Editorial

By Noel Oettlé, Drynet Coordinator

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2023! This is the first newsletter published by Indigo, which took over from EMG as the host organisation for the Drynet Coordinator at the end of 2022. This newsletter has been compiled from contributions of network members by Sinovuyo Mbobo, our new Drynet Administrator.

The year has started with a flurry of activity for Drynet. The IUCN appointed consultants at the end of 2022 to work with us to develop a full proposal for the GEF LDN project. As Drynet members will have seen from the project document, the intended output for the component of the project that Drynet is responsible for is that “Civil Society Organizations have greater capacity and increased opportunity to influence LDN decisions and actions”. Drynet member Both ENDS of the Netherlands has been nominated by Drynet to serve as the Executing Agency for this component on behalf of the network.

Drynet members have been contributing their ideas to Nathalie van Haren at Both ENDS, and the project team will be working hard in the coming weeks to design the project in a way that will enable our network to effectively achieve this output creatively and with high energy!

The year ahead promises to be an exciting one for Drynet, and we will be publishing the newsletter every quarter. Please contribute articles and photos of your work, and any news snippets that you would like to appear in the newsletter or on the website.
New Partner Introductions

We are pleased to welcome three new partner organisations to the network.

Our new partners have distinguished themselves through their ability to inspire those around them. Their passion and commitment are evident in the impact they have had, improving the lives of members of the communities in which they operate. Their work demonstrates their commitment to our network’s goal of integrating environmental concerns, particularly related to dryland ecosystems, into national development priorities, processes, and frameworks.

Dhrubotara Youth Development Foundation (DYDF):
The oldest youth-led organisation in Bangladesh, DYDF is an award-winning, UNCCD-accredited CSO that began its work in Begumgonj in the Noakhali district in 2000. Its work focuses on the sustainable socio-economic development of the country through the implementation of the SDG Agenda 2030 and youth empowerment.

Ajemalebu Self Help (AJESH):
To fight poverty, AJESH was established as a non-profit organisation to promote self-sufficient and resilient households in Africa. AJESH’s work covers the whole of Ghana and Cameroon and focuses on ensuring the well-being of the community in harmony with its environment. This is achieved through the sustainable management of natural resources and livelihoods while promoting healthy practices that protect and reduce the progressive loss and extinction of biodiversity through community-based, nature-based approaches.

Indigo Development & Change (Indigo):
Based in South Africa’s most sparsely populated province, Indigo creates opportunities that support and empower young people and women, especially women of colour, to become more resilient in a rapidly changing world. Indigo is the trusted community partner in linking grassroots processes and realities to national and international policy, with a focus on natural resource management, biodiversity, and climate change.

There is no doubt that the skills and experience of these organisations will be valuable resources for our network. We are therefore delighted to have them on board, and we look forward to working with them and building a long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship as we expand Drynet.
Happy Drynet Retreat in the Cevennes in France

Nathalie van Haren, Both ENDS

After 2 years of COVID, and an inspiring and intense Desertif’Actions meeting in Montpellier, Drynet members took 2.5 days to be together and strategize about our future.

The Drynet coordinators Anne and Noel together with Nalini (PMEL expert at Both ENDS) organised the Drynet Retreat in Hameau de l’Étoile, which is an old silk factory in St Martin de Londres, near the mountains of the Cevennes.

The Drynet group consisted of Marioldy (AIDER, Peru), Nalini, Nathalie and Stefan (Both ENDS, The Netherlands), Paulo Pedro (CAATINGA, Brazil), Patrice and Manon (CARI: unfortunately, Manon was not able to attend the entire event due to local gasoline strikes), Nahid (CENESTA, Iran), Anne and Noel (Drynet Coordination/ EMG, South Africa), Emmanuel and Fatima (ENDA Energie, Senegal), Ana (FARN, Argentina), Kusum and Rakesh (GBS, India).

Nalini and Anne had developed an energetic working format, which supported the group to share and build on each other’s ideas and actions. The group discussed the vision, advocacy messages and ways of working. In addition, Drynet talked about the GEF-IUCN-Drynet cooperation and agreed upon and welcomed the host of the Drynet coordination (Indigo). The Drynet Retreat was a very nice interaction in the beautiful natural surroundings.

