

The Great Green Wall initiative in the Sahara and Sahel

The Great Green Wall is a **political initiative**, developed and adopted in 2005 by the governments of the Sahelo-Saharan states, and endorsed by the African Union in 2007. From the very first texts that define it, the initiative must enable national and regional institutions to work together to address the threats of land degradation and desertification around the Sahara. **A priority geographical area is defined**, south of the Sahara Desert, in the territories where annual rainfall is less than 400 millimeters. The Great Green Wall aims to provide a framework for development actions in response to the multiple and interconnected challenges of the Sahelo-Saharan zone.

Moreover, there has never been any question, in the strategic texts defining the Great Green Wall, of simply planting trees from Dakar to Djibouti. This distorted image no doubt stems from the first large-scale interventions, which made the Great Green Wall visible, and which for the most part concerned reforestation actions.

In 2015, at the COP 21 of the Climate Convention, quantified commitments, to be achieved by 2030, were backed by the Great Green Wall:

- Restore **100 million hectares** of degraded land
- Sequester **250 million tons** of carbon
- Create **10 million jobs**

These are the indicators that will guide future investments in GMV.



To operationalize the Great Green Wall, **national agencies** have been set up in 11 countries. They are generally attached to the ministries in charge of the environment.

A **Pan-African GGW Agency**, based in Nouakchott, Mauritania, is responsible for coordinating regional efforts.

⇒ The national and regional agencies establish periodic action plans to implement the initiative. They mobilize funding from state budgets and financial partners to implement their action plans. They also have the task of federating and monitoring the actors who contribute to the initiative, including civil society organizations and local authorities.

The implementation of the Great Green Wall has recently been visible in large regional projects, such as the SAWAP program (2013-2019), the Action Against Desertification project (2014-2019) or the FLEUVE project (2015-2018), which have allowed for important work in the production of knowledge on techniques for combating desertification, sustainable land management, and agricultural practices adapted to the lack of water and poor soil.

Support of the UNCCD to the implementation of the Great Green Wall

The UNCCD recognizes the Great Green Wall as a relevant policy vision for combating land degradation and addressing the challenges facing the Sahel. The UNCCD Executive Secretariat regularly mobilizes to draw the attention of development partners to the initiative and to urge them to support it.

In 2020, the UNCCD produced a report on the status of GGW implementation. Based on data submitted by the 11 countries, international organizations and a small number of NGOs involved in implementation, the report shows a low level of achievement of the initiative: 17.8 million hectares restored out of an estimated 156 million hectares of intervention area.

➔ These figures do not take into account small-scale initiatives by civil society, communities, etc.

- Nor do they integrate other actions carried out at the country level in the framework of other sectoral programs (agriculture, livestock, water, etc.).
- The figures focus on restored areas, they do not take into account areas where management has been improved or made sustainable.

One of the crucial issues regarding the implementation of the initiative is to be able to know what a development project that contributes to GGW is. In the Sahelian zone, many actors accompany the sustainable rural development of communities, even at the smallest scale. However, they do not situate their action as contributing to the initiative, and they are not taken into account by the monitoring systems in place.

Working on the Great Green Wall at a national workshop Désertif'actions 2022

Question to be addressed: how can support for agroecological transitions contribute to achieving the land restoration, carbon storage and job creation objectives of the Great Green Wall?

Tips for workshop organizers:

- Contact and invite the National Agency of the GGW (their coordinates are available on the website of the [PAAGGW](http://www.grandemurailleverte.org/index.php/structures-nationales-gmv) <http://www.grandemurailleverte.org/index.php/structures-nationales-gmv>)

Learn more about the Great Green Wall

- [On the UNCCD website](#)
- [On the GTD website](#)
- [The GGW Partner Platform](#)
- [The GGW accelerator](#)