

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2008

Small Scale Agriculture – an essential component of sustainable livelihoods in the face of land degradation, desertification and adaptation to climate change in Africa.

Special Forum

17 June 2008, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



Organized by

Unisfera International Centre
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Cover Photo: Blythe McKay, Farm Radio International

Special Forum

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought for 2008

17 June 2008, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

Introduction

To mark the 2008 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, a special Forum was held in Ottawa on the topic: *Small Scale Agriculture – an essential component of sustainable livelihoods in the face of land degradation, desertification and adaptation to climate change in Africa*. This year's theme for the World Day, "Combating Land Degradation for Sustainable Agriculture", links directly with the current cycle of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) which focuses on: agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa. It represents a unique opportunity to underscore the importance of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD) in addressing desertification, land degradation and sustainable agriculture within the sustainable development context.

The Forum brought together representatives from a wide range of Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and other government departments, and national and international institutions. The objectives of the Forum were to:

- foster the sharing of knowledge, experiences and best practices of small-scale farmers' strategies for sustainable land management in the combat against land degradation and desertification and for adaptation to climate change in fragile ecosystems in Africa;
- further promote cross-fertilization between international development and environment organizations;
- encourage deeper understanding of the importance of sustainable local agriculture systems to combat land degradation, drought and desertification; and to
- mark June 17, the World Day on Desertification, seen also in the context of the current priorities in the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The Forum's anticipated outcomes concentrated on a deeper understanding of the role small scale agriculture can play in sustainable land management, reversing land degradation and improving food security and the conceptualization of relevant strategies. Furthermore, a strengthening of the collaboration among organizations and networks around the issues was expected, as was the development of recommendations that could feed into Canada's contributions to international policy discussions under the current cycle 16/17 of the CSD.

Forum Agenda

Carla Hogan Rufelds, CIDA, Opening Address

The International Framework and Context

- *Rachel McCormick, DFAIT* : Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) Sessions 16/17: Outcomes of Session 16 and Canadian strategy for 2008/09.
- *Friederike Knabe, Unisfera* : Role of Civil society – UNCCD and CSD context.

Making a case for supporting resilient small scale agricultural systems in Africa

- *Kenton Lobe, Canadian Food Grains Bank* : Introduction to case studies being prepared by members of the Food Security Policy Group (FSPG). The case studies feature agricultural initiatives supported by members of the FSPG.

Small-scale agriculture in dryland/fragile ecosystems in Africa: Experiences, best practices and lessons learned Panel Discussion

- *Salamatu Garba, Women Farmers' Advancement Network, Northern Nigeria - Farm Radio International partner*: How rural women in northern Nigeria are affected by land degradation and climate change and why they must be involved in developing coping strategies.
- *Francisca Smith PhD, Bioversity International, Rome, Italy*: Small-scale Agriculture – Implications for Food Security, Nutrition and Health of Resource-poor Populations.
- *Awegechew Teshome PhD, USC Canada*: Mitigating Land Degradation and Desertification through Agrobiodiversity.

Roundtable buzz groups to discuss recommendations emerging from panel discussions and case studies and **reporting**.

Susan Walsh, USC Canada, Evaluation and Summation

Opening Address

Carla Hogan Rufelds (CIDA) opened the Forum by welcoming the broad range of speakers that had been brought together. This range reflected the integrated approach to climate change, desertification and drought that should be taken, especially as there is a desire for a multi-stakeholder dialogue in working towards combating desertification and land degradation. June 17 was established as the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought by the UN in 1994 on the adoption of the UNCCD. It was hoped that the Convention would raise the general awareness of land degradation, desertification, and drought and lead to joint action from governments and other stakeholders. The website of www.unccd.int provides ample information and outlines activities and outreach events by participants in this World Day from around the world.

The Forum's discussions should also provide insights and information for the Canadian delegates at Session 17 of the CSD. The themes of the current two-year cycle will

include combating land degradation and its relation to famine and hunger, food access, poverty, conflict, and migration, and Africa. Ms. Hogan-Rufelds stated that the rural poor are the most affected by land degradation and desertification especially as global demand for food is increasing and land degradation is affecting agricultural productivity. Solutions include sustainable agricultural management with a focus on food security for rural communities. Ms. Hogan-Rufelds concluded by asserting that Canada had an important role to play in working towards solutions to land degradation and desertification.

Session 1 – International Framework and Context

Dr. Rachel McCormick, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT)

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) Sessions 16/17: Outcomes of Session 16 and Canadian strategy for 2008/09.

