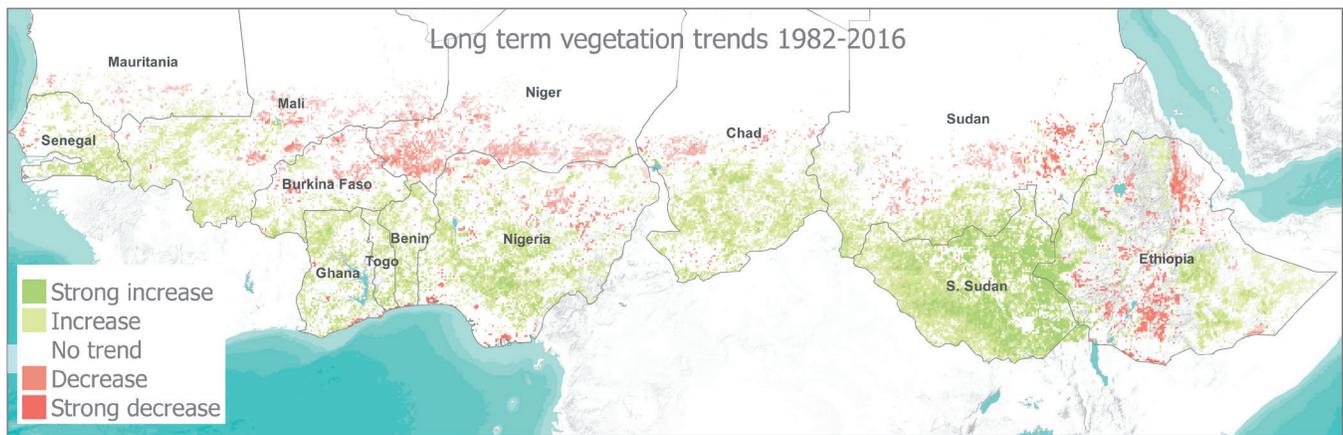
The GGWI began as a tree planting venture. The collective vision of a sustainable and resilient Sahel has long been far broader, however, and today the GGWI is focused on integrated management of natural resources as a means to transform livelihoods and landscapes by improving crop and livestock productivity, restoring degraded lands, and promoting resilient landscapes for food security.

Over the years, a number of significant partnerships have advanced the dream of improving the health of the land in the Sahel and at the same time improving the health of the communities that depend upon it. The power of the GGWI vision lies in the fact that the local benefits it generates also generate global benefits for water, land, and nature.

The TerrAfrica Partnership for Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa

In 2005, the World Bank, in collaboration with African countries and other development partners, launched TerrAfrica, a coalition-based partnership to address land degradation by increasing the scale, efficiency, and effectiveness of investments in sustainable land management (SLM).

The first comprehensive effort to combat land degradation and desertification under the TerrAfrica platform was the **Strategic Investment Program on Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa**. Launched in 2008, the program provided \$1 billion of development financing, including \$150 million in GEF resources and \$580 million from the International Development Association, to invest in 36 projects across 27 countries. Nine countries¹



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in the Sahel region participated and eventually the program became the catalyst for the next generation of integrated landscape management investments to restore ecosystem services, improve soil health, and increase crop productivity. The program reached about 4.8 million beneficiaries and brought over 2.7 million hectares of land under SLM. This achievement helped establish the foundation for the **Sahel and West Africa Program in Support of the Great Green Wall Initiative (SAWAP)**, a major financial contribution to sustainable landscapes in the region that began in 2011.

The Sahel and West Africa Program in Support of the GGWI (SAWAP)

SAWAP is a \$1.1 billion multi-trust fund programmatic approach to implement SLM in targeted landscapes and climate vulnerable areas. Under the program, 12 countries² in the Sahel and West Africa region have implemented practical solutions to reduce poverty, achieve security, improve resilience, and ensure environmental security and sustainability.

Under SAWAP, a regional project on Building Resilience through Innovation, Communications, and Knowledge Services (BRICKS) was established to engage diverse stakeholders in supporting participating countries on knowledge and learning for scaling-up innovations across the region. This project, implemented by three regional centers of excellence—the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel, the Sahara and Sahel Observatory, and the international Union for Conservation of Nature—has reinforced SAWAP as an information hub that facilitates south-south cooperation on knowledge, monitoring, and other operational services among the Sahelian countries and the broader GGWI partnership.

