



BRIEF

Opportunities for Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) in the Great Green Wall Initiative in Mali and Senegal

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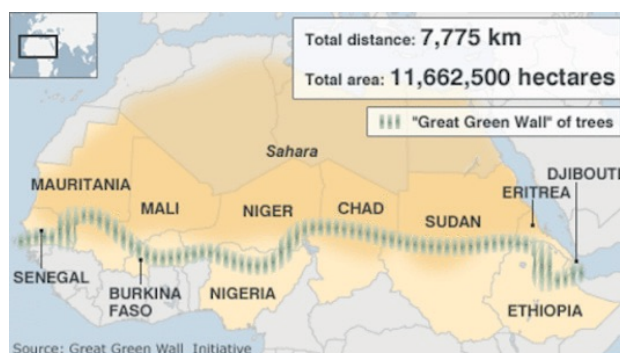
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Introduction

The Great Green Wall (GGW) initiative began in 2007 as a reforestation project to create a shield of trees to keep the desert at bay. It runs across the Sahel region from Senegal in the West to Djibouti in the East of Africa. The GGW or La Grande Muraille Verte aims to restore 100 million hectares of degraded ecosystems and sequester 250 million tonnes of carbon across 11 countries by 2030.



Source: Journals of India 2021 <https://journalsofindia.com/great-green-wall-ggw-programme/> Great Green Wall Programme.

The first appraisal survey in 2020 showed limited progress. Only 4 million hectares had been restored in the 11 founding member states, which is only 15–18% of the area the project aims to cover by 2030.¹

The GGW was launched in 2007 by the African Union to promote sustainable development and climate change mitigation. The 11 countries selected as intervention zones are Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan. However, implementation is uneven across the countries. It has also been criticized for taking a top-down approach, excluding local land users and contributing to conflict.

Despite some obstacles, the GGW initiative is now gathering pace, with refocused objectives and new funding in 2021.

Role of international agencies

¹ The survey was commissioned by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and released in September 2020.



The role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other international partners is discussed along with their funding. The United Nations Food and Agriculture organization and UNEP are leading the new **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030** and the GGW will be one of the UN Decade’s flagship projects.

UNEP is one of the key international partners in the GGW initiative and has an interest in increasing investments in participatory approaches to rangeland restoration. Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM) is a process for building community capacity to manage rangelands to improve productivity and good governance. PRM has been implemented in East Africa over significant areas of rangelands in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania.

Participatory rangeland management

Based on the participatory forest management approach, PRM was first piloted in Ethiopia and then scaled up to more than 1 million hectares with significant impacts on strengthening the management of access to rangelands, improving productivity and empowering communities, in particular women. As described in Figure 1, the process improves understanding of rangeland resources and their status, builds community capacity to develop and implement a rangeland management plan and strengthens management and governance structures.

The process has led to community, donor, and public investments in rangeland restoration. Following the success in Ethiopia, PRM was then piloted in Kenya and Tanzania with funding from the EU as a contribution to the Rangelands Initiative of the International Land Coalition with significant social and environmental impacts.

Figure 1: Stages and steps in PRM (Source: Flintan and Cullis 2010)



The GGW in Senegal and Mali

In both Senegal and Mali, GGW interventions and activities are implemented from the top, with decisions about location and type of activities decided by local government agencies. There is little consultation with local land users. In Senegal, over a dozen projects are contributing to the GGW. Tree planting has been the main focus to date. Local land users are usually not involved, except for planting trees through cash-for-work programmes and fencing off newly-planted areas which excludes them from local use. The people interviewed during this study drew attention to some major gaps in implementation and monitoring, including the need to strengthen community participation and support and the need for a better evaluation of tree planting as the main focus.

In Mali, weak political commitment and financing were highlighted as major challenges. In both countries, insecurity and conflicts in intervention areas were a concern but details were not available.

Pastoral Units

In Senegal, the government introduced pastoral units (PUs) in the 1980s. PUs were set up around water points and have since been supported by several projects. The objective is to manage resources sustainably and benefit local populations and the community of transhumant pastoralists. PUs appear to be a successful intervention in terms of developing better land management systems and natural resources, water infrastructure management systems, and transhumant grazing management systems. Despite their apparent success, PUs have been implemented in a top-down manner and project managers have failed to invest in or empower pastoral communities. Once management plans are prepared, the PUs are often left without supervision, capacity-building programmes, or monitoring. As a result, management plans are often not implemented. Good governance is weak because communities have not been given any authority over their PUs. Where there are PU management organizations, they are often politicized and heavily influenced by local chiefs.

Opportunities for PRM

There are some similarities between the pastoral unit and PRM approaches. Both include an investigation stage where people collect and analyze information on rangeland resources and other aspects of the local context and both develop a rangeland management plan and set up a governance or management organization. There are also significant differences.

Perhaps the most significant difference is that PRM is embedded in local land-use practices and the community builds on customary management and governance customs. PUs are separated from the pastoral landscape and managed according to new rules and regulations that often exclude local communities. The PUs will always



need external interventions and resources. In PRM, the main objective is to build community capacity for management so people can implement their own plans and invest in themselves and their community.

In Mali, projects have set up PUs around boreholes powered by solar energy. There is significant scope for PRM to add value to these projects. In many places, customary institutions and governance have broken down, leaving a vacuum in terms of institutions for rangeland management and governance and increasing the likelihood of conflict. The emphasis on decentralization, with power and resource management in the hands of local communities, provides a supportive political context for community-led processes such as PRM.

Potential for testing and piloting

There is significant potential for testing and piloting PRM in both Senegal and Mali. In Senegal, a major issue is to make it clear how PRM can add value to the PUs and contribute to improved management of rangelands outside the PUs.

In Mali, the challenge is to identify areas suitable for management units in the vast rangelands and maintain connections between these units. This means working at both landscape and local scales to make sure PRM is well-supported. PRM also fosters community participation by including women and youth. In contrast, the mainly top-down approach taken so far has excluded communities and created conflict.

By building the capacity and willingness of communities to play a greater part in the GGW, implementation will have long-term beneficial impacts, including reduced costs and greater sustainability.

For the full report on this study, please see:

<https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/119174>

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