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The Great Green Wall Initiative

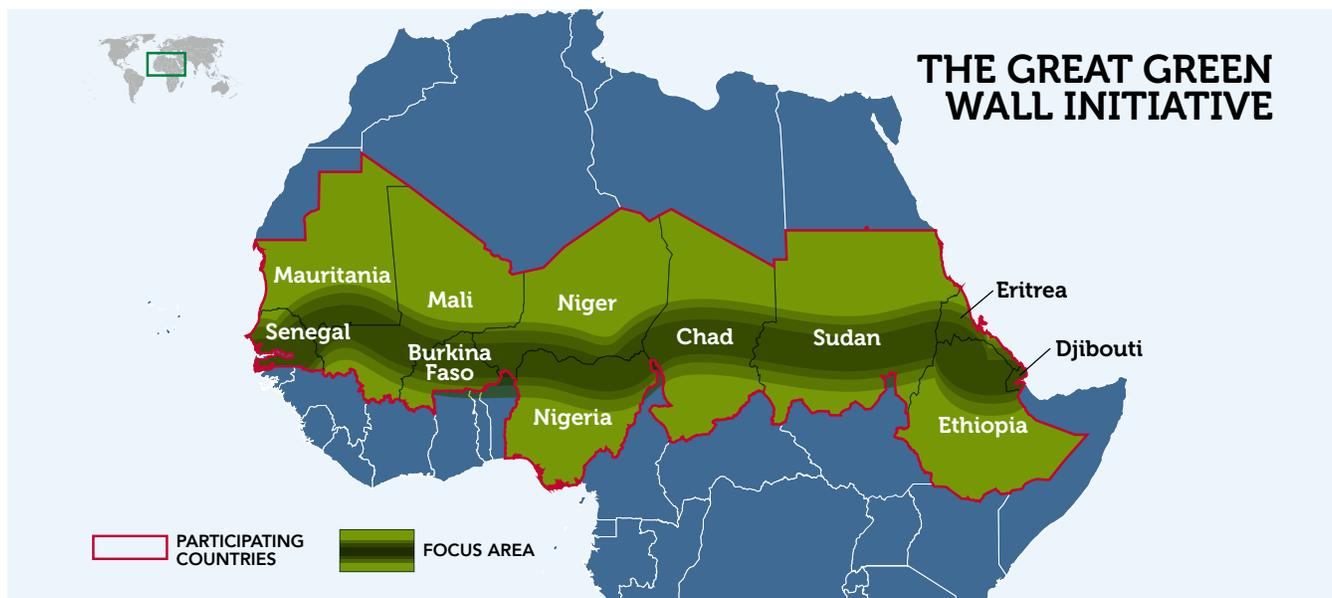
Supporting Resilient Livelihoods and Landscapes in the Sahel

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.



Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in the Sahel—Evolution of Financing for Global Environmental Benefits

Perhaps no other region on Earth is as vulnerable to climate change as the Sahel. Temperature increases in the Sahel are projected to be 1.5 times higher than the global average, and the region has the largest population of people who are disproportionately affected by global warming. The region is also one of the most environmentally degraded regions in the world, and it is characterized by political and social vulnerabilities. The sustainable management of precious and scarce natural resources, such as water and arable land, is thus a necessary condition for maintaining stability and resilience in the Sahel. This is a key priority under the Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI), which was launched in 2007 under the auspices of the African Union (AU).

Over the past decade, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) has played a leading role in influencing a shift from the initial vision of a tree planting venture, to one that is focused on integrated management of natural resources for transforming livelihoods and landscapes. During this period, the GEF in response to demands of countries in the region, helped to increasingly promote innovative practices for improving crop and livestock productivity and restoring degraded lands.

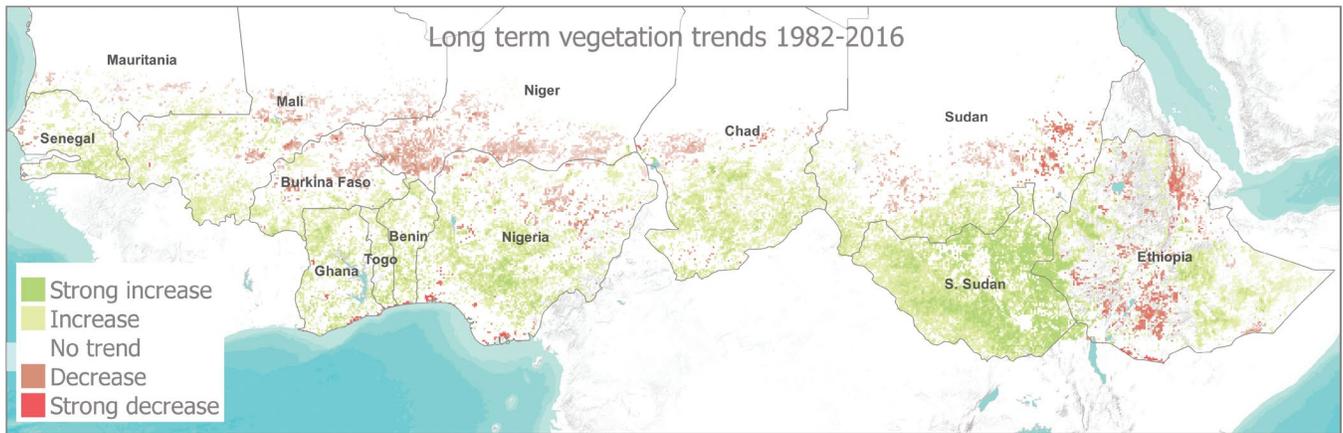
Degradation of land and water resources in the face of climate variability and change transcend institutional and geographical boundaries. Addressing the challenge requires an **integrated and holistic approach at scale**. In 2005, the World Bank, in collaboration with African countries and other development 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) across sub-Saharan countries. Co-chaired by the World Bank and the African Union's New

Partnership for Africa's Development Agency (NEPAD), the TerrAfrica Africa Partnership is present in 30 sub-Saharan countries and supported by 20 partners. It has leveraged \$3 billion of financing so far for sustainable land and water management related operations.

