Introduction

Degradation of land quality, whether due to over-exploitation, climate change, inappropriate management, or other natural or anthropogenic factors, is a severe global problem, particularly in Africa. Desertification in particular leads to huge loss of productivity and ecological function of affected areas, with corresponding negative effects on local food security and primary production activities.

The objectives of this Portfolio Review are:

- To quantify the value of SLM investments and assess their contribution to the achievement of established strategies and objectives under the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Terrafrica, the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and the Environment Action Program (EAP).
- To assess their contribution to the national and regional goals and priorities relating to the issues of land degradation, desertification and poverty.

The definition of SLM is the adoption of land-use systems that, through appropriate management practices, enables land users to maximize the economic and social benefits from the land while maintaining or enhancing the ecological support functions of the land resources.

Approach

The review methodology was based on the guidelines created by the Global Mechanism (GM), in collaboration with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD; See GM, 2008). In the first phase – the pre-screening – SLM-relevant projects were selected from the total African Development Bank (AfDB) portfolio based on keywords, then checked for relevance. Projects were then classified according to AfDB Thematic Sectors and UNCCD portfolio indicators, such as Rio Markers (RM). These set up for the more in-depth analysis, comparing project themes, involved sectors and the actions and entry points for SLM activities within the projects, and any trends that were shown in relation to these.

Main findings

1. 53 projects were studied across 29 countries.

2. Agro-climatic zones were hard to establish due to the ambiguity of project area description. WMO aridity zones were used to classify the main climate in each project-country: 54% of all projects were included in UNCCD categories of ‘Dry Sub-Humid’ (5 projects), ‘Arid’ (6 projects, and the most frequent category of all, ‘Semi-Arid’ (17 projects).

3. Information on project area size and total population affected was patchy: projects areas were mentioned in 60% of all projects, whereas population total was stated in 69% of all projects; total population should be established in number of households affected as opposed to total number of individuals.

4. Total investment in the PR was $US 1637.32 million, with an average spend on projects overall of $US 31.49 million, and a median cost of $US 18.10 million. The range of costs was $US 242.35 million, with the lowest spend $US 0.58 million and the highest $US 242.93 million.

5. Whilst applying Rio Marker weightings, intending to show particular investment in SLM, this figure changes to $US 954 million, 58% of total investment in the PR. This is a very similar figure to the total ADF investment of $US 950 million.
6. Total investment was divided into local and foreign sources: local investment provided from within the project country, included 32% of all financing, while foreign costs invested 41.5% of the total sum. 26.5% of the total investment did not state the source of their financial help.

7. Co-financers were frequent in this PR, the most significant source being ‘Governmental’, ‘Non-Governmental’ and ‘Beneficiaries’.

8. 40% of projects were rated as Rio Marker 1 projects, while 60% rated as Rio Marker 2 projects. Rio Marker 1 projects were found in 53% of all countries involved, and Rio Marker 2 projects took place in 67% of all countries involved.

9. The PR does not contain any RM 3 projects. This does not mean that projects do not deal with UNCCD objectives; they simply were not explicitly mentioned in the project reports.

10. This SLM-focus is reflected in the project Relevant Activity Codes and the main sectors involved: the RACs commonly include programmes of capacity-building and community development, as do the specific social programmes discussed in the documents, and the main sectors involved are agricultural and environmental.

11. Certain Components (specific areas of investment within the portfolio projects, with greater level of detail than Sectors, Sub-Sectors or Themes) features more heavily: ‘Project Management’, features in 54% of all projects, whilst ‘Capacity Building’ is present in 39% of all projects. ‘Watershed management and development’, ‘Agricultural Research / Development’ and ‘Agricultural and Rural Infrastructure’ are all present in just over a fifth of projects (21%).

12. The PR identified 20 international Partnerships. The most frequently mentioned were the EU, World Bank, IFAD and UN-affiliated orgs. Multinational Partnerships were rare however. National Partnerships operated mostly through Steering and Technical Committee, and Coordination Units. Local affiliations included community based organisations, regional committees and local coordination units.

13. Higher-level objectives contribute towards national policies and development frameworks. The most important was ‘Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan’, featuring in 29 projects (56% of all projects) and 19 countries.

14. NEPAD was present in 8 projects, making it the most common multilateral agreement in the review. UNCCD, linked to the Rio Markers, was present only twice throughout the whole portfolio of projects. Other agreements, including RAMSAR convention networks and PRODECOM/PADECOM featured a single time in the portfolio review.

15. The most common beneficiaries targeted by the portfolio were Farmers and Local communities; the least common were ‘Tourist Tradesmen’, ‘Government Institutions’, and ‘Forest-related Organisations’. The portfolio does not have a large focus on forestry or tourism, but is mostly concerned with relatively local development and agricultural productivity. There is also a noticeable focus on Women, reflecting the importance of Gender.

16. ‘Local Social Benefitting’ was the most common Outcome Indicator, featuring in 75% of all review projects. ‘Technology and Techniques Improved’ was also an important one, present in 67% of all projects involved in the portfolio review. Interestingly, ‘Biodiversity Conservation’ was present in 15 projects (29%), yet there are only 5 projects in the Environment Sector. This biodiversity focus in the portfolio indicates the important consideration of sustainable, ecologically-sound growth and development.

17. Outcomes mainly relate to local infrastructure development, agricultural productivity and improved road systems (also the most common market access improvement), improved water supply and land quality, and technology improvement.

18. Contributions to national development strategies were the most common mainstreaming strategies.

19. Although there seemed to be a fairly low level of policy changes intended, the success of previous projects was highlighted as an important facilitating factor for current projects, suggesting that the success of the current projects intend to pave the way for future advances in their target areas – which the focus on capacity-building and training supports.

20. There was a low focus on research in general in the portfolio projects. Agricultural Research as a component was present in 11 projects, and ecological research was considered in 15 projects. This lack of investment in new research implies that expertise will need to be imported, provided by international groups.

21. 73% of projects took into account predicted risks and/or future developments within their objective. The most common Risk considered was ‘Natural Disasters’, ‘Social Unrest’, ‘Institutional Weakness’ and ‘Geographical Issues’. ‘Climate Change’ was considered in only a tenth of all projects.
Conclusions

- This map superimposes the Portfolio review with a map of Africa detailing Land degradation, compiled by UNEP. The comparison of the two shows an absence of projects in Central Eastern Africa, and Southern Africa. In terms of countries, South Africa, Namibia, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan, Algeria and Somalia can all be listed.

- However, projects should also be directed towards certain countries with a strong agricultural preponderance within their economy. This can be measured by the proportion of national GDP devoted to the primary sector. Cameroon, DRC Congo, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Rep of Congo, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo are countries that have an agricultural GDP of over 40%. These countries’ agriculture is obviously an important aspect to the development of their economy. Hence in order to maximally contribute to the development of SLM in Africa, one should focus on these countries, devoid of projects.

- For the reviewing process, it would useful to have a greater use of Rio Markers – Rio Marker 3, which was UNCCD-specific was not included as few projects specifically mentioned the UNCCD, although it is likely that their objectives were contributory.

- Finally, considering how important previous project experience was as a facilitating factor, it might be valuable to ascertain what that experience entailed. An examination of a greater range of closed projects would give a better idea of what approaches and techniques are the most successful, both in terms of actual implementation, and setting up for future work.

References:

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