

The CCD as a Strategic Framework for Natural Resource Management in Dry Zones - Mainstreaming the CCD, and Synergies between the Conventions

Winckler, G.

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GTZ) – CCD Projekt
Tulpenfeld 2, 53113 Bonn, Germany
E-mail: winckler@gtzccd.de

Keywords: CCD implementatio, mainstreaming international conventions, dynergies between conventions, poverty reduction, natural resource management in Dry Zones

1 The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) and its background

Desertification, i.e. the degradation of soils and vegetation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid zones is a worldwide problem affecting the dry lands of all continents (see Figure 1). Dry areas comprise approximately 40% of the earth's land surface, which give home and provide livelihoods to a significant proportion of the human population. 70% of all dry areas (excluding hyper arid deserts) suffer from desertification, currently accounting for 36 million km², an area three and a half times the size of Europe and although diversity in dry lands may be comparatively low, they are extremely important in terms of supporting animal biomass. Of all the countries concerned, the least-developed are the hardest hit by desertification. Here, dry zones account for around two-thirds of the total land area. The increasing degradation of natural resources and subsequent desertification endangers the livelihood of many people, especially in rural areas where ninety percent of the world's poor live. At the same time, poverty often forces people into an irreversible over-utilization of sensitive ecosystem, thereby exacerbating the problem.



Fig. 1 Shrinking vegetation cover, reduced soil fertility, erosion and salinisation threaten the life support systems of humans and animals (Courtesy of W. Moosbrugger)

The Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD), adopted in 1994, came into force in 1996 and focuses on environmental protection as well as the sustainable economic and social development in dry areas. Investments in dry lands which have been neglected for a long time pose a new challenge to the world-community, indicating the need to establish new partnerships between governments and civil societies, and public and private institutions. Its main aim therefore is to provide a strategic framework for sustainable natural resource management, including soil management, in dry zones by linking desertification control measures with development strategies like for example poverty reduction and crisis prevention strategies. The CCD is thus far more than a pure 'environmental convention', it is rather a broad-based 'development-convention' with a strong poverty link.

Throughout the implementation process of the Convention an attempt is made to systematically utilize experiences with desertification control, to involve all sections of the population in the affected

regions, and to establish networks with other important programmes concerning the environment and development. In more concrete terms implementation is facilitated by National Action Programmes (NAPs) designed by the individual countries, and on the Regional and Subregional Action Programmes (RAPs and SRAPs), which are designed to help solve or alleviate trans-boundary desertification problems. The CCD regards itself as an integral part of national development strategies where principles such as: partnerships, participation (particularly by natural resource users and women), decentralized decision-making, consultation of all actors (including donor coordination), harmonization of existing plans and programs which ensure policy coherence as opposed to the development of new plans, regional and international exchange of experiences, and processes that are country-driven (including mobilization of internal financial resources) are key elements of the CCD.

2 Synergies between existing conventions

2.1 The convention on biological diversity (CBD) and the framework convention on climate change (FCCC)

There are natural overlaps and interfaces between the major international “environmental” conventions such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). The principal aim of the CBD is to protect biological diversity by means of sustainable resource management and to encourage equal sharing of the benefits derived from the economic value of biological and genetic diversity. The FCCC aims to reduce or at least stabilize CO₂-emissions in an attempt to meliorate the impacts of global warming. As ongoing trends in climate changes cannot be fully reverted or stopped new adaptive measures have to be introduced to provide a new form of protection against these changes. An emerging issue is hence the stimulation of synergies between the CCD, CBD and FCCC since dry lands are particularly vulnerable to changes in climate, loss of biodiversity and desertification.

2.2 Links to the CCD

Both the CBD and FCCC embrace a number of elements that complement the CCD. For instance: (1) The maintenance of agricultural biodiversity, i.e. animal and plant genetic diversity, through promoting appropriate methods and practices of sustainable agriculture, thus preventing desertification. (2) Afforestation measures or the promotion of vegetation cover in degraded areas help to stabilise climatic conditions by absorbing carbon and at the same time combat desertification by protecting soils. The complex relationship between climate change and desertification is presented in Figure 2. (3) Changes in climate can lead to an increase of droughts in some areas: new adaptive measures are needed like, for instance, the introduction of new cultivations that are capable of adapting to changing environments.

