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as a Best Practice to Enhance Rural Development
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Sustainable Land Management in the ESCWA Region*

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Sustainable Land Management in the ESCWA Region

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Outline

I. Introduction: overview and relevance of SLM to ESCWA
II. SLM: objectives, scope and limitations
III. Challenges limiting the implementation of SLM in ESCWA
IV. Options available to implement SLM
V. Case studies and lessons learned
VI. Conclusion and recommendations
I. Introduction: overview and relevance of SLM to ESCWA

What is SLM?

- The sustainable land management (SLM) approach integrates land, water, biodiversity, and environmental management to meet rising food and fiber demands while sustaining ecosystem services and livelihoods and assuring the long term potential of these resources (WB, 2006).
SLM importance

- 75 percent (%) of the world’s poor live in rural
- Changing world landscapes
- Food crisis 2007-2008
- Poverty reduction, environmental preservation and SLM are highly relevant interlinked strategic goals

Importance in ESCWA

- Limited water
- Agriculture still important in most countries.
- Fragile, degraded lands: 15.3 million hectares farmland degraded. Losses US$5 billion of agricultural revenue per year
- Rural livelihoods
- Community participation
- Indigenous knowledge
Fragile Mediterranean Semi-arid Ecosystem, Tubnah Village, North Jordan

Severe Drought affecting Coffee Plantation (Yemen)
Salinity induced by irrigation in the Euphrates basin in Syria

SLM, Livelihoods and Local Communities

Land is one of the capital assets required to construct rural livelihoods
SLM and Community Participation

Community Communication in Hawf, Yemen: Civil society and Women groups

SLM and Indigenous Knowledge

“The Hima is the most widespread and longstanding indigenous / traditional protected area institution in the Middle East, and perhaps on Earth”
II. SLM: objectives, scope and limitations

SLM in ESCWA

- Sustain the ecosystem of the marginal drylands
- Enhance livelihoods
- Adapt agriculture to climate change
**Objectives and scope of SLM (CDE, 2008)**

**Limitations of SLM in ESCWA**

- **Policy level**: Absence of appropriate policies legislations and incentives, as well as with the failure to mainstream SLM in land use planning and in rural development.
- **Technical level**: Need to invest in new technologies and to approach resource management as a system rather than as a series of discrete actions. Paucity of data for planning, M&E.
- **Community level**: Relevance of SLM not always apparent. Difficulty of scaling-up and replicating experiences. Unrealistic expectation-building.
III. Challenges limiting the implementation of SLM in ESCWA

Challenges

- Growing demand for food
- Breakdown of local food systems
- Loss of indigenous knowledge
- Rural poverty
- Urban development
- Climate change
  - Increased water stress
  - Extreme weather events
  - Floods
Factors limiting the implementation of SLM in ESCWA

1- Insufficient sharing of knowledge and technology. **Solution:** Improving the access to clear and easily understandable land management techniques, small credit schemes

2- Inadequate policies and weak institutional governance. **Solution:** Strengthen decentralized management and participatory governance of natural resources.

3- Economic and financial limitations. **Solution:** Mainstreaming of environmental concerns into production program, policies, and cross-cutting sectors

4- Social and behavioral motivation. **Solution:** Rural literacy and education, especially environmental education, must be supported and promoted as a priority in achieving sustainable development goals.
The Jordanian Case (GEF, 2008)

- Jordan has only about 5% of arable land and has a high water deficiency. Its limited natural resources are a major challenge altering its agricultural productivity. This challenge is being aggravated by 22% of land degradation due to overpopulation. Therefore, promotion of SLM is essential for agricultural purposes. However, the following barriers obstruct the mainstreaming of SLM:

1. Lack of effective knowledge information and management
2. Institutional and Governance Barrier
3. Economic and Financial Barrier
IV. Options Available to implement SLM