Friederike Knabe, Unisfera International Centre

Role of Civil Society in the UNCCD and CSD Contexts

Dr. McCormick reviewed the role of Agenda 21 as the action plan derived from the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development in 1992. The Commission on Sustainable Development was established to ensure the implementation of Agenda 21 and its follow-up and was conceived as an inclusive process of Governments, International Organizations, Major Groups and Experts. To facilitate the participation of civil society Agenda 21 identified nine major groups: women, children, indigenous groups, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, scientific and technological communities, and farmers. Over the years the CSD has evolved in the way it addresses the various thematic clusters and cross cutting issues (e.g. poverty eradication, consumption patterns, health, gender equality, education, AIDS, and Africa). Since CSD 11, a two-year cycle rhythm has been operating whereby the first year of the cycle is used to review best practices and lessons learned, and the second year is focused on policy formulation. The current cycle (CSD 16/17) concentrates on six inter-related themes: agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification, and Africa. The CSD works with plenary-negotiation meetings, non-plenary events, learning centres, partnership fairs, and other events for outreach and information sharing. Thus there are many opportunities for civil society to engage in the process.

The regular reports, among them National Reports, Case Studies, a Chairman's Summary and the Secretary General reports, help to streamline themes, share lessons and best practices, promote dialogue and identify areas for improvement. The Canadian government's objectives for CSD reporting places emphasis on the use of case studies, sharing lessons learned, promoting open dialogue with partners and using these tools to make a difference in future reporting – ensuring that progress has been made. Canada's most recent thematic report on desertification to Session 16 focussed on the related topics of climate change, biodiversity, food security, agricultural practices, irrigation,

governance, land tenure, role of science and technology, and the role of multi-stakeholder approaches to address these concerns in a coordinated and, where appropriate, integrated way. More information on Canada's Reporting to the CSD can be found at <http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natinfo/countr/canada/index.htm>.

Ms. Knabe introduced the historic context of the UNCCD - in particular its position on civil society engagement. The UNCCD embraces a holistic, bottom-up and multi-layered partnership approach to development, which allows for a strong and active role for CSOs. At the international level, CSOs have in the first instance been negotiating for their full participation in the implementation strategies of the Convention, and later for their regular contribution to policy dialogue at the national, regional and international levels. From the outset, the role of Southern civil society organizations in the UNCCD context has been more prominent than in the other major environmental conventions. The latter benefit from stronger international and northern NGO participation. It is important to note, that the UNCCD has not adopted the UN "Major Group" concept for civil society participation, thus weakening the organizing and lobbying capacity of CSOs in the international negotiations.

At the national level, the UNCCD prescribes the inclusion of CSOs in National Action Plans (NAPs) and Program developments. The CSO role includes the facilitation and exchange of information, as well as a reporting back function to the respective constituencies. CSOs have been positively challenged by the wide range of tasks: active participation in multi-stakeholder negotiations, compiling best practice strategies, establishing benchmarks for progress in local implementation of the UNCCD; encouraging holistic approaches, involving different sectors in initiatives and identifying gaps in research. In their various capacities, CSOs must also act as a voice for vulnerable groups (e.g. women, children, indigenous people) and advocate their viewpoints on topics such as land degradation, desertification and drought, and related impacts of climate change. The most serious challenge for many, often small, CSOs from developing countries, in particular from Africa, is trying to deal with the local, networking and international policy levels concurrently. Resources and capacities are often lacking to operate effectively at all levels. Canadian NGOs can strengthen the potential for their southern partners in national policy dialogue around the implementation of the UNCCD by engaging more directly with them on these and related concerns.

Session 2 – Making A Case For Supporting Resilient Small Scale Agricultural Systems In Africa

Kenton Lobe, Canadian Food Grains Bank

Introduction to resilience and the case studies featuring agricultural initiatives supported by members of the Food Security Policy Group (FSPG)

Mr Lobe introduced the FSPG whose purpose is advocacy for small-scale agriculture. It does this through literature reviews, checking principles with southern partners, and compiling case studies.

The FSPG is currently working on seven case studies, of which five pertain to Africa:

1. Canadian Food Grains Bank – Soils, Food and Healthy Communities – Malawi
2. CARE Canada - Smallholder Capacity Building – Zambia
3. Farm Radio International – Radio Drama on Climate Change Adaptation – Nigeria
4. Mennonite Central Communities – Sand Dams – Kenya
5. UPA-DI – Small Holder Cooperatives – Mali

The FSPG has placed particular importance on the concept of *resilience*. At its simplest level, *resilience* simply means to "bounce back". However, the connotations are much broader and place resilience closely together with the concept of sustainable development. In this sense it is very applicable today to small-scale farmers, more than has ever been the case. Small-scale farmers must be able to persist as well as to adapt to change, i.e. bounce back from climate change, land reform, land degradation, HIV/AIDS, and other complex socio-economic factors. The speaker described the three principles of resilience, as defined by the FSPG and applicable for small-scale farmers:

- Knowledge and Innovation – recognizing local knowledge, indigenous technologies and supporting flexible and adaptive approaches to learning;
- Diversity – building on local agro-ecosystems, recognizing multi-functionality of agriculture and promoting livelihood diversification;
- Social Trust and Mutual Reliance – providing opportunities for collective actions at household and community levels, valuing and strengthening the crucial role of women in sustaining small-scale agricultural development and enabling children to learn.

