Dear Members of the Accredited CSOs to the UNCCD,

It is our pleasure to share with you the latest issue of our newsletter that brings news related to land conservation and sustainable use of its resources.

This seventh issue includes news and work updates from the CSO networks, latest reports and publications, Panel’s feedback on a recently held CRIC19 and CSOs preparatory meeting, Science-Policy Interface (SPI) and upcoming events. Stay tuned!

As COVID-19 upends lives and livelihoods across the planet, many of us continue to cope with the fallout of the pandemic, mobilizing and building action to protect our lands, we would like to continue to compile these inspiring stories so please do not hesitate to tell us how you carry on with the situation, and how you are able to meet the needs arising among the communities you work with.

We look forward to staying in touch with you!

Your CSO Panel (Csopanel@unccd.int)

IN THE FOCUS

Dialogue between CSOs, Land Degradation Neutrality Fund and TAF
17 May 2021 (15:00 to 17:00 CET)

Accredited CSOs to the UNCCD are gradually invited to the forthcoming Dialogue between CSOs and representatives of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund at an online event on May 17th.

Register here
*Connection link will be sent to you after you’ve registered
*Discussions will be held in English

Background information:
Since January 2019, the UNCCD Secretariat facilitated the participation of the CSO Panel representatives in the Strategic Board Meetings of The Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Fund. Following this involvement, the Panel members started a constructive consultation process with the accredited CSOs from various regions to receive their insights, concerns and expectations on the LDN Fund operationalization.
In preparation for the CRIC19 of the UNCCD, a synthesis report was developed by the CSO Panel members on the Operationalization of the LDN Fund (report by the GM (ICCD/CRIC(19)/3)) and the CSOs statements were delivered on LDNF during CRIC19. Both documents reflected the existing gaps, concerns, and expectations of the accredited CSOs for the LDN Fund.

In response to the CSO’s questions and concerns, and to provide more clarification, LDN Fund developed a Q&A document. It was also agreed that a separate event/interactive dialogue should be organized with the CSOs and the LDN Fund stakeholders to share experiences and lessons learned on land restoration/SLM projects aiming to:

- Inform CSOs on the financed projects by the LDNF, focusing on the type of projects, the financing process, effects on communities and ecosystems considering environmental, social, and sustainability standards, and contribution to achieving LDN;
- Share the lessons learned on the funded projects that contribute to land restoration and sustainable land management while meeting the criteria of investment return;
- Exchange experience and recommendations between CSOs and LDN Fund regarding SLM and land restoration;
- Strengthen collaboration to achieve LDN.

As was said in CSOs statement on LDN Fund: The post-COVID recovery requests humanity to adopt a more robust alliance and solidarity at global, regional, national, and local levels to avoid, manage, and reverse land degradation and restore natural ecosystems. Providing an approach to achieve LDN in the full context of the SDGs has become a must. Therefore, CSOs are highly encouraged to join and contribute to this online event as part of the efforts in achieving LDN at various levels.

The CSO Panel is looking forward to meeting you all on May 17th!

CRIC-19: outcomes and feedback

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the 19th session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-19), a subsidiary body of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), convened as a virtual, non-negotiating meeting from March 15 to 19, 2021. Civil Society Organizations accredited to the Convention, took part to follow-up on the discussions between countries and express themselves through collectively developed statements.

The agenda covered, among other topics:
- Country-level progress in implementing the voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets;
- Financial flows for the implementation of the Convention, including the status of operationalizing the LDN Fund, and its affiliated Technical Assistance Facility; and
- Implementation of the UNCCD Drought Initiative, including a review of the UNCCD Intergovernmental Working Group on effective policy and implementation measures for addressing drought.
CRIC 19 was preceded by online consultations of the five UNCCD regional implementation annexes: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern Mediterranean, and Central and Eastern Europe.

The CSO panel facilitated civil society’s collective preparation and unified voice. Panel members prepared and circulated summaries of the Convention implementation reports discussed at the CRIC. These summaries and analysis report of CRIC19 are available at www.csopanel.org.

