

African Union Great Green Wall Initiative Strategy and Ten-Year Implementation Framework: *Ecosystem Restoration and Livelihoods Resilience (2024-2034)*

SUMMARY BRIEF



Strategic Intervention Axis 2: Co-design and deliver pathways toward transformative restoration, resilience and development

BACKGROUND

The Great Green Wall Initiative (GGWI) is a flagship project of the African Union (AU), launched in 2007 to combat desertification and land degradation in the Sahel and Sahara regions. Initially, it was conceived as a narrow belt of trees stretching across Africa to halt the spread of the desert. However, the initiative has since evolved into a broader land restoration and sustainable development programme, aiming to revitalise degraded ecosystems, support agriculture, pastoralism, and forests, while improving livelihoods and resilience in affected communities.

Originally focused on 11 countries, the initiative has now expanded to include 25 additional nations from across Africa, with South Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda also expressing interest. Recognising the need for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to land degradation, desertification and climate change, and cognisant of the need for its urgent revision, the African Union Commission (AUC) developed a revised strategy and ten-

year implementation framework. This new GGWI Strategy encourages an integrated and holistic approach to land rehabilitation and climate-resilient development among its Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Agencies and partners. It emphasises ecosystem restoration, climate resilience, and economic opportunities for smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and local communities, positioning itself as a transformative continent-wide solution for achieving land restoration at scale.

The revised GGWI Strategy is a ten-year strategic planning document (2024-2034) that defines the vision, specific objectives, intervention and action areas required to scale up land restoration and resilience building activities associated with agricultural, grazing, and forest landscapes across the African continent. The new GGWI Strategy drew upon the findings and key recommendations of the independent evaluations which have been conducted since its inception in 2012.¹

This brief presents Strategic Intervention Axis 2 of the new GGWI Strategy.



1. **UNCCD. 2020.** The Great Green Wall implementation status and way ahead to 2030. Pan African Agency of the Great Green Wall and Government of Ireland.
UNCCD. 2023. Independent Evaluation of the GGW Accelerator. UNCCD.
Transparency International. 2023. Governance mapping and assessment of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative.

STRATEGIC FRAMING OF THE GGWI STRATEGY

The new GGWI Strategy comprises four strategic intervention axes, designed to support the achievement of the GGW vision and objectives. Within the GGWI Strategy, specific suggested priority actions are articulated for each of the intervention areas identified under Strategic Intervention Axes 1-4.

Aspirations and objectives of the Strategy



VISION

By 2034, Africa's dry regions are transformed into socially, economically, and environmentally resilient and stable regions.



OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Enhance the resilience of communities, ecosystems, and economies in the African drylands by improving the living conditions of populations, improving the state and health of ecosystems, advocating and mobilising resources, strengthening institutional collaboration and promoting policy coherence.



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Promote locally led land planning, land restoration and resilience building initiatives and nature-based entrepreneurial and livelihood activities that improve the well-being and incomes of communities, as well as empower them, particularly women and youth.

Catalyse inclusion, alignment, cooperation and ownership of land restoration and resilience-building in related strategies, policies, programmes and plans.

Promote policy coherence, alignment and a common narrative in strategies, policies, programmes and plans.

Invest in, and scale up, nature-based practices and inclusive landscape approaches to sustainable land, water and biodiversity restoration and management to support resilient value chains.

Enhance Africa's capacity to mobilise resources at multiple scales.

Develop, invest in, and support, economic and environmental infrastructure facilitating the move to a green and circular economy.

Enhance the linkage and effective collaboration among community, practice, science, policy and private sector stakeholders fostering knowledge sharing and learning from experience and building upon a harmonised knowledge management system.

Encourage systems-oriented, cross-sectoral and coordinated decision-making and adaptive management environments that facilitate the integration of activities across all stakeholders, sectors and scales.



AXIS 1

Enhancing leadership, governance and political commitment



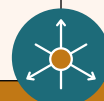
AXIS 2

Co-design and deliver pathways toward transformative restoration, resilience and development



AXIS 3

Enhancing the means of implementation for resilient landscape restoration



AXIS 4

Leveraging existing initiatives



AXIS 2

Co-design and deliver pathways toward transformative restoration, resilience and development

Strategic Intervention Axis 2 articulates the strategies and actions that will directly contribute to landscape and livelihoods resilience, including increased land and soil health, biological diversity, effective water cycles, income from nature-positive farming, pastoral and forest endeavours and related entrepreneurial activities, and food security and nutrition at subnational and local levels. The axis has seven intervention areas.