Blythe McKay, Farm Radio International

Radio Drama on Climate Change Adaptation - a Case Study From Nigeria

This Farm Radio International project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of radio drama as a tool to help smallholder farmers in northern Nigeria adapt to climate change. The 26-episode radio drama is called *In Kidi Ya Chanza* ("when the drumbeat changes, you must change your dance steps") and will be broadcast in two languages on six stations beginning in August 2008. The project partners, African Radio Drama Association (ARDA) and Women Farmers Association of Nigeria and the University of Guelph, decided to base the episodes on climate change themes after conducting focus group sessions in northern Nigerian communities.

It is hoped that the radio drama will be an effective means to inform a vulnerable group of smallholder farmers about the issues surrounding climate change, which would normally be a difficult task since the targeted beneficiaries are spread across vast distances and are largely illiterate. This is a particularly important target group to reach since 90 percent of agricultural output from Nigeria is produced from smallholder farms. The tools that this project is promoting – knowledge, innovation and resiliency – are the keys to help this population combat the effect of climate change on their agricultural livelihood.

Session 3 – Small-Scale Agriculture In Dryland / Fragile Ecosystems In Africa: Experiences, Best Practices And Lessons Learned

Salamatu Garba – Women Farmers’ Advancement Network, Northern Nigeria - Farm Radio International partner

How rural women in northern Nigeria are affected by land degradation and climate change and why they must be involved in developing coping strategies

Francisca Smith, PhD. – Bioversity International, Rome, Italy

Small-scale Agriculture – Implications for Food security, Nutrition and Health of Resource-poor Populations

Awegechew Teshome, PhD. – USC Canada

Mitigating Land Degradation and Desertification through Agrobiodiversity

Ms. Garba was unable to attend the Special Forum due to visa complications. Thanks to the assistance of IDRC, the organizers were able to have her interviewed over the phone on a date prior to the Forum. The transcript of the conversation is appended.

Ms. Garba outlined the many livelihood challenges that farmers in Kano, northern Nigeria, are facing: land degradation, livestock disease, water management problems and diminished rainfall, soil fertility decline, erosion, and food insecurity. Traditional coping mechanisms, such as collecting water in ditches or digging underground, intercropping, and using traditional herbs as solutions for livestock diseases, no longer suffice in trying to address the crisis. Climate change in the area is negatively affecting women farmers, especially in terms of causing food insecurity. In general, women do not have the technical knowledge or resources to cope with climate change. Ms. Garba provided an example of how the women in a village Katai in Kano State are coping alone with climate change.

Salamatu Garba’s organization works to help farmers adapt to climate change especially by giving farmers a voice. They work with extension workers to disseminate information about new seed varieties, fertilizers, nutrition and organic farming alternatives. The organization works with the government to address policy issues by playing an intermediary role between the rural farmer, the policy makers, and the scientists. Ms. Garba argued that the most important factor for vulnerable populations, such as women farmers, in coping with climate change is the lack of data. Record keeping of meteorological patterns is weak and there is an urgent need for communities, scientists, and NGOs to work together to update data. Another important factor is the lack of capacity to address key challenges: more female extension workers are needed and more agricultural programmes oriented towards coping with climate change, and local governments need to strengthen capacity to roll out programmes dealing with climate change.

Dr. Smith’s presentation focused on the linkages between small-scale farming, desertification, and nutrition. She stated that while nutritious food is a most fundamental

human need, this very simple statement does not always receive the highest priority by policy-makers.

Bioversity International works on biodiversity research for development through collaborative partnerships, across sectors and levels, with NGOs, governments, and academics. Bioversity's food and nutrition strategy is "to mobilize agricultural biodiversity of traditional food systems in order to ensure food security, improved nutrition and health, particularly of resource poor populations". This strategy is linked directly to the 1992 World Declaration and Plan for Action for Nutrition.