An online preparatory meeting was held on March 11, bringing together some 50 representatives of civil society organizations, more than half of whom came from the African and Asian regions. This meeting was opened by the Executive Secretary of the Convention, Mr. Ibrahim Thiaw, who recalled his attachment to the actions of CSOs, which contribute both to the assistance to populations affected by desertification, and to the civil monitoring of international negotiations. This meeting allowed the panel members to go back in details on the subjects that would be discussed during the CRIC19, and to report on the regional meetings of the Parties in preparation for the CRIC19.

During the five days of the CRIC19 meeting, CSOs had the opportunity to express themselves through collectively prepared statements. The Panel members would like to reiterate their thanks to the organizations that contributed to the drafting and review of these statements. The statements as well as the CRIC19 report prepared by the panel can be found on the panel’s website.

Key messages on each of the topics discussed are included in the official CRIC19 report.

CSOs furthermore encourage the Parties to consider the technical guide to integrate the VGGTs into the UNCCD and LDN implementation and CSOs urge the Parties to be proactive in ensuring the adoption and implementation of legal frameworks that guarantee access and adequate management of land to minority groups, such as pastoralists, and indigenous people.

The CRIC19 sessions can be viewed on the UN web-TV: CLICK HERE

IISD, through its Earth Negotiations Bulletin (ENB) Meeting Coverage, also provided daily web coverage as well as a summary and analysis report of CRIC 19: CLICK HERE
FAO and University of Greifswald have published a new report on “Integrated natural resources management (INRM) worldwide and in Uzbekistan”. The publication is an effort to describe the principles, history and main parts of INRM worldwide and in Uzbekistan. Specific attention has been made on the natural environments in the region of cold winter deserts of Uzbekistan. The report is a result of the project “Central Asian Desert Initiative”.

Photo by: Abdusalom Normatov

The world’s first of-its-kind mobile application that enables reporting of the water leaks in public places was launched by IDEA and the UNDP - GEF Kura Project in Azerbaijan. With the application called Hydro Heroes citizens can now report information and images on water leaks directly to municipal water companies, while further monitoring the reported case.

The new app can already be downloaded from Google Play store on Android and soon to become available on iOS.

The application also includes entertaining features, which are water-related games, quizzes, interesting facts, 360 ° videos of the Kura River, water usage calculator and AR function. Read more.

Green-marathon, the nation-wide tree-planting campaign was launched by IDEA and Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources joining hands to plant a total of one million trees in Azerbaijan, increasing green areas and raising awareness on the importance of protecting the environment. Apart from the planting activities spanning right across the country, free seedlings of fruit-bearing and evergreen trees were handed out to public at four supermarkets, inspiring everyone to support the efforts of planting trees for more sustainable and livable cities.
Plantation of 1 Million trees by partnering with 5,000 farmers from a drought prone area is the flagship project embarked by Yerala Project Society for a period of 5 years, since 2018.

Million tree plantation project is a very promising project to combat desertification in the drought prone area of eastern Maharashtra. It’s designed in a way so that the local environment can benefit from the plantation. The project involves local farmer families who plant trees around their houses, schools, temples and public places. The idea is to create clusters of microclimatic patches by establishing a biodiversity.

The organization involves 1000 individual farmer families to plant 200 different types of saplings around the house they are living. The families contributed their 1 acres of land, the manpower, water and many other resources to nurture the plantation. Whereas, the organization has been supporting them with the kit of organic manure and water absorber to be used for plantation on barren land around the house. The watering pipe and some emergency water support, especially during drought period, has been provided to assure successful plantation. Read more.

New episodes on the Drynet podcast series

Drynet recently published two French language podcasts as part of its series on the fault lines of modern food systems, which have been brought into sharp focus by the COVID crisis.

Globally, it is the most vulnerable who have had to shoulder the greatest burden and endure great hardship. The podcast series casts light on the complex systems that sustain life on the planet and put food on our tables. Experts in their fields explain how industrial agriculture contributes to unhealthy diets while also costing the earth in terms of environmental impacts like global warming and loss of biodiversity.

The podcast series presents the view and insights of:

**Episode 1:** “Food security and COVID: a global perspective” with Professor Patrick Caron, former Chair of the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) of the United Nations Committee on Food Security and Nutrition.

