



Environment and climate change

Combating desertification

The challenge

Drylands cover around 40 per cent of the Earth's land surface. They are home to some 2.5 billion people, at least 90 per cent of whom are in developing countries. Seventy per cent of these drylands are threatened by desertification – that is, the loss of soil productivity. The livelihoods and very survival of the poor rural population are particularly at risk. The direct economic losses amount to several billion US dollars per year. The problem is exacerbated by climate change: drylands are particularly affected by its impacts, because extreme weather events such as droughts and intense precipitation events cause further damage.

Through its measures to combat desertification, GIZ opens up new options for the inhabitants of drylands.

Our approach

Our integrated approach offers our partners support in the battle against desertification at all levels, from the local to the national. We help partner countries that have signed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to use it as a strategic framework for resource management and sustainable development. We work with our partners to develop strategies appropriate to local conditions for the sustainable use of natural resources – soil, forests, rangeland and water – enabling these resources to be maintained for long-term food security.

Our services

Policy and strategy advice

We promote the inclusion of sustainable land use in national development strategies and relevant processes and programmes. We use our specialist and strategic knowledge to help our partners develop sustainable resource management strategies for drylands and mainstream them in over-

arching national policies and national budget planning. We also advise on adaptation to climate change by reviewing sustainable land-use strategies with the aim of identifying any need for adaptation to changing climatic conditions.

Advice at local and subnational level

If national strategies are to be effective they must be accompanied by planning, investment and specific measures at provincial and local level. We therefore strengthen stakeholders and institutions, so that procedures can be introduced that integrate sustainable resource management into decentralised planning. We also help our partners to identify, develop and implement practical, environment-related training and awareness-raising measures for the population.

Regional cooperation and international negotiation

Resource management calls for an increasing degree of cross-border cooperation so that experience can be disseminated and used more effectively, and solutions to transboundary problems can be found. We promote regional cooperation by strengthening our partners' ability to organise and manage transboundary partnerships and providing sectoral policy advice. We advise on the development of regional financing strategies and on ways to play a part in shaping international negotiation processes. We are able to mobilise a network of international players (e.g. UN organisations, other bilateral donors and regional development banks).

Awareness-raising and networking

We raise awareness among decision-makers in politics and society and provide them with information; we carry out targeted public relations work and help our partners to engage in effective networking.

Monitoring and knowledge management

We help our partners to document and evaluate both the impacts and the quality of measures to combat desertification.



The benefits

GIZ has for more than 25 years been involved in designing, implementing and evaluating measures to promote sustainable land management in drylands and as a result has built sound cross-sectoral knowledge and experience in this field.

We engage at all intervention levels, cooperate closely with all the key stakeholders involved in combating desertification and provide worldwide networking opportunities and services in the highly topical policy context of climate change, desertification, and development cooperation. Our decentralised structure in partner countries gives us rapid access at national level and enables measures to be rolled out quickly and flexibly, while at the same time securing the quality and sustainability of interventions.

An example from the field

In Central Asia an area of more than four million square kilometres is at risk from desertification. Extensive areas of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are already being laid waste by salination, overgrazing and deforestation.

The problems are exacerbated by climate change. Central Asia is one of the regions where the threat of water scarcity is most acute.

Acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ has been involved in combating desertification in Central Asia since 2001. It has helped to create and establish a regional

policy initiative that is successfully attracting funds for resource conservation. Measures on the ground are also supported through country-specific projects. For example, in Turkmenistan shifting sand dunes are being stabilised, irrigated areas undergoing salination are being rehabilitated, private tree nurseries are being set up, anti-erosion measures are being implemented and vegetable growing is being promoted as an alternative to livestock farming. By such means we work with the local population to develop and disseminate strategies for protecting the valuable resource which soil represents. For local people this results in higher incomes and increased food security.

Country-specific measures are underpinned by regional projects that serve to develop the capabilities required to improve the conditions for sustainable resource management. We help to improve regional knowledge management and natural resource monitoring, initiate studies and dialogue forums on issues such as water and land law policy, and train and advise on national and regional financing strategies.

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