The group came to the following strategic conclusions:

The Drynet vision for 2030 is of a dynamic, spirited network with a convincing voice that creates an enabling environment for enhancing the empowerment of communities and resilience of ecosystems.

The group has developed 4 advocacy messages that will help the members in their individual and collective advocacy activities in the context of UNCCD:

1. Responsible land tenure governance must include everyone* using the land on an equitable basis for decision-making, ensuring long-term benefit from investment of labor, resources, knowledge and vision for improving the productivity and resilience of land.

2. Local communities**, and especially women & youth are the most affected by desertification, land degradation and drought and are key agents of change to achieve land
degradation neutrality and need solidarity and support of CSOs, governments and other relevant stakeholders.

3. Agroecological approaches and regenerative practices driven by indigenous peoples and local communities** should be prioritized in land-related policies and funding at all levels to provide sustainable livelihoods for people in drylands.

4. Engaging for sustainable value chains and fair markets including use of renewable energy and gender equity are key for generating income and strengthening livelihoods in drylands.

*Particularly women, youth, indigenous peoples and groups/people in conditions of vulnerability

**Local communities living in drylands such as nomadic pastoralists, indigenous peoples, traditional communities, fisher folk, forest peoples etc.

The group prioritized 3 strategic ways for working together:

1. Knowledge sharing on sustainable land use practices of farmers and pastoralists, on how to work together and learning together with women, youth, communities, farmers, pastoralists, on fundraising, on policy analysis, on rights-based agroecological approach, and more.

2. Strategic cooperation through webinars, through exchange visits, through newsletters, and through sharing of information on funding opportunities,

3. Internal and external communication by distrusting a newsletter that is attractive to read for people with knowledge on sustainable land use and inclusive land governance in drylands, by sharing “heroic” stories of communities that are supported by CSOs, by sharing toolkits on UNCCD and advocacy for CSOs, by connecting with farmers organizations, women organizations, implementing agencies of GEF, Green Climate Fund, youth groups, cooperation, universities and research centres, UNCCD, etc.

You can find the summary and the complete report on the Drynet website. Please feel invited to share your questions, highlights and tips with the Drynet Board and Drynet Coordinator before 28 February 2023.
Rainwater Harvesting: Ancient knowledge to secure water in dry areas

By Giancarlo Ramirez (AIDER)

Peru frequently suffers from severe droughts. The frequency of drought is increasing at an alarming rate, and it’s taking a toll on the lives of people and animals. Worldwide, water resources are becoming more scarce as a result of land use changes, deforestation, migration, overgrazing, and climate change.

For this reason, water security has become key for many communities and people living in areas where access to water is challenging; however, building concrete infrastructure requires a very high levels of investment, long-term planning, and government involvement, which may take a long time to yield results. Furthermore, some Peruvian communities live in areas where it’s almost impossible to build a dam big enough to fulfil their water needs.

An ancient alternative

At almost 2000 meters above sea level, in the region of Piura (the northern region of the coast of Perú), members of the community of Palo Blanco and Nangay in the province of Ayabaca are struggling to secure water for their daily activities. Thanks to AIDER and the European Union, a rainwater harvesting project was implemented to help alleviate their water needs and provide a low-cost, long-term solution with little negative impact on their environment. This streamlined process can be replicated and scaled up in other communities in the region.

A group of women from Incan heritage partnered with AIDER and contributed rainwater planting and harvesting techniques of their pre-Incan ancestors to designing modern interventions. They taught project beneficiaries how to build green infrastructure such as reservoirs in strategic areas high up in the mountains. These reservoirs each collect around 1200 to 1800 litres of water, filter it underground and create small water streams at lower altitudes where agriculture is undertaken and animals are pastured. This project is helping 140,000 people in the Ayabaca province.
In an area where the precipitation is sometimes less than 200mm a year, this technique helps to minimize the impacts of drought and creates opportunities for local communities to manage their water resources to feed their families, cattle, and crops, and to enable them to enjoy improved health and food security.

Project Link:
Siembra y Cosecha de Agua y Servicios Ecosistémicos (euroclima.org)

Press Release (ESP)
Se presentaron los resultados del intercambio de conocimiento entre Perú y Costa Rica para mejorar la gestión del agua - AIDER

Drynet at Désertif’Actions
By Manon Albagnac, CARI

In October 2022, the 5th edition of the Désertif’actions International Summit took place in Montpellier (France). Désertif’actions is an international multi-stakeholder summit initiated and organized by Drynet member CARI since 2006.