Intervention Area 2.1

Bundle administrative, scientific and implementation and engagement capacities to tailor and scale landscape restoration and the management of ecosystems



Intervention Area 2.2

Promote inclusive leadership and resilient land-based economic enterprises and entrepreneurial activities for men, women and youth



Intervention Area 2.3

Invest in integrated value chains and employment that promote land health, effective water cycles and biological diversity



Intervention Area 2.4

Invest in climate resilient infrastructure and access to renewable energy



Intervention Area 2.5

Promote community-led land restoration and resilience by expanding socio-ecological and political approaches, tools, and contextualised options



Intervention Area 2.6

Promote community-led land restoration and resilience building by expanding the nature based, agroecological and greening approaches, tools, practices and options



Intervention Area 2.7

Invest in coordinated scientific and experience-based support and the creation of a common monitoring framework



Intervention Area 2.1

Bundle administrative, scientific and implementation and engagement capacities to tailor and scale landscape restoration and the management of ecosystems



Indicative priority actions:

- Focus on land and soil health and productivity to build resilience to enhance food security and raise rural incomes, in compliance with the principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems.
- Bundle agroecological, nature-based practices based on harmonised knowledge management systems.
- Ensure the empowerment and leadership of land users and communities and secure mechanisms for inclusive land, tree, water and other resources governance.
- Develop core competencies in engagement and facilitation skills at the local level.
- Build upon existing or create mechanisms for nested participatory landscape, watershed and land use resilience planning across scales.
- Promote integrated natural resource management, enhanced ecosystem functions and the rising sustainable delivery of ecosystems services to build resilience, enhance food security and raise rural incomes.
- Secure mechanisms for inclusive land, tree, water and other resources governance.
- Build forward-looking locally led climate resilience and disaster preparedness plans, practices and accessible resources taking into account evidence and predictions under different scenarios.
- Adopt governance principles of adaptive management built upon structured stakeholder reviews of experience and evidence for constant learning and improved decision-making.



Intervention Area 2.2

Promote inclusive leadership and resilient land-based economic enterprises and entrepreneurial activities for men, women and youth



Indicative priority actions:

- Promote governance structures that recognise and support women as leaders of land restoration initiatives and comprehensive risk management.
- Strongly encourage the participation and leadership of women and youth in rural development, ecosystem restoration activities and entrepreneurial activities.
- Analyse the state of women's rights, constraints and opportunities in the GGW area, at multiple scales, to facilitate and secure women's access/control over natural resources, their participation in economic activities, and their participation and leadership in natural resource and economic governance structures.
- Promote green jobs in rural areas and optimise the employment potential for young people and women.
- Optimise the employment potential for young people and women.
- Maximise the number of people empowered by the GGW vision and beneficially engaged in restoration objectives in rural areas.
- The GGW entities and relevant line ministries should encourage the co-development and co-management of targeted gender interventions with local women's cooperatives.

- Develop and support an active Youth Advisory Board for the GGW.
- Promote economic empowerment to enable rural women and youth to participate in and benefit from profitable economic activities.
- Co-develop incentive structures with representatives of differently abled people to facilitate their access to rural jobs and entrepreneurial support systems.
- Promote a more equitable balance in workloads and in the sharing of economic and social benefits between women and men.
- Simplify the registration, formalisation, and other rules governing company creation in the GGW areas to provide incentives, particularly for young people to gain income sources.
- Build on the entrepreneurial drive of young rural people to enhance their engagement and leadership in agricultural, pastoral and natural product-based businesses and value chains.



Intervention Area 2.3

Invest in integrated value chains and employment that promote land health, effective water cycles and biological diversity



Indicative priority actions:

- Promote and fortify capacities and competencies for integrated landscape and farming systems management.
- Adopt, roll out and strengthen mobile advisory and counselling services that are demand driven.
- Support farmer-to-farmer and farmer led innovation.
- Undertake market analysis and market development processes that encourage the growth of locally rooted entrepreneurial nature-positive agribusinesses and value chains.
- Promote nature-based (tree, crop, plant) value chains to support livelihoods, as well as nutrition, soil health and ecosystem health.
- Enhance the markets for non-timber forest products to strengthen the commitment of populations to protect their natural resources
- Promote livestock value chains including the development of high value addition products that contribute to enhanced landscape management systems.
- Create the capacity of local land users to engage with and benefit from strengthened value chains.
- Create self-sustaining mechanisms including fee-based training/learning for directly supporting farmers and land managers to implement practices that steward and protect ecosystem functions and services.
- Deploy remote sensing, land health surveillance, fintech and other technologies to estimate the value of, and offer payments for the environmental services provided, and reward farmers, pastoralists, forest managers and local communities for stewarding and protecting ecosystems.



