



**drynet**

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# Putting dryland people in the driver's seat: DRYNET paves the road!

**RESULTS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM WORKING TOGETHER IN 22 COUNTRIES**

In three years the DRYNET programme (officially entitled 'Strengthening civil society networks to address dryland degradation and poverty issues in the context of strategic development frameworks and the UNCCD') has achieved remarkable results. This leaflet highlights the most outstanding ones. The DRYNET programme provided a unique opportunity for 14 Civil Society Organisations (CSO) around the globe to work together to promote the interests of dryland communities and dryland ecosystems. The DRYNET network has been goal-oriented, collaborative, and bottom up. The network intends to continue to grow and to work together in the coming years. A more detailed report can be obtained from [drynet@bothends.org](mailto:drynet@bothends.org).

## THE DRYNET APPROACH

DRYNET adopted a step-wise approach to building and strengthening CSO platforms and collaboration in order to enhance CSO participation in decision-making. These steps included:

- 1 Mapping problems, stakeholders and existing dryland initiatives;
- 2 Analysing the political context, relationships and financial flows;
- 3 Organising stakeholder dialogues to establish a strategy for influencing policy; and,
- 4 Providing training, information and inspiration for capacity building.

These activities were supported by a science and technology officer whose role was to provide the partners with links to scientists and scientific developments and to help them commission their own scientific mini-studies, an approach which proved highly effective.

The programme used a combination of tools and exchange structures, including face-to-face seminars and trainings, newsletters and other forms of electronic information exchange that maintained contact and interest. The newsletters were translated into 15 local languages.

DRYNET received financial support from the European Commission, the Global Mechanism, PSO, IUCN-NL, Misereor and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The partners in the programme were: *Both ENDS Netherlands, CAREC Kazakhstan / Uzbekistan / Kyrgyzstan / Tajikistan / Turkmenistan, CARI France, CENESTA Iran/Afghanistan/ Azerbaijan, EMG South Africa, ENDA TM Senegal / Madagascar / Morocco, Instituto Sertão and the ASA Network Brazil, LPP Germany, LPPS India, OLCA Chile, PROBIOMA Bolivia, SCOPE Pakistan, TEMA Turkey and TENMIYA Mauritania.* More info: [www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org).

*The DRYNET members meeting in Cape Town, South Africa.*



**BUILDING STRONG CSO PARTNERSHIPS**

All the partners managed to establish, expand or strengthen a network of organisations in their own countries concerned about drylands.

In Mauritania and Turkey, networks were established from scratch. In Bolivia two rival CSO networks came to work together and now present a unified voice in dealings with the government.

**CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

The programme has significantly increased the skills base of the network’s partners, who have built up their experience and knowledge in participatory facilitation methods and developed training methods that involve sharing knowledge rather than merely receiving information.

In Central Asia, CAREC worked with UNESCO, conducting two workshops with scientists in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan and two workshops on education and sustainable development for twenty Central Asian government officials (from different ministries). This provided the basis for a training curriculum that includes desertification issues and a pool of potential trainers.

Grassroots network partners are now better placed to link to national and international policy processes, while those that are mostly engaged at the policy level have gained more contacts with local actors and realities.

Tenmiya overcame a history of poor civil society participation and recognition in Mauritania, and initiated a coordinated input into the Copenhagen Climate Conference. *“As an organisation, we went from being project implementers to being network organisers, providing a platform where government and civil society stakeholders meet.”*

The training sessions have improved participants’ skills in strategic campaign planning, documentation, lobbying and advocacy and project development. They also helped participants to better understand the issues and position of other actors.

In Brazil one set of trainings focused on how to prepare applications for project funding. As a result almost thirty project applications have been successfully made by local CSO.



*Villagers and the Iranian government rehabilitating some 12,000 hectares of degraded rangelands in Iran.*

## **POLICY IMPACT**

DRYNET partners have significantly contributed to, and engaged with, national policy processes in all the participating countries, although the approaches differed substantially between countries. They included:

- inviting government representatives to attend seminars;
- providing tailor-made training to government representatives;
- submitting policy papers, proposals and other written contributions to government delegations and meetings;
- creating stakeholder platforms for discussing specific issues, such as Soil Protection Councils in Turkey;
- legally challenging plans that threatened to cause irreversible environmental damage;
- using the media and cultural events, such as a photo fair, environmental film festival and informative environmental tours for the media to raise public awareness about desertification.