**Episode 2:** “Food security in the times of COVID: a view from the ground” with John Nzira, agroecology practitioner and trainer in southern Africa.

**Episode 3:** “Good Food for a Better Normal: reinventing food systems to serve humanity” with Professor Rachel Wynberg, scholar-activist, and bioeconomy researcher.


**Episode 5:** “Conservation through agriculture” with Dr Jonathan Davies, Senior Agriculture Advisor of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

**Episode 6:** “Thinking Globally – Acting Locally: Why the Rio Conventions matter” with Dr Mariam Akhtar-Schuster, Senior Scientist with the Project Management Agency of the German Aerospace Centre and former Co-Chair of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Science-Policy Interface (SPI).

**Episode 7** (in French): “How inequitable and unsustainable food systems destroy natural resources, degrade the land, reduce biodiversity and deplete water resources” with Silvestre Tiemtoré, sociologist, philosopher and Coordinator of the Permanent Secretariat of NGOs in Burkina Faso.

**Episode 8** (in French): “Ecological agriculture demonstrates the importance of land and the urgency of the fight against land grabbing” with Mariam Sow, chair of the board of directors of Environment Development Action in the Third World (ENDA-TM).

You can download the podcasts at [https://drynet.podbean.com/](https://drynet.podbean.com/) on Podbean and on the Apple Store. Alternatively, find the episodes by searching for The Drynet Podcast Series on whatever podcast platform you use.
A handbook for evaluation of Agroecology

To support development actors who promote agroecology as a way to avoid ecosystem destruction, land degradation, and to help rural community resilience; the Working Group on Agroecological Transitions (GTAE) has published a Memento for the evaluation of agroecology.

This handbook is a methodological tool useful to evaluate the conditions for developing agroecology and the agro-environmental and socio-economic effects of agroecological practices and systems. Mainly planned for development actors, it is also intended to be an easy-to-use tool with a reliable and common methodology for the systematized production of references that are still often lacking today to promote and support the development of agroecology.

This guide is a first methodological document, which will be improved and adjusted based on the lessons learned from the implementation of the proposed tools and methods, within the framework of future evaluation work carried out by the GTAE and its partners.

The handbook is available in English and in French.

Intl. Centre for Environmental Education and Community Development awards Miss Environment 2021

Organized by the UNCCD accredited African CSO - ICNECDEV and partners, the Miss Environment contest aims to demonstrate the involvement and commitment of the girls (youth) in environmental protection, promoting biodiversity conservation, social equity and economic progress within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa Vision 2063.

This year’s contest focused on following environmental themes:
• Best biodiversity conservation project (illegal trade and wildlife);
• Best technological project to protect the environment;
• Best innovative project on production of biodegradable female pads and the production of natural body lotion with the use of medicinal plants;

The winners of 2021 Miss Environment contest became:

- 1st place: Miss Ayawung Christy a student of the University of Buea / Environmental Science department, with project on “Making plastic waste valuable”
- 2nd place: Miss Agbaq Ebai Griselda for presenting “Mainstreaming culture, peace building and politics in environmental sustainability”
- 3rd place: Nkengason Sharon for “Wetland Conservation” project.

The winners were awarded with financial support, laptops to help them develop their projects and certificates for participation recognized by the Ministry of Environment Protection of Nature and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED).
Update on the work of the UNCCD SPI

The 13th meeting of the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI) took place between 29 March and 1 April 2021. This was a virtual meeting, with active participation from SPI members from around the world, and demonstrated how bodies of the UNCCD can function effectively and collectively on virtual platforms. Good preparation and facilitation helped to make this a very productive meeting; and it did not cost the earth, although we missed all of the opportunities to engage face-to-face.

The meeting was opened by the Deputy ES of the UNCCD, Ms Tina Birmpili, who emphasized how important it is for scientists to assess the entire body of science so as to construct a complete and convincing story to tell policy makers. Work was taken forward during the meeting in a number of crucial areas.

The meeting reviewed progress made on preparing a comprehensive report for SPI Objective 1: Integrated land use planning and landscape management and LDN. The draft of the report which is to be delivered to the Parties at COP 15 was reviewed by SPI members. The continuum between ILUP and ILM is seen as a key instrument for efficiently delivering on LDN targets. ILUP can be understood as planning to do the right things in the right places, whereas ILM is about actually doing the right things in the right places in the right way. In order to achieve LDN, the planning and implementation processes are being conceptualised as iterative, taking place within a system that allows for learning and re-planning in the light of experience.