Intervention Area 2.4

Invest in climate resilient infrastructure and access to renewable energy



Indicative priority actions:

- Promote and popularise the large-scale use of renewable energies.
- Encourage rural energy entrepreneurship by facilitating the adoption of fintech payment systems, offering tax relief to renewable energy investments, and by facilitating the formalisation of small rural energy businesses.
- Build necessary infrastructure to ensure communication connectivity and incubations for small- and medium-sized enterprises.



Intervention Area 2.5

Promote community-led land restoration and resilience by expanding socio-ecological and political approaches, tools, and contextualised options



Indicative priority actions:

- Collaborate to ensure women, households and communities have clear ownership and usage rights to their natural resources.
- Promote local governance mechanisms for natural resources that are locally led, evolved or adapted, and locally enforced.
- Develop financial capacity of local councils to support community-led restoration initiatives.
- Catalyse behaviour change regarding the organisation and management of natural resources by understanding how to influence through incentives, competencies, and socio-cultural frameworks in each context.
- Develop and disseminate through a training-of-trainers programme on an iterative behaviour-change toolkit that takes into account the heterogeneity of contexts across the GGW areas.
- Share experience and knowledge of bylaws that enable more successful landscape restoration and resilience among and between countries, communities, wards and districts.
- Facilitate cross-learning between communities by using mobile/digital communications and citizen-science tools and cross-visits.
- Financial transactions should whenever possible be carried out through mobile payment systems, which facilitate transparent accounting.
- Primary, secondary schools and universities should incorporate an understanding of agroecological and nature-based principles and practices into course materials and emphasise hands-on exercises.
- Collaborate to strengthen land tenure and property rights to ensure women, households and communities have clear ownership and usage rights to their natural resources.
- Analyse cultural and other barriers to local level land restoration.
- Encourage the development and provision of new community-based enforcement mechanisms.
- Support the co-development of local natural resource governance rules, bylaws and conventions.
- Roll out a programme of community future-casting, local governance reviews, and co-imagination of practices and investments.
- Promote digital linkages to create 'homegrown' and connected restored landscapes.
- Catalyse and support local level restoration campaigns and movements.



Intervention Area 2.6

Promote community-led land restoration and resilience building by expanding the nature based, agroecological and greening approaches, tools, practices and options



Indicative priority actions:

Urgently promote the uptake of adaptation plans including:

- Foster tree regeneration through simple, highly cost-effective practices such as farmer-managed natural regeneration/ assisted natural regeneration.
- Promote tree planting with carefully selected species desired by local communities that provide high financial and nutritional benefits.
- Promote simple and widely proven land and water cycle restoration interventions.
- Capitalise on using compost from animal manure, mulching, and other inputs from conservation agricultural practices.
- Promote simple permaculture approaches.
- Encourage communities to save, exchange and trade seeds.
- Optimise the management of livestock grazing systems.
- Encourage the regeneration of trees in grazing lands, such as silvopastoral approaches.
- Encourage the regeneration and planting of trees along degraded streams.
- Integrate nomadic pastoralists in landscape-scale natural resource management plans.
- Apply measures for preventing the spread of invasive plant species.
- Make improvements in resource efficiency, including sustainable food systems that restore natural resources and sustain livelihoods.
- Incentivise community coherence for landscape restoration.



Intervention Area 2.7

Invest in coordinated scientific and experience-based support and the creation of a common monitoring framework



Indicative priority actions:

- Agree on a common list of social, economic and ecosystem health indicators for process, impact and behaviour change and a monitoring framework and commit to their regular measurement over the long-term building upon the GGW Accelerator Indicator Definition Guide (2021).
- Develop and agree upon mechanisms for displaying data through easily accessible mobile device-based dashboards to support decision-making and adaptive management.
- Make use of scientifically backed community-based monitoring mechanisms and frameworks.
- Build human, institutional, and social capital for representatives of research, development, education, extension, and support specific to sustainable soil, land, water, nutrient and biodiversity.
- Carry out foresight analyses at regional and national levels to understand the underlying causes and key drivers of land degradation and land regeneration and to analyse uncertainties and how to best address them.
- Encourage incentivised trans-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary scientific teams to more effectively address systems dimensions and promote systems change.
- Create intentional links between transdisciplinary African researchers and citizen scientists to collaboratively monitor progress related to land health, water cycles, land cover and diversity as input to continental data bases.
- Build in evidence and experience-based dialogues at the local level to support local adaptive management.
- Incorporate accessible evidence- and experience-based planning, decision-making and implementation, monitoring, learning, evaluation and adaptive management.
- Facilitate cross-learning between communities through the use of mobile communications and citizen-science tools, and cross-visits to facilitate the rapid adoption of innovative, high-performance practices.



For additional information about the meeting and how you could get involved, please contact:

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