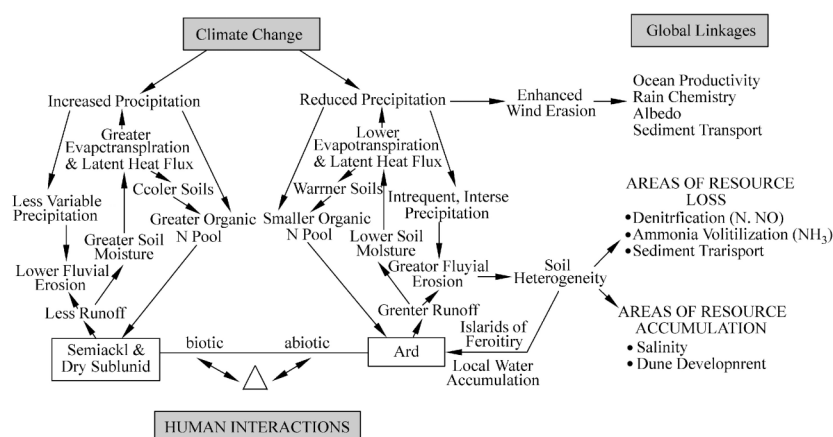


Fig. 2 Possible links between climate change and desertification (Source: UNEP, p.9, based on Schlesinger *et al.*, 1990)

A good illustration of the interconnection of all the three conventions is the Gran Chaco Americano in South America where the implementation of all key issues falls together. It is the second largest uninterrupted forest in Latin America after the Amazonian rainforest, and is therefore of immense significance for balancing our climate. The whole region comprises 800,000 km² and is biologically diverse, but threatened by expanding desertification processes. The main reason for this lies in inappropriate natural resource management methods (e.g. logging to make space for arable production) which result in a loss of production potentials and biological diversity and consequently affects the livelihoods of the population.

The close link between desertification and the loss of biodiversity implies that a number of common themes and goals exist and that instruments, methods, concepts and experiences can be exchanged and information and communication structures can be coordinated. It is useful to consider the conventions as complementary to each other as the benefits of synergies clearly lie in the efficiency, transparency and transmission during and of the implementation process which makes a positive contribution to sustainable development. An encouraging example comes from Mauritania where many issues of the CCD and CBD partially overlap: the over-exploitation of forest resources means that a great fraction of the biological diversity is being lost while at the same time soil quality is badly affected, too. Here new synergies between the two conventions will substantially contribute to a more effective and efficient implementation of the CBD and CCD. The GTZ project 'Implementation of the CBD and CCD in Mauritania' has the aim to pursue this combined implementation strategy.

While it is important to identify synergies between the existing conventions, the many interfaces and points of interventions between the conventions also imply the risk of duplicated work and uncoordinated approaches at the national and international level. The wording of the CCD calls explicitly for coordination with measures carried out under the other conventions, "in order to derive maximum benefit from activities under each agreement while avoiding duplication of effort" (Art.8,1).

In recent years, institutions and organizations concerned with soil conservation and desertification control have therefore emphasized the importance of legally binding instruments like the UNCCD and the necessity of an intensified international discourse between farmers, practitioners, politicians, scientists and decision-makers from business, government and civil society. In order to find appropriate solutions to the problems of desertification and to ensure a sustainable development in the affected regions, the dialogue between all the stakeholders involved has to be deepened and extended. Fig. 3 gives an overview of the possible links that can and ought to exist between different levels of stakeholder groups.