Their food systems-based approach aims to revitalize traditional food systems, increase access to and use of indigenous and traditional foods, and re-introduce traditional staples where they are lacking. The role of small-scale agriculture in this approach is crucial, as micronutrient needs can only be met by agricultural biodiversity, Ms. Smith argued. She suggested that many of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be met with a focus on small-scale agriculture. While the Green Revolution technologies, such as monocultures, have provided sufficient caloric energy for the population, there is a need for diversity in diets to provide adequate nutrition, such as antioxidants and phytochemicals. In addition, the foods grown on small-scale farms are often more culturally and ecologically appropriate for the area as well as more accessible to the local population.

Dr. Teshome presented data from farmer and field-based experiences gained through USC Canada's programming. "Land degradation" may be defined as the process whereby the qualities of biophysical resources deteriorate relative to their natural state. "Desertification" is the degradation of biophysical resources in dryland ecosystems. There are many factors that accelerate this process. Land degradation is often an unintentional result of poor agricultural practices, policies, and systems, and that nature alone is not to be blamed. USC Canada works to mitigate land degradation through multiple strategies including:

- Environmental rehabilitation;
- Education for biodiversity;
- Conservation and sustainable uses of agrobiodiversity *in situ*;
- Home garden for nutrition & income generation;
- Participatory natural resources management;
- Participatory varietals selections; and
- Secured seed supply systems.

These strategies are achieved through various farming practices which have shown that arresting and reversing desertification and land degradation can be achieved through sustainable land use practices. Human intervention is not necessarily always harmful as farmers can help to restore biophysical capability. This applies in particular where a farmer-led agrobiodiversity-based approach is in use: focusing on traditional production systems, using local seed sources, and building on local knowledge and practices.

Plenary Discussions

Each session was followed by discussions of key issues related to the importance of small scale sustainable agriculture in securing sustainable livelihoods and in combatting desertification and land degradation and its place within the international framework and context of the UNCCD and the current cycle of the CSD. The following is a summary of salient points and major issues raised.

Small Scale Agriculture And The Global Food Crisis

- The emerging global food crisis added urgency to the Forum's topic of discussion and reached beyond its original focus. Participants expressed concern that the importance of this farming sector remains least understood and tends to get sidelined in a global food crisis by both governments and by large-scale agricultural systems that tend to promise quick-fix-results. These, however, do not address the impacts on the food supply system nor the needs for long-term solutions. While participants accepted that, in a crisis, governments need to address quantity of food over quality in production for food aid, longer-term strategies must be developed in tandem. Agriculture is multifunctional: a way of life, an economic driver, and a provider of calorific food and nutritional health.
- Misconceptions persist regarding the validity of small-scale agriculture and farming systems based on agrobiodiversity and traditional foods as a major component in ensuring food security in many developing countries. Farmers are often perceived as part of the problem of desertification and land degradation, as well as low yielding harvests, due to their use of poor land practices, poor fertilizers, land clearing, etc. Farmers are essential for combatting desertification and land degradation, yet they must be cautious as to what type of biodiversity they encourage as there are multiple facets of desertification each with its own site-specific conditions and solutions. Careful land use planning is essential, as are multiple land use practices in different ecosystems that have to respond to the different sensitivities and vulnerabilities. Nature is heterogeneous, and land use must reflect nature.
- There is an underlying assumption that small-scale agriculture must be transformed in order to achieve development. Small-scale agriculture is still not recognized as the main contributor to food security; however, 50 percent of the food supply comes from small producers, and 1.4 billion farm families depend on saved seeds. Can funding be re-channelled to smaller scale agriculture instead of the large industry to sustain large profits? Almost without question, in a food crisis, governments will support industrial farming when under pressure to provide food aid to the population. This has an effect on budgets for research for small-scale farming.
- CIDA is in the process of developing a position on the food crisis. What type of agriculture should CIDA and Canada support? Where should civil society groups

be directing their policy input to the Canadian government regarding medium- to long-term solutions to the food crisis? CIDA does not currently have an answer about where the Government is planning to go in the medium- or long-term. CIDA has a new President and this is an opportune time to present viewpoints of Canadian organizations involved in the food security debate and engage CIDA in a constructive dialogue.