Progress was also made on advancing the work related to SPI Objective 2: Ecosystems and population resilience to drought. A draft report includes sections on (i) Introduction to droughts of different types with time and their impacts in social and natural systems, the drought risk framework and role of building resilience in the transition to risk mitigation, and stages to building resilience based on informative decisions, (ii) Inventory and analysis with results of the evidence-based matrix of ecosystem indicators and social indicators at different scale and with supporting methodologies, (iii) Technical guidance to a tiered approach at multiscale for resilience assessment and colour coding mapping approach and (iv) Policy and enabling environment to facilitate drought resilience monitoring and assessment.

Over recent months the SPI has been contributing to the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), most notably contributing to the review of the draft IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (AR6). Numerous review comments were compiled into review sheets and submitted to the IPCC. In addition, a working group meeting took place during the SPI meeting in which SPI members analysed the key messages of the Special Report on Climate Change and Land (SRCCL) and the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) relevant for the UNCCD for presentation at the fifteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology.

The delay in convening COP 15 until 2021 has de facto extended the current term of SPI members until the COP is held in May or October 2022.

Plans are being made to convene another “Science Day” during COP 15. These events are a forum for science presentations and interactive discussions that create an opportunity to focus on the findings of recent assessment work by the SPI and relevant partners, and provide an opportunity for the broader UNCCD-stakeholder community to engage with the scientific rationale for taking the right actions to conserve soil-based resources. If any CSOs are interested in contributing to Science Day at COP 15 in 2022 please contact me, Noel Oettlé at dryland@global.co.za
2021 Desertification and Drought Day

The 2021 Desertification and Drought Day to be held on 17 June will focus on turning degraded land into healthy land.

Observed every year to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification, the day is a unique moment to remind everyone that reversing land degradation is achievable through problem-solving, strong community involvement and co-operation at all levels.

UNCCD will work with the Ministry of Environment (MINAE) of Costa Rica, the host of the global observance, to encourage households, communities, private sector and countries to have a better relationship with nature as we recover from COVID-19.

To find out how to organize a Desertification and Drought Day event or learn what you can do to help prevent land degradation and desertification, visit the UNCCD webpage for frequent updates and campaign materials. Please submit your event with photos to DDD2021@unccd.int for feature at UNCCD website!

You can also follow and support the campaign on social media using these hashtags:

#DesertificationAndDroughtDay #RestorationLandRecovery

The Global Land Outlook 2nd edition (GLO2) - DEADLINE EXTENDED

is now under preparation and will be launched at UNCCD COP15. It aims to support the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration by offering a positive narrative and future scenarios that stress the potential and opportunities afforded by a continuum of restoration activities that improve environmental conditions by avoiding, reducing, and reversing land degradation while at the same time deliver multiple benefits (i.e., ecosystem goods and services) that underwrite the current and future sustainability of our societies, economies, and the planet.

GLO2 print and digital products will focus on promoting and learning from case studies and good practice examples from around the world. Consideration will be given to the presentation of case studies in a range of formats (e.g., comprehensive, full page, box, pull outs) for GLO2 report and the digital platform. A strategic communications campaign will enhance the dissemination of case studies by linking social and other media to the GLO2 knowledge base created.

Case studies will also increment analytic papers and recommendations on the following subjects (to be confirmed):

- Youth engagement
- Gender equity and responsiveness
- Tenure security
- Urban-rural linkages
- Resilient food systems
- Perverse incentives and repurposing subsidies
- COVID-19 response and recovery

UNCCD stakeholders are kindly invited to submit case studies at the regional, national, or sub-national scale that illustrate conservation, sustainable land management and restoration activities that have a positive impact on communities and nations.

Your organizations’ experiences and field practices are valuable and need to be valorized through this coming GLO. Please submit your case studies to the CSO panel cso@unccd.int before the new deadline 15 May 2021.
THANKS EVERYONE FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS!

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Previous issues of the newsletter available here