In the course of 2022 workshops and consultations were organized by CSOs, including Drynet members, to find solutions and to promote agroecology as an appropriate approach to solve entangled ecological, economic and social problems, and to ensure greater resilience in the face of the multiple crises we are facing and will continue to face.

In May 2022, CSOs representatives engaged at UNCCD COP15 (Abidjan) to promote agroecological practices as contributions to achieve LDN and respond to drought, attracting the interest of a great number of delegates.

In October 2022, the Desertif’actions Summit created an ideal opportunity for CSOs to continue their dialogue on agroecology, and to interact with scientists, political decision makers and donors.
The Summit also offered the opportunity to reach out to the general public. An international cartoon contest on the theme of Earth and Drought generated much interest and drew a lot of attention. An international land and Seed Festival was open to the public and proved to be a big attraction. The Festival concluded in a march for the land and the ecological transition.

To conclude, some statistics that reflect the scope of the event:

- More than 350 people from 17 countries participated in the national workshops
- 29 representatives of associations from 13 countries brought the recommendations of Deserti’actions 2022 to COP15
- 270 participants from 39 countries contributed to the International Civil Society Summit
- 100+ booths and 50 speakers at the Land and Seeds Festival
- 238 press cartoonists involved in the drawing contest, from 58 countries. 400 drawings received, 33 were selected and 2 cartoonists were winners.

Results of Désertif’actions can be accessed online: [https://desertif-actions.org/en/homepage/desertifactions-2022/](https://desertif-actions.org/en/homepage/desertifactions-2022/)

**PROBIOMA promotes the strengthening of food production systems of rural communities**

*By Miguel Angel Crespo, Probioma*

PROBIOMA’s technical team has been active in providing technical assistance and training to families from various communities in Chaco and Chiquitanía.

In the Chaco, the Yateirenda and Cotoca communities of the Takovo Mora Captaincy are supported, and to the south, in the Kaaguasu Captaincy, the Tatarenta Nuevo, Los Pozos and Sausalito communities are supported.

The main purpose of these activities is to strengthen the food systems of these communities, through ecological family gardens in which fresh and healthy food is produced for direct consumption by these families. Likewise, to strengthen the food sovereignty of the communities, the multiplication of native corn and bean seeds is being promoted, which are essential in feeding these communities throughout the year.

Agro-extractive activities, with the expansion of systematic deforestation, have generated serious problems in the communities, since the loss of forests generates more intense and frequent droughts such as those that have been endured in the last 10 years. To this situation must be added the fires of 2019 and 2020, which did not allow the communities to produce food on a regular basis, for which they faced a situation of food insecurity.
The agricultural activities of agribusiness directly violate the human right to food in the communities, since they are destroying the conditions that provide environmental services such as modulating the climate, an important factor to produce food sustainably.

We can present this violation of the right to food in the following way:

- First, the large companies and agricultural producers concentrate the most fertile lands, cornering the communities on degraded or low-fertility soils.
- Second, the systematic deforestation by large producers ends up with large extensions of cleared forest lands in a short time. This has generated sudden changes in the climate with intense droughts, frosts or floods that have different impacts: for large producers the impacts are limited to economic losses; for the communities, the impacts of droughts, frosts or floods are terrible, because they lose food for the whole year, for which families have to find economic resources to buy products at higher prices.
- Third, not content with destroying the forests, large agricultural and livestock producers use large amounts of toxic agrochemicals that end up contaminating water resources, soil and air. In Bolivia, the use of these has increased by 487% in 20 years, going from 22 million kilos in 2000 to 129 million kilos in 2020. These agrochemicals directly affect the health of families in the communities.
- Fourth, large producers use transgenic crop seeds, which have a direct impact on the native seeds of the communities, causing contamination of their seeds, as is the case with corn. These problems are exacerbated by climate change, which causes more severe droughts leading to the loss of seed banks in the communities.

All these points mentioned cause the violations of the human right to food in the communities, in response to which it is important to demand that the State provide the necessary guarantees so that the communities can carry out the production of their food with their own production systems.