



## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GREAT GREEN WALL INITIATIVE AND CSOs FORUM

The Great Wall and Civil Society Forum was held from 24 to 26 July 2018 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on the theme "Accelerating the implementation of the Great Green Wall Initiative: What roles for the society? The Forum brought under the same roof more than 100 participants from various organizations and representing countries implementing the GGWI, international and national civil society organizations, community organizations, local communities, development partners, among others. The various discussions help participants agree on a number of elements to speed up the closing of the gaps in the implementation of the Great Green Wall, to link the actors and the sectors in order to enhance synergy.

The proceedings of the Forum were preceded by an opening ceremony chaired by the Technical Adviser of the Minister of the Environment, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso. Other key participants in the opening ceremony included the Coordinator of AU-SAFGRAD Office representing the AU Commissioner for the Economy and Agriculture, the Regional Director of IUCN/PACO, the Representative of the Permanent Secretariat of NGOs (SPONG), the Representative of the Great Green Wall Coordinator of Nigeria, the National Coordinator of the Great Green Wall in Burkina Faso. Also present at the Forum were the Coordinators of the Great Green Wall Initiative of Senegal, Niger, Djibouti and Mauritania, the representative of the Coordinators of the Great Green Wall Initiative of Nigeria, Mali and Chad. They all called upon participants to make the Great Green Wall and Civil Society Forum a dialogue free from mistrust, complacency prejudice.

Thus, during these three days of work, the various actors highlighted the need for them to promote and to foster ownership of the concept of the Great Green Wall. Hence the need to emphasise what it really is.

- The GGWI is above all **an intersectoral and integrated programme** that takes into account socio-economic and ecological realities of arid and semi-arid lands in Africa.
- Combatting desertification is **a major development issue** whose implementation will be the result of a collective action or will not be.
- The GGWI **goes beyond resilience / humanitarian aspects** to embrace the integrated development of communities.





- **The GGW is not and has never been only about a line of trees from Dakar to Djibouti**, although it places a strong emphasis on the issues of ecosystem restoration, reforestation and afforestation. It is above all **a metaphor presenting a set of activities aimed at building the resilience / development capacities** of people and ecosystems and at establishing a mosaic of rural development hubs that enable men, women and youth in drylands to live decently at home, without conflicts over access and control of resources and without forced and / or ecological migration.
- The Great Green Wall is a programme that federates and strengthens synergies in the implementation processes of the 3 Rio Conventions (Desertification, Climate Change and Biodiversity). It also helps develop actions to ensure that initiatives undertaken by Governments towards sustainable development goals and African Union Agenda 2063's aspirations can be extended to dryland areas ("the Africa we want") to facilitate the implementation of the various efforts to fight against climate change . In this regard, the community of CSOs was challenged **to help build bridges between the GGWI and these global and regional sustainable development objectives**.

### **Conclusions of the Conference**

After agreeing on the nature of the Great Green Wall Initiative, different aspects were highlighted to facilitate a symbiotic collaboration among international and national civil society organisations, state institutions, local communities, community based organizations, etc. The main points highlighted during the Forum to strengthen CSOs' involvement were as follows: (i) coordination and synergy of actors, (ii) Communication and Knowledge Management, (iii) Monitoring and Evaluation, (iv) Resource Mobilization, (v) South-South and North South Cooperation.

### **Coordination and synergy of actors**

Effective coordination was identified as one of the challenges to be addressed in order to foster better involvement of civil society. To this end, the following recommendations were made:

- The different stakeholders should work towards an effective involvement of civil society, including women's groups, youth groups, pastoralists, etc. in the GGWI implementation.
- Develop a synergy based on the interest of the communities and not on monetary bases.





- Encourage and facilitate the rapprochement between GGW national coordinations and CSOs.
- Establish mechanisms to facilitate the flow of information (top down and bottom up).
- Civil society actors should align their interventions with the GGW Results Framework Document and the different national action plans.
- GGWI national agencies should strengthen their collaboration with local communities and develop a dynamic and inclusive communication framework that promotes the correct vision and objectives of the GGWI.
- The civil society, through grassroots organizations, is encouraged to mobilize groups at the national level and strengthen national alliances promoted by the national GGW agencies/coordinations.
- Set up mechanisms for the capitalization of experiences and good practices collected as part of the Great Green Wall.
- **Define labelling criteria** based on the GGW Results Framework and National Action Plans.
- Governments and CSOs should encourage the pooling of resources (financial, human, technical) to facilitate the implementation of GGWI projects.
- GGWI national coordinations should ensure their regulatory role in order to take advantage of the presence of CSOs in communities.
- Strengthen the operational partnership with CSOs with proven track record in the implementation of the GGWI.
- Take into consideration existing platforms to avoid competitions among different actors
- Put people at the centre of any GGWI initiatives to facilitate collaboration / complementarity between CSOs and national coordinations in the implementation of the GGWI.





