

The Great Green Wall: Growing A World Wonder

Context and rationale

The major cropping regions and degraded grazing lands of the world are the most affected by the loss of soil organic carbon. An estimated 0.68 petagrams of organic carbon can be sequestered back into the soil every year if the current management approaches to recapture the lost carbon are pursued, which could lower the global temperatures by 0.1 degree C by year 2100 without a decrease in the area under food production.

Improved land use and management, such as low-emissions agriculture, agro-forestry and ecosystem conservation and restoration will ensure greater food and water security and build community resilience while sequestering carbon. Such climate-smart land management practices nearly always come with adaptation co-benefits and could under certain circumstances reduce the emissions gap by up to 25%.

An overview of the contribution

The Great Green Wall (GGW) is an African-led initiative which has an epic ambition to grow an 8000 km natural wonder of the world across the entire width of the continent from Senegal to Djibouti. In the process it will restore Africa's degraded landscapes and help transform the lives of millions living on the frontline of climate change.

By 2030, the Great Green Wall aims to sequester **250 million tonnes of carbon**, restore **100 million hectares** of currently degraded land, and create **10 million jobs** for the world's poorest people.

How the contribution leverages living natural systems as a solution to avert climate change?

The conservation of biodiversity in achieving the goals of the Great Green Wall is critical because it underpins the range of ecosystem services which support the livelihoods of local communities, forming the basis for sustainable agriculture. It is a unique example of a nature-based solution to climate change on an unrivalled scale, where people and nature come together to create a lasting legacy for future generations.

How might the contribution support both climate, mitigation and adaptation as well as other important co-benefits and social, economic and environmental outcomes in coming years.

The Great Green Wall offers multiple (environmental, social and economic) benefits on an epic scale, touching on **15 of the 17 SDGs**. Through large-scale investments in land-based adaptation and climate resilient development, it promises to create resilient landscapes across the Sahel and address major challenges of our time: climate change, drought, famine, conflict and migration.

Environmental benefits include:

- Restoration of degraded landscapes and increasing ecological resilience of production landscapes and natural capital;
- Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, including agrobiodiversity, in production landscapes;
- Mitigated/avoided greenhouse gas emissions and increased carbon sequestration in production landscapes.

Social benefits include:

- Enhanced sustainable livelihoods (food security, nutrition, market access) for rural communities;
- Increased social resilience of rural communities;
- New employment opportunities in agriculture
- Stemming forced migrations

Economic benefits include:

- Creation of land-based green jobs;
- Development of new income sources;

Which countries and organisations are involved in the contribution?

22 countries are now involved in the Initiative, supported by a broad set of international partners (<https://www.greatgreenwall.org/partners>)¹

How have stakeholders (for example local communities, youth and indigenous peoples where applicable) been consulted in developing the contribution?

Representatives from Governments (national, sub-national, local), civil society and donor agencies are part of the GW Steering Committee, which meets on an annual basis to discuss progress in implementation and evaluates the achievements on the ground.

Where the contribution can be put into action?

The actions designed to deliver multiple social and environmental benefits, including carbon sequestration, have so far been initiated in 15% of the areas targeted. Targets have been set for the remaining 85% (scaling up) and collaboration with other parts of the work could lead to replication (scaling out).

¹ Algeria, Burkina Faso, Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, the Gambia and Tunisia.

How the contribution will be delivered? How will different stakeholders be engaged in its implementation? What are the potential transformational impacts?

Country level implementation is led by national Great Green Wall agencies. Future projects will be designed in line with the Great Green Wall “Harmonised regional strategy for implementation” adopted in 2012. Each project will be adjusted to the needs of each community and ecosystem characteristics, and detailed interventions and activities in each community will be designed with local authorities under the leadership of the national governments.

The Great Green Wall is a unique transformational initiative proving the interlinkages between land management and climate change adaptation and mitigation, security and migration, poverty reduction and job creation; food security and drought.

Is this initiative contributing to other Climate Action Summit workstream?

Energy transition: Boosting access of local communities to renewable energy for basic household needs as well as communal and production needs

Infrastructure, cities and local action: Contributions to low-emission rural infrastructure at scale (irrigation, energy, market access)

Resilience and adaptation: Building climate risk into a sustainable production of high-value drylands products to connect local producers to international markets

Youth and citizen mobilization: A GGW public awareness campaign has been launched to create a global movement targeting global citizens behind a rousing call to ‘grow a new world wonder’

Examples of experiences to date: how does this contribution build upon this experience?

Since its launch in 2007, key examples of progress include:

- **Ethiopia:** 15 million hectares of degraded land restored, land tenure security improved
- **Senegal:** 11.4 million trees planted, 25 000 hectares of degraded land restored
- **Nigeria:** 5 million hectares of degraded land restored and 20 000 jobs created

How does the contribution link with different ongoing initiatives?

The Great Green Wall links to several initiatives in the region, including: AFR100 (the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative), the Bonn Challenge, the African Resilient Landscapes Initiative, the African Union Agenda 2063, The Sahel and West Africa Program of the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank.

Mechanisms for funding (with specific emphasis on potential for partnerships)

A number of bilateral and multilateral donors are currently financing projects along the Great Green Wall, and several public-private partnerships with potential for upscaling are in place.

Means of stewardship, metrics for monitoring

The GGW initiative is implemented under the auspices of the African Union Commission. Each country is responsible for monitoring progress and impacts. A 'State of the Great Green Wall' Report will be launched in 2019, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the status of implementation. It will also propose a clear roadmap for achieving the 2030 Great Green Wall vision.

Communication strategy

The UNCCD has launched a global campaign on the Great Green Wall which has already generated substantial interest among the general public:
<https://www.greatgreenwall.org/campaign>

Discussions have also been held with Summit Organisers (Anne Sophie Cerisola & Yassamin Ansari) regarding screening a cut down of the soon to be released Great Green Wall documentary (featuring Oscar nominated filmmaker, Fernando Meirelles and Malian singer Inna Modja) at a key moment of the Summit. This could be a powerful way to shine a spotlight on the Great Green Wall to create a unique cultural moment at the Summit to inspire and engage the general public beyond the Summit and build political momentum and action behind this new world wonder in the making.

Contact details of proponents (indicating the degree of commitment among the countries and organizations that are named).

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