Large-Scale And Small Scale Agricultural Systems

- The participation of agri-food industries, as members of official government delegations, in the international food security policy debates was regarded with concern by many attendees. The CSD process, which treats "business and industry" as one of the major groups with its specific consultation structure, was seen as a more appropriate approach that could be recommended for replication in other consultation processes. At the same time, and in the broader context of food security and food production, civil society groups in the nutrition sector cannot ignore corporate/industry partners. Agriculture, nutrition and health are strongly interlinked, and an open dialogue must be used, which must include industry, governments and civil society in search for long-term solutions to food crises like the current one.
- In the ensuing exchange among participants, nutrition and its dependence on small scale and sustainable agriculture moved to the forefront of the discussion. Improved seeds from traditional food systems will ultimately improve yield in food production. Improved seeds often provide better micronutrients and antioxidants that are important for nutrition. Monocropping in large-scale agriculture is a reality today; however, both systems can be married, which would be healthy for everybody. To ensure the highest level of micronutrients and phytonutrients, the need to improve local systems and small-scale agriculture, with a rich diversity in crops to provide sufficient nutrition, is without doubt. While small-scale systems may have increased profile in the public discussion, it is essential to find the balance between small-scale and large-scale producers. In Africa, the habitat is usually not suited to monocultures. African ecosystems rely on heterogeneity and diversity for their sustainability. In this context, one of the emergent opportunities is in the wider conceptualization of "resilience", sustainable development, and ecosystem health. The idea of resilience should be further examined and attempts made to truly identify its meaning.
- The education system in many countries in Africa is inadequate in promoting and teaching traditional farming systems as an essential component for ensuring food security and economic development of rural communities. The emphasis on monocultures and other methods of the Green Revolution have been counterproductive in many parts of the continent; education affected by the Green Revolution conceptualization focused on energy rather than on nutrition. How can the education systems be influenced to teach more balanced and diverse approaches? Universities and researchers need to be encouraged to develop curriculum focused on small-scale, sustainable agriculture.

The International Policy Framework

- The CSD, as the only international consultation process that applies a consistent sustainable development lens to the range of issues emerging as part of the food security and sustainable agriculture debates, may be able to assist in addressing the concerns expressed. It must also be recognized that the intersection of such major topics, and adequately addressing them, is a big challenge for any international structure. Nonetheless, the CSD could play an important role in bringing the necessary long-term strategies, that include the recognition of the importance of small-scale agricultural systems to the international negotiation table. The Canadian CSD delegation was urged to take these concerns of farmers and Canadian CSOs working with African partners on sustainable small-scale agricultural systems into the Canadian preparation process for the next policy session of the CSD in May 2009. Case studies currently being developed by members of the Food Security Policy Group can provide necessary examples and backgrounds for arguing the case to give small-scale agriculture a higher profile in the policy dialogue.
- It is essential to overcome the still often limited direct access that farmers organizations' have in participating in international negotiation and consultation processes. There is a need for rural CSOs to have a stronger voice and co-ownership of the consultation processes as they affect them directly. The last session of the CSD could not afford to bring all stakeholders to the meeting, and farmers were overlooked. The lack of funding is a serious concern. On the other hand, the CSD process allows for farmers to be heard at other times when meetings are held after their harvests, giving farmers a better time to attend. While funding is always a limiting factor for international participation of civil society stakeholder groups, efforts should be made by every means possible to increase such direct exposure for farmers and their representatives in the CSD, the UNCCD and other related forums.
- In preparation for CSD 17, an indication system for priority issues would be helpful. This should be used as an early heads-up for the planning on how to address issues over the medium and long term. A major goal of the upcoming conference on Effectiveness of Aid in Accra (Ghana), is to engage CSOs and to push forward principles for CSO participation in multi-stakeholder dialogue and action which in turn can feed into the CSD process.
- In conclusion, it was agreed that there is a need to bring sustainable development groups together under one umbrella, that being the CSD, in order to tackle the various issues raised. CSOs interested in participation in the Canadian CSD process in preparation for Session 17 can subscribe to the designated listserve, a good tool for information sharing and participation, by sending an email to: csdcanadasubscribe@groups.takingitglobal.org

Session 4 – Buzz Group Roundtables

Three "buzz groups" were formed to pursue topics raised during the day and to develop recommendations where appropriate.

Resilience in Small Scale Agriculture - an Emerging Paradigm

- There is space for both small and large-scale agriculture for food production, but there must be safeguards established for small-scale agriculture.
- Each food producing country should emphasize self-sufficiency in agriculture. While countries can and should export some crops for income, a priority should be placed on feeding the local population with locally grown foods.
- Emphasis should be placed on integrated agriculture, not just monocultures. Traditional foods for local consumption need to be produced, as well as modern crops for export. Both government and farmers must think about resilience when planning for the long term.
- As each country and its government is planning its poverty reduction strategies, it is important to take into consideration how resilient its food production system is in terms of future trends and in meeting the nutrition needs of its own citizens.