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 (SIP/TerrAfrica)**. Launched in 2008, the **SIP/TerrAfrica program** provided \$1 billion of development financing, including \$150 million in GEF resources and \$580 million from the International Development Association of the World Bank Group (IDA), to invest in 36 projects across 27 countries. The SIP/TerrAfrica portfolio included 9 countries¹ in the Sahel region and eventually became the catalyst for the next generation of integrated landscape management investments in the GGWI.

The SIP/TerrAfrica portfolio reached about 4.8 million beneficiaries and brought over 2.7 million hectares of land under SLM. As a convening platform, the program enabled testing, development, and application of a wide range of SLM technologies, tools, and implementation approaches to restore ecosystem services, improve soil health, and increase crop productivity. The SIP/TerrAfrica regional programmatic approach provided a vehicle for multi-scale (local, national, transboundary, and regional) investments in SLM, including a focus on cross-cutting issues for resilient livelihoods and landscapes. Most importantly, the SIP/TerrAfrica program established 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.

¹ Senegal, the Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti.



EO4SD Agriculture Cluster (DHI GRAS for WB, 2019) based on AVHRR NDVI3g time series (Jorge E. Pinzon and Compton J. Tucker)

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

In 2011, the GEF and World Bank deepened their engagement to support the ambitious GGWI, led by the African Union Commission, to transform the Sahel into a stable, sustainable, resilient region through improved management of natural resources, land, water, and climate risks. SAWAP is a \$1.1 billion multi-trust fund programmatic approach to implement SLM in targeted landscapes and climate vulnerable areas, mainly financed by the GEF, the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF), the IDA, and country contributions. Under the program, 12 countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, and Togo) have implemented practical solutions to reduce poverty, achieve security, improve resilience, and ensure environmental security and sustainability.

The projects, which cover multiple sectors and themes (agriculture, water, forest, energy, climate, and disaster risk reduction), have led to reduced land and soil erosion, improved soil fertility and fodder availability, increased crop yield, maintenance of biodiversity, diversified income, and increased resilience to climate change.

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. The BRICKS project, implemented by three regional centers of excellence—the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS), and the international Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)—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. The project has created a community of integrated natural resources management practitioners in the Sahel by promoting collaboration and sharing best practices and knowledge

on innovations in managing natural resources, climate change, and natural disasters.

To monitor land degradation/regeneration, as well as desertification and land use trends, the 12 countries participating in SAWAP share a set of performance indicators, such as: increase in land area with sustainable land/water management practices; changes in vegetation cover; institutions with increased adaptive capacity; change in carbon accumulation rates in biomass and soil; implementation of natural resources management plans; and uptake of sustainable land and watershed management practices/strategies.

SAWAP has resulted in **over 1.6 million of hectares of land under SLM**, reduction of anthropogenic pressure on forests, increased adoption of participatory approaches in natural resources management, increased investments in SLM, and income-generating activities for vulnerable households. The project has reached **over 22 million direct beneficiaries across all 12 countries**. Ethiopia, Sudan, Benin, Nigeria, and Niger registered positive changes in carbon stock (carbon sequestration) in their project implementation sites. As SAWAP is approaching closure, countries in the Sahel region have continued to demonstrate commitment to the GGWI by promoting resilient landscapes for food security.



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Building on SLM achievements to advance Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security

During the Sixth GEF Replenishment Cycle (GEF-6), the GEF launched an Integrated Approach Program on **Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa** (FS-IAP). The 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 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 FS-IAP 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 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. This approach facilitates the scaling-up of practices that support aspirations for food security, generate global environmental benefits, and promote the integrated management of natural resources in smallholder agriculture. The FS-IAP thereby 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 replenishment cycle (GEF-7), especially the Food Systems, Land Use, and Restoration Impact Program, (FOLUR) led by the World Bank as an implementing agency and the Dryland Sustainable Landscapes Impact Program (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 (LDN) 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), hence illustrating the leveraging effect of SAWAP over time.

Looking Ahead

Over the last decade, the GEF partnership with the World Bank has helped to shift focus of the GGWI from a

tree-planting venture to a sustainable land management approach. As a result, 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.² 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 LDCF, and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), as well as bilateral partners, Civil Society Organizations, and the private sector. Among the financing instruments, the new World Bank's PROGREEN multi donor trust fund³ is particularly relevant to the GGW region's countries as it intend to support countries to deliver on their national objectives and related global goals and commitments (e.g., Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), the UN Convention to Combat Deforestation (UNCCD), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Bonn Challenge, AFR100 or the GGW) related to terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity, land restoration, desertification, and climate change in an integrated and cost-effective manner.

2 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.

3 Expected to be launched around the 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.