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US Agency for International Development

and the

Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification

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The USAID Framework for Cooperation in Africa
in the
Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification

I. Introduction and Purpose

In March, 1994, the Official US Delegation to the Fourth Negotiating Session Convention to Combat Desertification, stated that: *"The United States is a firm supporter of the goal of the Desertification Convention. We also believe that the key to success lies in making better use of existing aid flows in support of activities mandated by the Convention to support the sustainable development and long-term economic viability of lands subject to desertification, particularly in Africa. We strongly believe that the Convention correctly emphasizes the importance of innovative new methodologies, especially in the area of climate early warning; measures to encourage enhanced popular participation; rigorous but user-friendly planning; and improved donor coordination. We are prepared to support these activities through both bilateral and multilateral agencies and programs."*

In the spirit of our 1994 commitment, USAID believes the time has come for an active effort on the part of the bilateral and multilateral donors. The following Framework sets out the commitments and obligations of the Africa Bureau of USAID for Cooperation in Combating Desertification in Africa.

II. The Convention

The Convention now has 115 signatories, including the US. It has therefore received more than the required 50 ratifications and has entered into force on December 26, 1996.

This new Convention represents a major step forward in the post-Rio process and will encourage better use of development resources in arid areas world-wide, but especially in Africa where it mandates a process to combat land degradation which draws on lessons learned from past successes and failures. The Convention emphasizes local community participation, linkage between good planning and implementation, and (particularly in Africa) a 'new partnership' between donors and recipients to promote joint efforts, avoidance of duplication, and respect for national priorities.

The implementation of this Convention will have to depend on existing or planned development resources. While enabling funds are already available in some countries, all signatory countries clearly have considerable work to do educating all participants regarding the Convention. But, there is a commitment from all major donors to assist countries in producing integrated plans from documents such as, the National Environmental Action Plans, National Conservation Strategies and the National Action Programs (NAPs) to Combat Desertification.

Local community understanding of the Convention in some affected countries has not yet started, and this must be given high priority. At the same time there is donor concern that consultant missions brought in to draft NAPs should not undercut the bottom-up, participatory process desired in national programming. Thus, there is a strong interest by all participants in improving coordination and in supporting those enabling processes that are country- and community-driven. Also, it is imperative that the quality of program preparation and policy frameworks is maintained at a high level. It is important to remember that, in order to attract more resources in future years, legislatures, ministries and the general public must all be involved.

III. Obligations of the Parties

In several cases, major donor countries have provided enabling funds and have joined in partnership mechanisms. Donors should also encourage leadership initiatives by African countries, and should act in a responsible way to fulfill their obligations under this Convention. These commitments and obligations are as follows:

Commitments and Obligations of Developed Countries:

- a.) Assist African countries to combat desertification, and/or drought, by providing, and/or facilitating access to, financial and/or other resources, and promoting financing, and/or facilitating the financing, of the transfer, adaptation and access to appropriate environmental technologies;*
- b.) Continue to allocate significant resources, and/or increase resources, to combat desertification and/or to mitigate the effects of drought; and*
- c.) Assist in strengthening capacities to enable the improvement of institutional frameworks, as well as scientific and technical capabilities, information collection and analysis, and research and development.*

Commitments and Obligations of African Countries:

- a.) Adopt combating of desertification and/or mitigation of the effects of drought as a central strategy in efforts to eradicate poverty;*
- b.) Promote regional cooperation and integration in programs and activities to combat desertification and/or to mitigate the effects of drought;*
- c.) Rationalize and strengthen existing institutions concerned with desertification and drought and involve other existing institutions, in order to make them more effective and to ensure more efficient use of resources;*
- d.) Promote the exchange of information on appropriate technology, knowledge and know-how;*
- e.) Develop contingency plans for mitigating the effects of drought in areas degraded by desertification and/or drought;*

f.) *Make appropriate financial allocations from national budgets consistent with national conditions and capabilities and reflecting the new priority Africa has accorded to the phenomenon of desertification and/or drought;*

g.) *Sustain and strengthen reforms toward greater decentralization and resource tenure as well as reinforce the participation of local populations and communities; and*

h.) *Identify and mobilize new and additional national financial resources, and expand, as a matter of priority, existing national capabilities and facilities to mobilize domestic financial resources.*

IV. The Sub-Regional Effort

In developing the AFR Framework for Coordination, it should be noted that regional organizations, such as CILSS, SADC and IGAD, are already linked into the mainstream of what is happening in this area. All three of these organizations now have a stated objective of providing assistance to African countries in the area of implementation of the Desertification Convention as of 1996 (Box 1). All three receive some funding from USAID, and all three have begun to track the efforts which are already underway at national level in this sector. They also clearly identify how donors can help further support these initiatives and add value within the setting of the Convention requirements.