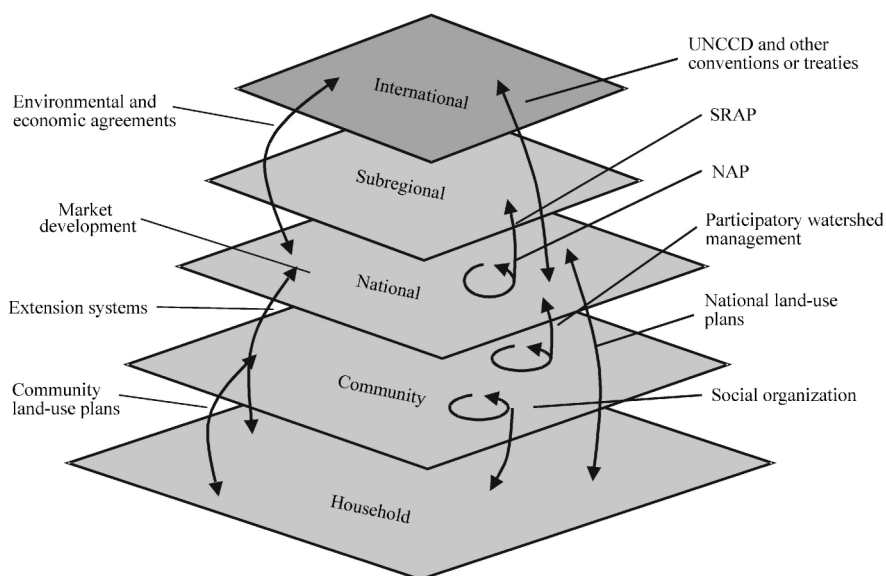


Fig.3 Possible ways of linking the different levels of intervention (Source: GTZ Project - Combating Desertification)

3 Networking with other strategies – “Mainstreaming the CCD”

3.1 The significance of mainstreaming

The greatest challenge faced in the context of the CCD implementation is the coherency and coordination with other key strategies for development. In the national context to date only modest success has been achieved in integrating the CCD into the wider development agenda and in generating thematic networking and synergies in the implementation of measures. But this is necessary as desertification does not only have ecological, but also social and economic impacts.

3.2 The CCD as a multi-sectoral platform

The CCD offers a multi-sectoral platform for natural resource management and can help avert implementation and efficiency losses resulting from one-sided sectoral perspectives. To date, the diversity of competing terms in use – such as soil and water conservation, erosion, degradation and desertification control – has led to unnecessary efficiency losses. This often results in financial schemes being inefficiently used as there is no consensus and no network as how to best employ and distribute these financial measures. Many projects concerning soil and water conservation measures are carried out without any link or coordination to or with desertification control, as is the case with crisis prevention measures. Watershed management, for example, as an integrated approach to natural resource management is also becoming increasingly important in the context of the CCD implementation. Conflicts over resource utilization between water producers located upstream and water users further downstream are especially significant in this context as are corresponding conflict management strategies.

3.3 The role of poverty alleviation strategies

Desertification and poverty reduction measures have to go hand in hand as they influence each other and many of the poorest people can be found living in areas seriously threatened by desertification. As poverty alleviation has been declared a global priority in the context of the extended HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) initiative, mainstreaming has become even more significant and makes it imperative that desertification control and CCD implementation need to be more closely networked with other key initiatives, such as National Strategies for Sustainability Development (NSSD) or Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRSPs). Many developing countries are endeavouring to design and implement NAPs, NSSD as well as PRSPs in order to combat desertification and to preserve biodiversity. The design phase itself already requires a high degree of coordination at the international level across society, i.e. not just inter-ministerial cooperation, but also cooperation with all key national actors. PRSP and NAP processes display many commonalities of design: each building on the other's experiences of a material or organizational nature, and a networking of activities can help avoid efforts being duplicated and running in parallel. This will require greater consultation, supplementation and networking of national programmes than hitherto, especially in the fields of management of knowledge, training, and the establishment of consultation and coordination mechanisms. Measures at the national and supra-regional levels therefore need to be complementary to activities at the regional and local levels. A random-sample analysis of UNCCD National Action Programmes reveals that usually no comprehensive link is established between desertification control and poverty reduction. As is evident from the interim and full PRSPs that exist to date, ecological sustainability and—in countries with dry regions—desertification problems have not yet been taken into account to a degree commensurate with their significance for the development of these countries.