Dealing with unsustainability

- Understand the processes leading to the adoption and implementation of unsustainable land use practices.
- Triggers of unsustainable land use:
  - Land users are unaware of the consequences of land use activities
  - Land insecurity prevents investment in SLM
  - Poverty prevents investment in SLM
  - Rapid population growth leads to cultivation of marginal land
  - Rapid population decline leads to neglect in maintaining protective practices
  - Policy failures create market imperfections, poverty, and degradation
Changing the way we use land

- INM
- IPM
- Organic Farming
- Conservation Farming

This will depend on:
- Skills
- Knowledge
- Policies

Innovative Approaches

- Farming systems-based approaches
- Livelihoods-based approaches
- Value chain-based approaches
V. Case studies and lessons learned

- New Crops and Cropping technologies
- Integrated Pest Management
- Organic Agriculture
- Rangeland Rehabilitation
- Conservation Agriculture
- Watershed Management
Traditional Method for Rain Water Harvesting

Water Catchment Area [Land resources conservation through rain water harvesting, Al-Ghaileen Village, Bura district, Hodiedah Governorate, Yemen]
Coffee grown in terraces as rained crops (Al Ghaileen Village, Yemen)
Management of the southern sector of Al-Shouf Cedar Reserve in collaboration with local communities (Niha, Mrusti, Jibaa and Khraibi)

Soil and Water Preservation ("Bridges" Traditional Techniques)
Lessons Learned

Strategic goals

1. Food security and sovereignty are issues of local, national, regional and global concerns. They can only be achieved sustainably in stable ecosystems.

2. Sustainability requires collective efforts. These require policy interventions that facilitate and encourage the local governance of land resources.

Lessons Learned

3. Economic and environmental interests must be integrated with other livelihood concerns. Here, the importance of off-farm income to support SLM must be recognized.

4. Agriculture is gaining renewed prominence as an important part of the solution of environmental degradation and rural poverty. SLM is required more than ever.
Lessons Learned

5. There is a need for rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness of SLM. Reliable land quality indicators are required for guidance.

6. Farming must strike a balance between the need to increase productivity, needed by farmers and society, and the need to sustain ecosystems. This may be achieved through improved management methods rather than through the adoption of high input crop varieties and the associated technological package.

Lessons Learned

7. An enabling policy environment that empowers farmers and land managers remains essential. Governance and decentralization of resource management must be achieved.

8. SLM should address the multifunctionality of rural landscape rather than just farming and food productions. Land managers are truly the stewards of the rural landscape, and their contribution has to be recognized at the environmental, economic and cultural levels.
VI. Conclusions and recommendations

Blue Print for Regional SLM Initiative

- Make SLM a local concern and a national responsibility through mainstreaming in poverty reduction and rural development strategies.
- Approach SLM as an integrated development plan rather than as a series of technical options.
Blue Print for Regional SLM Initiative

- Institutionalize collaboration between land users, technical experts and policy makers for the purpose of identifying, monitoring and addressing resource degradation. These can take the form of users’ networks.
- Foster knowledge-sharing platforms between local, regional and global actors for the exchange of good practices and of lessons learned.

Blue Print for Regional SLM Initiative

- Intensify locally-based research in order to improve the understanding of the ecological, social and economic causes of degradation.
- Promote the development of appropriate technologies that are responsive to change.
Blue Print for Regional SLM Initiative

- Regularly evaluate the progress of SLM projects and programs through the development of locally relevant indicators and M&E processes.

- Encourage long term commitment to SLM by research and development institutions.

Conclusions and recommendations

- Investigate and adapt local innovations and indigenous knowledge in SLM.

- Prioritize prevention and mitigation as essential components of SLM technical programs.
Conclusions and recommendations

- Develop locally appropriate methods for the social, cultural and economic valuation of land and ecosystems. Use to promote SLM with policy makers and policy advisors.

- Create an enabling environment for SLM by addressing issues of market opportunities, legislation and security of land use rights.

Blue Print for Regional SLM Initiative

- Develop an appropriate, non-market distorting incentive scheme to promote SLM in regions where poverty is a barrier to investment in SLM.
Need for a Comprehensive Capacity Building Program

- Land Users
- Researchers
- NGOs and Civil Society
- Donors
- Policy makers

Thank You