Box 1: The Sub-regional Action Program (SRAP)

Phase 1 - Identification and sensitization of potential stakeholders and parties.
Phase 2 - Initial identification of issues and programs which could constitute the SRAP.
Phase 3 - Preparing and holding the first forum meeting at sub-regional level.
Phase 4 - Formulating sub-regional action programs, projects and implementing agreements (from the first meeting).
Phase 5 - Undertaking full implementation and follow-up monitoring of program activities.

The USAID Framework for Coordination will actively support the Sub-regional Action Programs (SRAP) using the mechanisms outlined below.

V. Next Steps for USAID/AFR in Fulfilling the US Commitment to the Convention

1. *Several Missions, Regional Offices and the Africa Bureau itself, are actively supporting the preparation of National Action Programs to Combat Desertification (NAPs). Wherever possible USAID should ensure that relevant bilateral proposals should be consistent with NAPs once they are established.*

2. *The Africa Bureau Coordinator for Desertification at Bureau level, will work with the official representatives from the Department of State and the USAID Global Bureau.*

3. *NGOs/PVOs and Local Governments should be encouraged to "Get the Word Out" locally regarding the Convention and its importance to the health and well-being of host countries.*

4. To assist in the process of tracking the level of effort in this sector, AFR/SD has initiated a new activity code for "Desertification." This will help in identifying future funding levels.

5. Affected USAID Missions should be alerted to and should help to inform others of Sub-Regional Meetings. (For up-coming CILSS, SADC and IGAD meetings contact: Dr. L. Deng, UNSO Bureau for Africa, Nairobi, Kenya; tel: 254(2)-217597; fax: 213748).

6. AFR should continue to encourage support, where appropriate, from USAID Regional Programs, such as, the Greater Horn of Africa Initiative (GHAI); the Initiative for Southern Africa (ISA); and the Sahel Regional Program.

7. Regional AFR programs should ensure that sub-regional proposals and requests for assistance submitted for funding are in compliance with the respective Sub-Regional Action Programs.

VI. Summary

It is possible for in-country planners and programmers to work with existing activities within existing USAID Mission portfolios to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing resources in combating desertification. Obviously the most effective and efficient method of coordination would be to take the national priorities for combating desertification into account during the Strategic Planning Process at Mission and Regional program levels.

Country planners should be aware of the fact that over the years USAID has developed some basic ground rules relative to development funds. Of obvious importance, for example, is whether or not the Agency maintains a presence within the host country. Assistance provided to any host-country activity in support of the Convention would depend on that activity meeting criteria as follows:

1. Is the country a signatory to the Convention?

2. Has the country demonstrated a positive response to the recommendations, plans, and activities called for in the Convention?

3. Is environment a priority in the USAID Country Strategy? If so, has the Mission taken national priorities for combating desertification into account in preparing its Strategic Plan?

4. Assuming an activity is defined within a given National Action Program to Combat Desertification (NAP), how does it relate to the country's National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP), and is it clearly coordinated with the work of other donors?

5. Has the responsible agency in-country designed and implemented a system of benchmark indicators (as established within the Convention), along with monitoring, evaluation, and mitigation plans? Has policy reform gone forward to the extent that demonstrable progress can be demonstrated toward a policy environment?

**USAID Africa Bureau Activities
and the International Convention to Combat Desertification**

(Data for Use in the Information Base of the Global Mechanism)

by

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³ Any opinions expressed within this report are the personal views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of USAID. All material presented in this report is based on previous publications.

**USAID Africa Bureau
Activities
and
The International Convention
to Combat Desertification**

1. Introduction

The overall goal of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Africa Bureau's development program is to achieve broad-based sustainable economic growth, focusing on key priority areas that promote: (1) a public sector that is more equitable and efficient, (2) markets that are more competitive, (3) maintenance and restoration of renewable natural resources to increase agricultural productivity, and (4) greater food security. USAID has been in the forefront with respect to forging integrated approaches to development in which economic productivity and growth are seen as dependent on a properly nurtured and valued natural resources base.

What have been the activities most pertinent to combating desertification and mitigation of the effect of drought? This report provides a very brief synopsis of such programming, primarily that supported by the development program of the Bureau for Africa (AFR).