The Role of Corporate Sector

- The corporate sector is a vital player in the agriculture industry, and cannot be ignored by governments, CSOs or farmers. Instead, an open dialogue should be encouraged in order to help meet food production needs of both local populations and for the open market.
- The corporate sector is very influential in lobbying governments and smallholder farming processes. Therefore, safeguards should be put in place to monitor the activities of industry to prevent any negative action.
- Federal governments must lead by example. In order for the government to guide industry, they themselves must support local/traditional food production and a self-sufficiency ideology. Education on sustainable development should be introduced in each department.
- CIDA's poverty reduction and food security strategies should have direct linkages to strategies for sustainable agriculture. The UK Department for International Development's *Strategic Environmental Assessment* can serve as a good example for CIDA in the area of environmental assessments in agriculture.
- There should be a clear distinction between ownership status (small-holder farmer vs. corporation), farm size (small vs. large) and environmental impact (sustainable vs. erosive/destructive) of each farm and not make assumptions of one based on another (i.e.: negatively associate corporations with unsustainable practices, since any farm (large or small, corporate or not) can have destructive/erosive practices)

The Food Crisis

- This crisis is not like any other the world has seen before. It cannot be fixed simply by using food aid, which is a short-term solution. Solutions for medium and long term have to be developed in tandem.

- There are many integrated factors that have caused this crisis (e.g. agro-fuels, market speculation, land degradation, climate change, etc.).
- This crisis is now felt mainly by the urban poor, who are dependant on markets for their primary source of food, but it will affect others as well.
- Resistance to solving this problem will be hard to break. Many different interest groups and lobbies make the development of solutions difficult. Firstly, the price of food has increased for farmers; secondly, powerful actors, such as some governments are still using a large portion of their agricultural production for agro-fuels. Thirdly, many tariffs are still in place.

Evaluation and Summation

Ms. Walsh, USC Canada, closed the Special Forum by outlining key messages of the day and a proposed follow-up plan for action. She recalled that the meeting looked at desertification and land degradation in the context of the international conventions, the CSD process, and the current food crisis. The Forum's discussions had demonstrated that the challenges and opportunities have to be addressed in a holistic integrated fashion. There is a clear convergence of the international environmental conventions with the UNCCD addressing both environmental and socio-economic aspects of the concerns. The CSD process can lead the consultations forward towards new policies and strategies for implementation.

The evaluation by participants echoed the importance of the Forum which provided for ample opportunity to learn about the issues and the policy opportunities. Participants appreciated the range of topics being discussed and to be given the opportunity to exchange experiences.

With the general awareness of the global food crisis, civil society needs to make the government more accountable *vis-a-vis* the food crisis and encourage action. The voices of farmers and CSOs, who are at the core of the issue, need to be heard in a more meaningful way. The media and community organizations have a role to make the general public understand its importance in order to approach the food crisis in a more holistic way.

The concept of resilience is often referred to, yet it is not grounded in full understanding of what it entails. The role of CSOs and government is to work for resilience and to strengthen it. To use ecosystem approaches and agrobiodiversity will help build resilience. Diversity is a vital strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change and land degradation.

The corporate sector needs to be brought into the debate on agricultural models that include small-scale and sustainability, that do not work against the environment and against nutritional health. Clearly, CSOs have some mixed feelings about becoming an ally to this sector; however, CSOs must be able to maintain a clear, powerful voice.

Education must be used to raise awareness on the issues under discussion. This should be done on various levels, starting with our individual actions and consumer patterns. Farmers and CSOs must lobby governments at local, regional, and national levels. We must also brief delegates to international conferences and assist them to become educated in this field. Universities should expand research into the production of nutrient-rich, quality foods instead of the current focus on quantity and calorie-rich and often nutrition-poor food.

Civil society must play a key role in confronting the food crisis. Canadians are starting to be affected by the food crisis, so this can help in energizing the government towards action. CSOs must support food-first, farmer-first policies.

Proposed follow-up

- As CIDA has yet to develop position on the food crisis, CSOs should provide input to the new inter-departmental task force on the food crisis and to the new CIDA president via the FSPG.
- CSOs should each develop policy and strategies on the topic of the food crisis, including education, field research, and policy work and share these with CIDA and the CSD process.
- The discussions on the concept of resilience should be further refined and made public in the follow-up to the Forum.
- CSOs should engage in the CSD and UNCCD processes, based on their work and expertise.:
 - a. The special listserv, established as part of the consultation process for CSD 17, will provide a structure for participation;
 - b. The FSPG's case study project will be pursued and promoted among wider audiences;
 - c. Follow-up discussions among the different CSO groups will promote the outcomes of this Forum, share the report with those who were not able to attend and build on the learning and networking achieved through it.