3.4 The need for disaster mitigation

Inappropriate forms of land use and poverty are just some of the factors that make vulnerable regions even more crisis-prone, turning desertification into a “slow-onset disaster”. Hence, there is a close link between desertification control and disaster mitigation. Preventive activities in this domain ought to

include soil and water conserving measures, appropriate land use planning and the establishment of early warning systems for droughts. The CCD provides an adequate instrument to link CCD implementation with crisis prevention measures by ensuring and applying quality standards such as participation, appropriate land use and land use planning, and support for decentralization processes. However, prevention is a long-term strategy: particularly in developing countries prevention strategies investments are often mistakenly considered as cost intensive and unprofitable, but if any development is to be sustainable then the focus has to be shifted on to the setting-up of early warning systems in combination with concrete measures like in the area of erosion control or the stabilization and rehabilitation of natural resources. A good example for this current trend is the El Niño phenomenon. In addition to phenomena like climatic changes (i.e. global warming) and the severe impacts of El Niño as in 1998, the capacities of governments, institutions and social systems to respond to the growing problems of the affected population are limited. The lack of early-warning systems and the lack of appropriate financial investment worsens the situation. Thus, societies already suffering from desertification processes are often further weakened and more vulnerable to the potential impact of droughts and flooding (and by climate change in a wider sense). This is where the international community has to strengthen financial and technical cooperation in order to improve the implementation of projects and programmes to mitigate the effects of both, desertification and natural disasters and stimulate a 'culture of prevention'.

3.5 The eco-regional approach

To date, territorially-orientated approaches embracing clear, regional development strategies and practices for distinct ecoregions have seldom been implemented. The CCD supports regionally orientated natural resource management strategies and the elaboration of Subregional Action Programmes (SRAPs) in a number of regions. The ecological and economic zoning of most regions in the world make it obvious that both potentials and problems exist across borders and boundaries. So far there have been very few development strategies that would recognize this and use a broadly-based ecosystem approach. These difficulties are well exemplified by the Gran Chaco Americano. High levels of poverty amongst the population, particularly amongst the indigenous population, are exacerbated by an insufficient supply with basic services, uncertain and unjust land and property rights and non-existent income alternatives. Short-term production and survival strategies of the population in the Gran Chaco imply a high conflict potential and together with the degradation of natural resources are the main obstacles for a sustainable development of the Gran Chaco. Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay have ratified the CCD, but difficult political framework conditions, a low continuity of the involved actors, insufficient financial resources and a limited availability of human resources are only some of the difficulties which make an effective coordination and implementation of measures more problematic. Within a SRAP to support the implementation of the CCD in the Gran Chaco issues such as a better horizontal and vertical links between all actors, the attempt to initiate a learning process and exchange of experiences, and the planning and implementation of a concept for the sustainable development of the Gran Chaco are being discussed and developed. Several international organisations and funding agencies like the UNDP and UNSO support this process. Germany makes a contribution within the framework of the CCD: in all three countries there are projects running to support national and decentralized government and non-government organisations in their effort to define common guidelines and subsequently to implement them. A supra-regional project by the GTZ on 'Sustainable resource management Gran Chaco' will soon start to be implemented.

3.6 Managing knowledge and establishing new partnerships and alliances

Using Argentina as an example to prove the point that technical cooperation (TC) makes a significant contribution towards desertification control, it also shows that desertification is still not being considered as a political priority. New partnerships and alliances have to be established in order to convince the Argentinean Ministry for Finances and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) of the necessity and the economic benefit of implementing innovations obtained as a result of TC. The

cooperation within an international university network – in this context with the University of Harvard – can help to shift the purely ecologically based argumentation to an economic framework. This new strategy that uses economic considerations and analyses together with strategic marketing instruments has the advantage to convince political decision makers of the potential of rural spaces all of which ought to lead to an adequate investment policy. It also becomes clear in this context that both TC and financial cooperation (FC) have to be combined in a joint effort to solve challenges and implement measures on a broader scale (see Figure 4 for an illustration of how TC and FC need to interact with each other in the planning process). Due to or because of the different starting-points of the TC and FC, the comparative advantages have to be worked out and worked into compatible solutions for the local population.