## Communication and knowledge management

Participants also agreed on the need to strengthen communication activities undertaken as part of the implementation of the GGW. Civil society, very involved in communities, has a key role to play in promoting and ensuring that people take ownership of the objectives of the Initiative. For this purpose, the following recommendations were made:

- Strengthen communication efforts to ensure that communications and different actors take **ownership** of the Great Green Wall **concept**
- Take action to popularize the Harmonized Strategy and Results Framework
- Develop **results-based communication** to foster resource mobilization
- **Promote the key role CSOs can play** as far as environmental education is concerned.
- Strengthen communication activities and consider the translation of content into local languages to reach local communities and use innovative and context-specific materials
- **Regarding the information sharing platform**, the Forum encourages the AUC and other actors to **make this issue a priority** during the follow-up meeting on the implementation of the recommendations of this Forum which it intends to organize;
- To facilitate discussions around this platform, the Forum invited the AUC to share the concept note of the platform developed in 2013 and discussed at the Steering Committee in 2014 in Dakar. Each institution interested in the platform project could make its inputs in order to facilitate the establishment of a single platform
- **Create a mailing list of CSOs that attended the Forum** to facilitate collaboration between members of civil society supporting the achievement of the objectives of the GGWI





## Monitoring and evaluation of the GGWI implementation

CSOs have a key role to play in the monitoring and evaluation of the Initiative. On this point, participants recommended the following:

- Encourage CSOs to take ownership of the results framework and national plans of action to facilitate monitoring and evaluation
- Develop a reporting template that takes into account the specificities of activities undertaken by civil society organisations as part of the GGWI
- Involve CSOs in the next revision of the Harmonized Strategy and Results Framework for an alignment with the new UNCCD agenda and other Rio Conventions.

## Resource mobilization

Effective implementation will not see the light of day if the various stakeholders do not have the financial means to implement the programme in the communities. CSOs and other actors, in order to contribute to a greater mobilization of resources, have been challenged as follows:

- Encourage the development of local products and their labelling;
- Explore diaspora funding opportunities to support GGWI activities (sponsorship for social enterprises);
- Emphasize the socio-economic dimension of the Initiative by, for example, exploring employment niches for youth;
- Strengthen resource mobilization efforts and explore innovative financing opportunities, including mobilising African diaspora know-how and its remittances;
- **Create counters at the level of existing national funds and especially funds for the environment**, to finance activities of the Great Wall Green carried out by CSOs at the national level;
- Financial and technical partners need to be more involved in the implementation of the Initiative;
- **Strengthen the financial capacity of communities** through the development of income-generating activities (Case of Balanites and Milk sectors in Senegal and Mauritania, the dates sector in Chad and the gum arabic sector in Chad, Sudan, etc.);
- **Make a review of the GGWI regional harmonized strategy for implementation and its results framework inclusive**, so that all stakeholders can share a common vision and strategy and facilitate resource mobilisation.





## South-South and North-South cooperation

Cooperation is one of the fundamental principles of the GGWI implementation as outlined in its Harmonized Regional Strategy for the Implementation. Civil society plays a key role in cooperation and participants agreed on the need to strengthen South-South and North-South cooperation.

- **Encourage the involvement of CSOs** in strengthening South-South cooperation and the development of cross-border projects.
- **Promote networking, coalitions and consortia** while ensuring that the principles of transparency, accountability, solidarity, complementarity, good governance and assumed leadership prevail in the dynamics of cooperation. Such networks will facilitate resource mobilisation and the pooling of efforts. One of the eloquent examples is the network of pastoralists in West Africa, which in a decade, has managed to push pastoralism issues in the development agenda.
- **Create Roster of CSO experts** and see how to use this expertise for the development of bankable projects, projects accessible to innovative financing (GCF, PPP, Diaspora, etc.) and facilitate the operationalization and generalization of "Services hubs ". **The AU Commission is encouraged** to this end, to take stock of the call for expressions of interest that was made in 2016 to mobilize the African civil society for the implementation of the GGWI, and **to ensure that this Roster of CSOs is finalized** as soon as possible, put online and used by stakeholders to promote South-South cooperation, inter-CSO cooperation and cooperation between state structures, the private sector and CSOs.
- **CSOs need to contribute to the generation of knowledge and evidence in the GGW framework**, including in the area of traditional knowledge.
- **Need to promote collaboration with local authorities and inter municipality** (also beyond national borders).
- **Promote the principle of solidarity** to build trust among CSOs.
- **Build capacity of Southern CSOs** to facilitate resource mobilization.
- Develop at different levels a particular strategy for **the involvement of pastoral civil society in the GGW** in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations of the 4th session of the 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Steering Committee of the GGWI that took place in December 2017 in Abuja.