The information provided here in a tabular form updates and complements a previous USAID report for an earlier round of the International Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) negotiations (Gaudet *et al.* 1994). It reviews the past few years of the existing portfolio, and is not a statement of new and/or additional funds in the desertification area. It is merely intended to be used by the CCD "Global Mechanism" as supplementary information to aid in the effort of compiling information on donor efforts in this sector .

2. Major Activities of the Africa Bureau Pertinent to the Convention

For many years, USAID's Africa Bureau has been very involved in development aid in the general area of dryland natural resources management. USAID support is also directed at country-specific levels (i.e., via Mission funding) and at regional and sub-regional levels (i.e., through central funding). Table 1 summarizes examples of both kinds of development assistance activities targeted toward addressing desertification.

This list of activities does not include activities addressing broader macroeconomic and policy dialogue, general institutional reform, or agribusiness support, in which USAID has been quite strongly engaged. Similarly, USAID's considerable support to Africans through food aid and emergency relief are not included.

3. Summary

In addition to a general development effort in natural resources in dryland regions of Africa, the Africa Bureau has already initiated several regional and sub-regional support activities that are targeted toward desertification and will provide the basis for our support of the Convention to Combat Desertification. USAID will be very interested in strategies and any planning process that shows how countries can *increase the efficiency of the investment in this sector*. Up to this point, the measure of progress has been the amount spent against the problem and not the impact of that money. The amount of money spent is only the denominator in the equation: Efficiency = impact / investment.

It could be argued that, even if money were not the object, a focus on efficiency must still be the priority. Based on field experience and results, increased productivity and reduced degradation rates are not always directly correlated to the amount spent. Consequently, those involved in implementing the Convention should consider ways to measure efficiency of investments.

Table 1. Estimated USAID Africa Bureau bilateral and regional support directly relevant to Desertification. (FY96 data based on AFR/DP Program Summary; FY97 based on AFR/DP Sector Controls Summary).

Strategic Objective		Country	S.O.	US\$mil.	
				FY96	FY97
1 SUSTAINABLE DRYLAND AGRICULTURE					
	Increased food security	Eritrea	SO2	0.45	0.40
	Increased availability of locally produced food grains	Ethiopia	SO1	0.13	0.43
	Enhanced food security	Ethiopia	SPO1	0.00	0.25
	Increased support to private sector	Guinea-Bissau	SO1	0.05	0.00
	Smallholder agriculture and natural resource management	Kenya	SO2	0.66	0.64
	Increased agricultural income on a sustainable basis	Malawi	SO1	0.33	0.00
	Economic growth	Mali	SO1	2.72	0.00
	Rural household increased income in target areas	Mozambique	SO1	1.25	0.82
	Improved regulatory environment for agricultural production	Zambia	SO2	0.09	0.20
	Increased household food security in communal areas	Zimbabwe	SO1	1.92	2.25
	Sustainable increases in agriculture and natural resources	S. Afr. Region	SO3	0.51	1.00
2 REHABILITATION OF DRYLAND AREAS					
	Rehabilitation and resettlement	Angola	SO1	0.04	0.04
3 DROUGHT/DISASTER EARLY WARNING AND MITIGATION					
	Famine early warning	Africa	SO1	5.34	5.93

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4 MITIGATION USING NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT					
	Reduce natural resource depletion in target areas	Madagascar	SO3	1.68	1.88
	Increased sustainable use, conservation and mgt. Of natural resources	Malawi	SO2	1.54	3.75
	Improved benefit from locally managed natural resources	Namibia	SO3	0.12	0.10
	Increased crop production via improved natural resource mgt.	Senegal	SO2	3.08	7.70
	Environmentally sustained natural resource mgt.	Tanzania	SO2	2.05	1.75
	Stabilization of biodiversity in targeted areas	Uganda	SO2	0.74	1.28
	Improved policies, programs, strategies in sustainable environments	Africa	SO3	0.40	0.30
5 AWARENESS RAISING IN DRYLAND NAT. RES. MGT.					
	Dryland information and development	Sahel Region	SO3	0.65	0.65
6 CAPACITY BUILDING AND NATIONAL PLANNING					
	Horn of Africa support program	Gr. Horn of Afr.	SO2	0.19	3.50
	Broad-based support for African development	Africa	SO1	0.65	0.60
Total USAID Bilateral and Regional Support (\$mil.)				24.6	33.5