In India LPPS worked with the Raika, a community of camel keepers in Rajasthan, enabling them to record their role in, and contribution to, their natural environment. This resulted in the Bio-cultural Protocol of the Raika, which has been well-received at national and international policy forums. LPPS has also linked the indigenous knowledge of the Raika with policy frameworks and market opportunities and developed some promising initiatives.

Starting from different positions, DRYNET's partners have all succeeded in building stronger dialogues between policy makers and civil society and have improved their relations with the authorities.

In Bolivia, Probioma used two seminars to involve stakeholders in identifying new ways to combat desertification, and to identify coordinators and funding sources for these plans. This created the basis for a new National Action Plan under the UNCCD. The process survived a change in government and is now actively supported by the new Minister for Science and Technology who supports the creation of a Technological Innovation Platform to Combat Desertification.

Many DRYNET partners have been actively involved in contributing to revising national strategies (NAPs) for combating desertification, sometimes in the context of national poverty reduction strategies. DRYNET also sought to mainstream dryland issues into development frameworks: partners have successfully linked dryland issues with many policy areas, including local and national development plans, indigenous peoples acts, PRSPs, agricultural policies, forestry laws and investment plans.

In Madagascar, a DRYNET seminar led to a proposal to integrate the implementation of the three UN environmental conventions (on biodiversity, climate and desertification).

## **SOME EXAMPLES OF DRYNET'S INFLUENCE ON POLICY...**

In Kyrgyzstan, CAREC was centrally involved in developing a new Forestry Code for the Kyrgyz Republic. A new law to encourage land owners to plant and maintain forests is now before Parliament.

In France, CARI has encouraged local authorities active in development cooperation to take a more active role in combating desertification. They are now working with some donors and the French government to set up a fund for decentralised desertification projects.

In South Africa, the government has provided financial and technical support to the CSO-led South African Adaptation Network, and recognise the value of this group's contribution to the policy process. The DRYNET partner (EMG) also influenced the establishment of a Desertification Fund, funded by the Development Bank of Southern Africa.

In Chile, OLCA increased political awareness about desertification, which led the Minister of Environment to establish a cross-ministerial committee to coordinate actions to combat desertification. The government has also renewed its commitment to the UNCCD and to reviewing its NAP.

LPP Germany and other DRYNET partners persuaded the Animal Genetic Resource Unit of the FAO to pay more attention to pastoralists and to acknowledge (for the first time) that they are "guardians of biodiversity", especially in drylands. As a result the FAO is adopting new methods and concepts that give greater recognition to livestock keepers.

### SOME OF THE LESSONS LEARNED

One of the most important aspects of the programme has been the way in which it has improved communication between CSO, policy makers and academics, allowing them to learn from each other and become more aware of each other's activities. This suggests that dryland initiatives could capitalise more on what is already being done, rather than initiating new blue prints.

"We learned that one of the best ways to strengthen the capacities of local CSO is to provide them with opportunities to share their experiences and learn from the experiences of others." - Probioma, Bolivia.

Partners found that being part of an international network provided them with a legitimacy that made it easier for them to reach their goals. Participating in different events at different levels provided the partners with inspiration and gave them a hook to capture media interest and thereby increase public and political awareness about drylands and desertification.

The tool of the mini-studies worked well as a way of increasing interaction between CSO and scientists and in strengthening the local activities of DRYNET partners.

It takes time to build a solid network based on trust, mutual understanding and respect. The first phase of DRYNET has involved making significant investment in building such relationships and this has created a solid grounding for a sustainable and supportive network that will endure into the future.

**DRYNET had to overcome language and cultural differences, political instability, administrative difficulties and staff changes. The partners are proud of the programme's successes and the vibrancy of the network and look forward to continuing to work with different stakeholders on dryland issues in the future!**



*Farmers in Senegal have begun their own Integrated Farmer Schools where they experiment with ways of combating desertification*