Achievements

= Examples of some country specific achievements

Overall achievements

On a national level, Drynet facilitates networking among CSOs working on dryland management. On a wider level, Drynet provides a platform for international cooperation and brings together an effective network of 14 diverse CSOs from 17 countries. By doing so Drynet stimulates a long term and solid cooperation at national level, while also giving partners firm roots to participate in international events, at which Drynet is increasingly recognized as an important player.

Drynet has raised its profile and that of its members by organising civil society participation at a number of international events and conferences. It has organised side events, presentations, papers and interventions. Involvement and participation in international networks and events enhances the position of individual Drynet partners in regards to their national governments. In most countries with Drynet members there has been an increase in cooperation between civil society and the government.

Internationally Drynet is credited for taking a clear position on participation processes and topics such as adaptation to climate change and bio-fuel production in degraded areas.

- 9 regional quarterly Drynet newsletters are published and distributed in 14 languages to over 10,000 contacts in more than 25 different countries.
- The Drynet database contains more than 1000 CSOs, 50 research and development institutes that work on drylands, and 110 donor agencies supporting local action in drylands.
- A Website (www.dry-net.org) is available in three languages, featuring successful local initiatives.
- Extranet application is used for internal communication between partners.
- 50 national seminars and trainings have been organised.

In Senegal, the Drynet activities helped to reinvigorate the National Action Plan and align it with national policy under the UN Climate Change Convention.

In Central Asia, a Drynet partner in Kazakhstan has established regular contact between stakeholders in four countries in their region. They conduct regional seminars and publish the Drynet newsletter in 7 languages.

In South Africa, the first Drynet workshop attracted the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism who gave the keynote speech.

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In Kazakhstan, the Drynet partner has been nominated as a national focal point for CSOs for the UNCCD. They are now the main contacts between NGOs and the government.

The Iranian Drynet partner influenced the final text of the section on drylands and rangelands in the country’s 5 Year Development Plan.

The Bulgarian Drynet partner has fostered a long term and solid cooperation at national level, while also giving partners firm roots to participate in international events, at which Drynet is increasingly recognized as an important player.

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In 2007 14 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from all over the world joined forces in a programme called Drynet. This three-year networking and capacity building initiative aims to strengthen the voices of local dryland communities through their organisations. By involving civil society groups in local and national development and planning processes Drynet builds a foundation for civil society across the world to strengthen its position in the struggle to sustainably manage drylands.

Countering degradation requires that local organisations and communities living in drylands should be at the heart of the work. Unfortunately their involvement in the national and international arenas is often very low. By directly reaching out to local groups, Drynet intends to redress the current imbalance.

Policy frameworks such as the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and its National Action Plans are designed to ensure political and financial attention for drylands. Their success however remains limited to a few examples. CSOs that know the local realities must play a crucial role in getting drylands higher on the agenda. Yet CSOs often lack the necessary coordination and cooperation to carry out this agenda setting. Drynet works to ensure that CSOs are able to become structural partners of the public and private sectors.

In building the capacities of CSOs Drynet disseminates information about successful local initiatives for restoring and conserving drylands. Drynet makes information accessible to partners and broader audiences by publishing newsletters, making radio programmes and websites. Drynet also produces reviews of scientific advances in the field. Extensive surveys in the participating countries contribute to the knowledge of Drynet partners about key players (actual and potential). This helps the partners to reach out to and engage these actors by organising seminars, discussions, exchanges of experiences and training.

Drynet offers a complete package for strengthening CSOs to revitalise drylands.

Today, 70% of the victims of serious and permanent under-nourishment - an estimated 600 million people - live in semi-arid and arid ecosystems or ‘drylands.’

Natural resources, cultivation and livestock-rearing remain centrally important to the economies and livelihoods of the majority of people who live in drylands. In many countries with drylands these activities account for 30–50% of the Gross Domestic Product and are a major source of income and livelihood for 70–80% of the population.

Healthy ecosystems, land and natural resources are therefore critical. However, some 70% of the world’s drylands are affected by degradation. Countering drylands degradation makes a considerable contribution to poverty alleviation and the eradication of hunger worldwide.
Inspiring local initiatives

THE CASE OF LPPS - LOKHIT PASHU-PALAK SANSTHAN (INDIA)

The camel is part and parcel of Northern India’s culture and tradition, and was once the strongest safety net that desert people could rely on against drought. Camel husbandry is an ingenious way of converting the scattered and seasonally varying vegetation of drylands into animal protein and energy. Furthermore, camel milk is very healthy as it contains enzymes with anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties, which help to fight diseases such as tuberculosis and typhoid. It also contains an insulin-like substance that reduces blood sugar levels in diabetes patients. The camel population of Rajasthan has dwindled by almost 50% and thousands of female camels are being sold for slaughter. With the help of the Rajasthan-based Drynet partner LPPS, the camel breeders of the Thar Desert are now realising their economic potential. Current efforts are focused on value-addition to camel milk which is already marketed as a health and beauty product in the Gulf and several African countries.

THE CASE OF EMG – ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING GROUP (SOUTH AFRICA)

The Suid Bokkeveld plateau in Western South Africa is located on the edge of the Karoo, an arid ecosystem that covers central South Africa. The area is rich in wild rooibos, a plant used for making tea, which is harvested and traded by local small-scale farmers. For many families this is a very important source of income. Wild rooibos is much more resistant to droughts and pests than the fast-growing plantation rooibos, which dominates the market. For the small-scale farmers the productivity of their lands (and thus their livelihoods) is extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in climate and weather patterns, to over-cultivation and to overgrazing. In 2002 the Heiveld Co-operative in Suid Bokkeveld started marketing wild rooibos as a distinctive product, and achieved notable success with this exclusive product. Sound management practices are necessary for the sustainable production of wild rooibos tea. The South African NGO and Drynet partner EMG is playing a key role in identifying sustainable harvesting methods for wild rooibos in these South African drylands.

THE CASE OF TEMA - TURKISH FOUNDATION FOR COMBATING SOIL EROSION, FOR REFORESTATION AND THE PROTECTION OF NATURAL HABITATS (TURKEY)

Saffron - which was known as “Turkish Saffron” until the beginning of the 20th century - is one of the oldest and most expensive spices in the world. Yet its cultivation was almost forgotten. The saffron plant - which is well adapted to the arid environment - can be used as an alternative to cotton production, which is reliant on irrigation. As such it can be a tool to combat desertification. Drynet partner TEMA, together with Harran University, developed the ‘Çıulklu Project’ to protect saffron gene resources and to make the public aware of the potential of saffron. The project has been working in the semi-arid climate of the Harran Plateau in south-eastern Turkey and has improved the incomes of villagers by enabling saffron exports.

THE CASE OF PROBIOMA - PRODUCTIVIDAD BIOSFERA Y MEDIO AMBIENTE (BOLIVIA)

The main impacts of intensive and widespread soy cultivation are land degradation, rural-urban migration, deforestation and poverty in the local communities. In Bolivia alone 300,000 hectares of land are degraded, much from soy production. In order to reduce the environmental and social impacts of soy cultivation in Bolivia, Drynet partner Probioma initiated the development of the ‘Criteria for Social and Environmental Responsibility in Soybean Cultivation’ in collaboration with public and private stakeholders. This programme has reached more than 2,000 farmers, who have begun to substitute agrochemicals by biological products, rotate crops, and reject the use of genetically modified seeds. They also conserve forested areas and create windbreaks. The success of this programme led to the initiation of a similar programme with Quinua farmers in the extremely fragile Bolivian Altiplano. Small-scale Quinua farmers have begun to establish their own criteria, and to implement responsible production systems.