List of Acronyms

ARDA – African Radio Drama Association
CIDA – Canadian International Development Agency
CSD – Commission on Sustainable Development
CSO – Civil Society Organization
DFAIT – Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization
FSPG – Food Security Policy Group
MDG – Millennium Development Goals
NAP – National Action Plan/Program
NGO – Non-Governmental Organization
UN – United Nations
UNCED – United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCCD – United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought
UNEP – United Nations Environmental Program
USC Canada – formerly Unitarian Service Committee
UPA-DI – Union des Producteurs Agricole - Développement International

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List of Participants

Africa Canada Forum

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Iain MacGillivray

Bianca Martinez-Alvarado

Sheila Riordon

Harriet Roos

Marie Aline Wood

CUSO

Susan Learoyd

DFAIT

Rachel McCormick

Farm Radio International

Blythe McKay

Kevin Perkins

Sheila Huggins-Rao

Nelly Bassily

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2. Speakers' biographical notes

Salamatu Garba

Since 1995, **Salamatu Garba** has played a key role in building and directing the Women Farmers Advancement Network (WOFAN), a non-governmental organization in Northern Nigeria. WOFAN provides a wide range of services for rural communities – particularly women and children – to promote economic, social and political empowerment. WOFAN is one of the organization's involved in the rural radio drama climate change project funded by IDRC's Climate Change Adaptation in Africa initiative. In 2006, Ms. Garba was the consultant for a UNICEF-supported water, sanitation and hygiene project and a Sorghum Alliance project that aimed to help support 900 farmers by increasing sorghum production. In 2005, Ms. Garba was part of a UNDP programme that surveyed traditional farming methods in an effort to improve techniques.

Ms. Garba has a BSc. in Botany and MSc. in Plant Pathology from Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria. She received a Gender Trainers Award from the Centre for International Development and Training in the UK. She has also received training in community leadership, community water management practices, HIV/AIDS reduction, social change, advocacy strategies, and childhood development from various education institutions in Europe and Africa.

Throughout her career, Ms. Garba has worked determinedly to mobilize and train rural communities in Northern Nigeria around issues of child health care and development, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS reduction strategies, the rights of women and children in Islam, safe motherhood, public health and personal hygiene. A few examples of her work include directing a community action plan to reduce urban/rural migration in several communities, coordinating an education campaign on the use of compost and organic fertilizer for cowpea and groundnut production, and training rural communities about water purification techniques. She is particularly skilled at using participatory learning and action approaches to facilitate community development and behaviour change.

Friederike Knabe

Friederike Knabe with thirty years' experience in fields of international development and human rights, has worked as senior manager in international not for profit development and human rights organizations in Europe and Canada and as independent consultant. Since 1995, she has participated in most negotiation sessions and Conferences of the Parties for the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD) and has become a principal civil society expert on the Convention's international policy platform. As leading member of the international NGO network on Desertification (RIOD), she has been working closely with civil society organizations in the South as well as in Canada on issues related to the broader UNCCD context and other major international environmental conventions.

As a consultant she has increasingly focused on inter-linkages and synergies between human development and environmental sustainability with particular emphasis to Africa's dryland regions. Recently, she has been undertaking various assignments as policy analyst on subjects relating to sustainable land management, climate change adaptation and capacity building in Africa, gender mainstreaming into development programming and contributed to several publications on related international policy concerns. She has also developed education tools and held workshops and training sessions in these fields.

Kenton Lobe

Kenton Lobe works with the Canadian Foodgrains Bank in Winnipeg as Policy Advisor, examining issues of agricultural trade, the human right to food, and the importance of small-scale agriculture for community food security. In addition to his role at the Foodgrains Bank, Kenton teaches half time in the faculty of International Development and Environmental Studies at Canadian Mennonite University. Kenton has lived and worked internationally in India, Haiti, and Hong Kong. Prior to his current work, Kenton was a high school geography teacher. In 2002 he completed a Master's degree in Natural Resource Management at the University of Manitoba. His field research and subsequent thesis explored the implications of globalizing shrimp markets for a community of traditional fisherfolk in Kerala, S. India. He has published numerous book chapters and journal articles on topics including south Asian small-scale fisheries, the African Green Revolution, community-based forestry management and Canadian environmental assessment policy. Kenton is married and has two children with whom he loves to garden.

Rachel McCormick

Rachel McCormick is currently the Deputy Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Government of Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. She is national coordinator for the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and represents the Department at the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation. Rachel's previous positions include as an economics officer in the Trade and Environment Division of the World Trade Organization in Geneva, Switzerland, and environmental officer for the 2002 G8 Summit in Kananaskis. In 2004, Rachel obtained her doctorate in environmental science from the University of Calgary. She also holds degrees in environmental studies and economics from the University of Saskatchewan. Rachel was born and raised in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and continues to be a prairie girl at heart.