SAWAP has brought over 1.6 million of hectares of land under SLM, reduced anthropogenic pressure on forests, increased adoption of participatory approaches in natural resources management, and increased both investments in SLM as well as income-generating activities for vulnerable households. The project has reached over 22 million direct beneficiaries across all 12 countries.

Building on SLM achievements for Resilient Landscapes and Food Systems

The GEF's Integrated Approach Program on **Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa (FS-IAP)** is a multi-agency program that promotes sustainability and resilience through management of the natural resources—land, water, soils, trees and genetic resources—that underpin food and nutrition security in the region. The program, launched in GEF-6, covers twelve countries across the drylands of Sub-Saharan Africa, of which six (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Ethiopia) are in the Sahel and West Africa Region.

The program takes an integrated and holistic approach focusing on three key priorities: engaging stakeholders in promoting collective action and coherent policies; intensifying, diversifying, and adapting practices for a

- 1 Senegal, the Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. SAWAP is financed primarily by the GEF, the LDCF, the Special Climate Change Fund, the IDA, and country contributions
- 2 Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, and Togo



Photo by Claudiovidri / Shutterstock

large-scale transformation of agro-ecosystems; and evaluating the impact in terms of sustainability and resilience to improve decision making in the agricultural sector and their consequences in terms of food security. The FS-IAP helps smallholder farmers strengthen soil health, improve access to drought-tolerant seeds, adjust planting periods and cropping portfolios, and enhance on-farm agro-biodiversity.

The Impact Programs in the current GEF Replenishment Cycle (GEF-7), especially the **Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Impact Program**, led by the World Bank, and the **Dryland Sustainable Landscapes**, led by FAO, also provide opportunities for Sahelian countries to program resources to support objectives of the GGWI. Both Impact Programs employ an integrated approach to implementing SLM and delivering on voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality targets that countries have set. Restoration of productive landscapes features as an important element, especially in degraded agro-forestry systems. Also, many SAWAP countries have already initiated follow up SLM operations at large scale using World Bank's IDA financing, such as Ethiopia (\$600 million) and Nigeria (\$250 million), illustrating the leveraging effect of SAWAP over time.

Supporting the next chapter of the GGWI - Boosting Collaboration and Innovative Financing

With the shift in focus of the GGWI from tree-planting to sustainable land management, countries are now tackling systemic challenges in an integrated and holistic manner for long-term sustainability of the entire Sahel region. This approach has enabled them to not only generate global environmental benefits, but also increase opportunities for transforming the production systems that underpin livelihoods of smallholder farmers and pastoralist communities.

As countries in the Sahel continue to advance their collective vision under the GGWI, the need for stronger support and engagement by development partners, International Financing Institutions, and the private sector remains apparent. This is not only critical for harnessing emerging technologies and innovations, but also for promoting policy options that unlock market opportunities and capital for scaling up SLM. Financial needs for impact at scale are estimated to average between \$40–130 million per country annually.³ This will require the mobilization of more resources from a range of sources domestically and internationally, including Multilateral Development Banks, special financing mechanisms such as the GEF, the Least Developed

Countries Fund, and the Green Climate Fund, as well as bilateral partners, Civil Society Organizations, and the private sector. The GCF could potentially be a key mechanism in scaling-up the achievements made to the entire Sahel in a sustainable way.

Among the financing instruments, the World Bank's new PROGREEN multi donor trust fund⁴ is particularly relevant to the GGWI region's countries, as it intends to support countries to deliver on their national objectives and related global goals and commitments (e.g., Nationally Determined Contributions, the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Bonn Challenge, AFR100 or the GGWI) related to terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity, land restoration, desertification, and climate change in an integrated and cost-effective manner.

The challenges across the Sahel remain daunting. Yet with new investments, collaboration, and support for the next phase of this unique Africa-led initiative, the Great Green Wall can turn the dream of its founders into reality.

3 Cervigni, R., and Michael, M., editors. 2016. *Confronting Drought in Africa's Drylands: Opportunities for Enhancing Resilience*. Africa Development Forum Series, Washington, DC: World Bank.

4 Expected to be launched around the September 2019 UN Climate Summit in New York.

The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has provided **over \$18.1 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$94.2 billion in co-financing** for more than **4500 projects in 170 countries**. Today, the GEF is an international partnership of 183 countries, international institutions, civil society organizations and the private sector that addresses global environmental issues.