

World Bank Rural Days 2006
Agriculture & Rural Development Sessions
Session on Sustainable Land Management

Theme: Standing on Solid Ground: Tackling Degraded Lands to Ensure Future Food Production

Chair: Marjory-Anne Bromhead (Sector Manager, ECSSD)

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Venue: World Bank Headquarters, Washington DC, USA. (MC Building, Preston Overflow)

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As part of Rural Week, 2006, and in celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (IYDD), this session gave an overview of the land degradation problems in the various regions in which the Bank works and reviewed some of the strategies and methods used by local and regional initiatives to mitigate and rehabilitate degraded lands.

A brief outline was given from a series of slides depicting degraded lands in various settings which showed the extent of degradation which often lead to the movements of sediments and export of nutrients from those lands. Land degradation can influence the potential investment capacity of lands (i.e. irrigation) due to the low productivity of these lands. Communities have been found to integrate themselves to work together for effective rehabilitation schemes to tap into degraded lands through the intensification or diversification of these lands. Degraded lands are increasingly not only having local or national effects but global effects as well. Dust from degraded lands in sub-Saharan Africa is found to influence coral reef production across the Atlantic.

In the presentation, experiences from the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), sub-Saharan Africa (AFR), East Asia and the Pacific (EAP), Middle-East and North Africa (MNA), Europe and Central Asia (ECA), and South Asia (SAR) regions were highlighted. These regions all presented the dynamic that exists between land degradation and land management. All are tackling and addressing the issues of land tenure and property rights, confusion over institutional collaboration, watershed management (upstream vs downstream linkages), payments for environmental services (PES), the costs associated with land degradation, and the unavoidable effects of Climate Change on sustainable land management (SLM). Last but not least, the regions also discussed the role the Bank can play in SLM and how to make an effective business case.

Experiences from land degradation in LAC show the need for a systematic approach to SLM. Salinization and loss of productivity are the main issues facing the region. The possibility that

SLM could reduce the occurrence of yearly flooding in a watershed in Haiti was also highlighted. Looking at the physical changes of the land and determining the cost of degradation was also discussed along with a time horizon for land users. Furthermore, the payment for environmental services for SLM in the region is being scaled up and is ready for introduction and replication in other regions.

Experiences from Africa show that the region now has an *Africa Action Plan* for SLM which is an effective strategy or tool to combat land degradation. Africa now has various projects in the pipeline and analytical work is being conducted to deepen the intervention for incorporation and integration of SLM with regular investment operations/projects using community driven development (CDD) approaches.

The experiences from the EAP and MNA regions were mostly drawn from the countries of Tunisia, Morocco and the Philippines. The issue of land tenure and property rights is one that is most prevalent in these regions. The process of land titling often takes so long that in the long run it's destructive to SLM practices. The inheritance laws in MNA often lead to perverse incentives and the prevalence of large families living on small plots of land is widespread. In the Philippines, the trend is an upward movement by local populations to mountain slopes, the cultivation of which could lead to increased land degradation. In addition, institutional assessment shows that there is lack of appropriate cooperation frameworks to ensure responsibilities are shared. Therefore, the Philippines is instituting a programmatic approach to push the agenda forward for the establishment of effective partnerships.

The SAR region (similar to the Philippines) faces the same problem of lack of institutional coordination. Conflicts exist over the existing legal framework. In SAR what is found to work effectively is to have direct dialogue with local/tribal leaders with regards to issues of land tenure, management and forest restoration to decrease conflicts over land uses.

The ECA region faces three main issues, namely, chemical pollution from agricultural lands, existing patterns of fertilization, and erosion (wind and erosion from deforestation). Experiences were derived from the Caucasus region namely, Georgia. The region wants to move away from the use of traditional harmful fertilizers that were used in the past to the use of organic fertilizers. Chemical pollution from overuse has severely degraded the lands and watersheds in the region. There is an urgent need to change the traditional farmer perception with regards to the new and improved fertilization methods. Climate change is expected to take its toll on the country with regards to increasing desertification and the potential for flooding. In addition, there is a need for the development of new farming technologies. The region identified the need for a more systematic approach to policy solutions.

Small group discussions and synthesis at the end of the session facilitated a deeper analysis of the relevant issues and ideas for moving forward in SLM. The groups discussed how to mainstream SLM. The importance of increasing institutional collaboration and cooperation, and securing land tenure was stressed. With regards to watershed approaches with upstream and downstream payments, emphasis was placed on sharing benefits both ways and how to provide effective incentives for upstream and downstream users to conserve the area. Access and equity issues were also discussed along with the need to put a price on degradation. Land administration and land management need to cooperate effectively to come up with more holistic approaches to SLM. The challenges will need to be resolved in the face of significant but highly unpredictable changes in global climate. The question as to what extent The Bank can facilitate SLM especially through increased coordination and dialogue with countries and partners. Likewise, analytical

work needs to be conducted to deepen interventions for the incorporation of SLM into community driven (CDD) projects.