I. Francisca Smith

Ifeyironwa Francisca Smith has a background in clinical nutrition and dietetics. A former Senior Lecturer in Foods and Nutrition at the Obafemi Awolowo University's College of Health Sciences, Ile-Ife Nigeria, she was also for ten years a Consultant and Head of Dietetics at the University's Teaching Hospital. Outside the hospitals, her research focus has been on food and nutrition security with particular attention on the rational utilization of available food resources from traditional food systems to ensure adequate nutrition of

all population groups. She has published two books that address relevant issues on foods, nutrition and health in sub-Saharan Africa

During a period of 16 years, she worked as a food and nutrition consultant to various institutions and organizations including the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Micronutrient Initiative, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), CARE Canada, and the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, now known as Bioversity International.

Dr Smith currently works as an Honorary Research Fellow in Nutrition at Bioversity International where she is involved in the development of the organization's nascent food and nutrition programme that focuses on the mobilization of agricultural biodiversity for food security, nutrition and health.

Awegechew Teshome

Dr. Awegechew Teshome is the International Scientific Advisor for the Seeds of Survival Program, a farmer-based conservation, and enhancement and utilization program. He is also a resource person and trainer for the USC International training workshops on Genetic Resources conservation and utilization. He has been a Research Scientist and project leader at the University of Ottawa and taught at Carleton University; a Project Manager in Ethiopia; a Research Fellow at IDRC; and a Genetic Resources Scientist at the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) in Rome, overseeing Farmer-led conservation and sustainable uses of plant genetic resources *in situ* in nine countries. Dr. Teshome is the winner of the prestigious Vavilov-Franklin fellowship.

Dr. Teshome has published in peer reviewed journals several scientific papers related to the conservation, use and management of natural resources, with a particular emphasis on the functions of agroecosystems. His research work places genetic resource management within a landscape and ecosystem context, and examines interactions between biotic, abiotic and human factors in the management of biological resources. He is strongly committed to working directly with farmers in documenting and validating their knowledge and practices on the management of biological resources. Dr. Teshome has a strong interest in wedding traditional farming systems with science to meet the challenges of conservation, agricultural sustainability, food and environmental security, empowering farmers over their genetic resources through sound policies and fair governance.

Susan Walsh

Susan Walsh is the Executive Director of USC Canada, one of Canada's oldest international development organizations. Grounded in its history of self-reliant, community-based development work, today USC Canada promotes vibrant family farms, strong rural communities, and healthy ecosystems around the world.

Susan initially worked at the Unitarian Service Committee as a Program Officer in the late 1980's. Since then, she had a two year stint at the helm of the World Food Day Association and worked for over a decade with Canadian Lutheran World Relief as that

agency's Director for Latin America Programs. In 2004, she returned to USC Canada in Ottawa, this time to lead the agency as its Executive Director.

Susan holds degrees from Simon Fraser University and the University of Manitoba. As part of her doctoral program in cultural anthropology, she focused on the resilience strategies of indigenous potato farmers, particularly their capacity to thrive within complex ecosystems. This research, which took Susan and her family to Bolivia's southern highlands for a year in 2000, fed a lasting commitment to strategies that promote the legal, cultural, and livelihood rights of indigenous and marginalized peoples. Susan is also an experienced trainer in cooperative conflict resolution. Other work-related passions include the struggle for gender justice, environmental conservation, and working with youth on these issues. In addition to leading USC, and travelling extensively in that role, Susan is currently teaching a third-year course on Community Development within an international context at Carleton University's School of Social Work.

3. PowerPoint Presentations

1 - Dr. Rachel McCormick, DFAIT

Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) Sessions 16/17: Outcomes of Session 16 and Canadian strategy for 2008/09

2 – Friederike Knabe, Unisfera International Centre

Role of Civil Society in the UNCCD and CSD Context

3 – Kenton Lobe, Canadian Food Grains Bank

Introduction to Resilience and the case studies featuring agricultural initiatives supported by members of the Food Security Policy Group (FSPG)

4 – Blythe McKay, Farm Radio International

Radio Drama on Climate Change Adaptation, a Case Study From Nigeria

5 – Salamatu Garba – Women Farmers' Advancement Network, Northern Nigeria - Farm Radio International partner - Transcript

How rural women in northern Nigeria are affected by land degradation and climate change and why they must be involved in developing coping strategies

6 – Francisca Smith PhD – Bioversity International, Rome, Italy

Small-scale Agriculture – Implications for Food security, Nutrition and Health of Resource-poor Populations

7 – Awegechew Teshome PhD – USC Canada

Mitigating Land Degradation And Desertification Through Agrobiodiversity