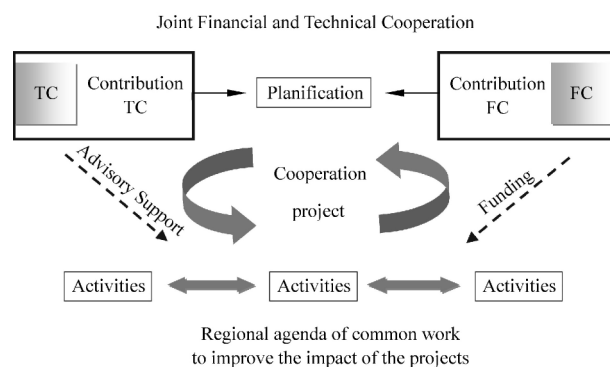


Fig. 4 The interplay between Technical (TC) and Financial Cooperation (FC) in the planning system (Source: CCD LAK-Initiative: P. Buss, H. Eger, I. Prem, G. Scheufele, G. Winckler)

It is also necessary to improve the framework conditions for development work to make projects and programmes more effective and cost-efficient. Problem solving concepts and strategies have to be exchanged, summarised and spread by means of a targeted management of existing knowledge. One possibility for this arises from a closer cooperation with Regional Development Banks, international organisations and scientific institutions (e.g. between IDB and GTZ). In Central Asia, for instance, the Regional Conference of the 5 Central Asian republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) in Kyrgyzstan in July 2000 identified the need for the elaboration and implementation of a SRAP. The Federal German Government is recruiting German partners from outside the development cooperation structure such as scientific and educational establishments, research institutes and non-governmental organisations, and partnerships with private companies.

With a stronger focus on programmes on the national level the German TC has made an important step: through the linking up of projects within programmes it will be easier to implement national strategies in an agreed manner on the various levels, and to enforce local measures with respect to national and supra-national goals in the context of a future orientation process. However, the integration of supra-national planning schemes and the cooperation with other political actors concerning development has so far not been used systematically enough. A focus of coordinated bilateral and regional projects on regional development key issues seems obvious. Coordination between projects and programmes by different donors—which also needs effective mechanisms for internal and external management of knowledge—together with a regionally orientated development strategy ought to be the mid-term aim of the TC. The elaboration of problem-solving strategies and methods calls for targeted knowledge management in order to facilitate the exchange, bundling and dissemination of development expertise across the boundaries of projects, institutions and countries. This strategy is being promoted by the German side. South- South cooperation (i.e. between affected regions) also has an important role to play in this context. Since the convention explicitly requires the application of the principles of 'partnership' and 'participation' and lays strong emphasis on a 'bottom-up' approach, such strategies have to focus on strengthening existing national and international cooperation and communication channels. Partnership and better interactions should not only be established between donors and the receiving

countries, but also between affected regions, between the different levels of society and among the various organizations involved. TC-FC cooperation, like the example of the German GTZ (TC) and the IDB (FC), as well as inter-institutional cooperation are intended to foster the exchange of information and working experience. Partnership instead of competition will soon enhance the implementation of joint projects and programmes by focusing on a common agenda with topics such as institutional strengthening, capacity building, rural poverty reduction, municipal development and sustainable natural resource management. These strategic alliances and partnerships can result in intensive forms of cooperation which contribute to an increased efficiency of existing projects and programmes and to the necessary broadscaling of the impacts by using the comparative advantages of the different organisations.

In addition to the positive effects of inter-institutional cooperations mentioned above, networking across physical, social and cultural borders as well as expanding the mental horizon can also establish useful synergies with the implementation processes of the CBD and FCCC and other national and international development strategies such as the NSSD or PRSP shall help to join forces and harmonize development strategie for a more appropriate and sustainable development for the future. That is why improving the CCD process by broadscaling of the necessary measures and by mainstreaming the principles of the convention will be one of the core issues in the future struggle against desertification.

References

- BMZ (1999). Combating Desertification: Experience of German Development Cooperation German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Bonn.
- BMZ (2000). Report by the Federal Republic of Germany On Measures Taken to Assist the Implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) in Affected Country Parties with a Special Focus on Latin America and Asia. Bonn.
- Eger, H. & Prem, I. (in press). Desertifikation bekämpfen-Armut mindern-Neue Handlungsansätze bei der Umsetzung der CCD in Lateinamerika. Landnutzung und Landentwicklung.
- UNDP (2001). Strategies for the sustainable development of dryland areas. The global drylands partnership - challenge papers.
- UNEP (1997). World Atlas of Desertification. 2nd edition. Wiley & Sons, London.