



KEY MESSAGES

Photo by Olivier Girard/CIFOR

RESTORING AFRICA'S DRYLANDS ACCELERATING ACTION ON THE GROUND

2-3 JUNE 2021

Restoring Africa's drylands is essential to protecting biodiversity and securing the health, livelihoods and futures of the 525 million people living in these arid-landscapes. The **GLF Africa 2021 digital conference** "Restoring Africa's Drylands - Accelerating Action on the Ground" will be 2021's only conference on drylands restoration and will play an important role in identifying knowledge gaps and seeking solutions to the challenging issues facing drylands and the people that live in them – particularly the severe threats posed by climate change, violence, pandemic, land degradation and livelihood collapse.

This conference will aim to answer the following questions:

1. How can African drylands restoration also help to restore the lives of millions of people living in these landscapes, who are threatened by drought, loss of livelihoods, hunger and are too often driven to perilous migration?
2. How do we catalyze awareness of the urgent need for action to restore severely deteriorating drylands in Africa and boost the resiliency of the land and its people, who are facing renewed threats of famine due to economic damage from the COVID-19 pandemic and destructive climate change?
 - Greater awareness could help to support millions of livelihoods, and stem perilous migration from the Sahel region¹ of drylands, located at the southern edge of the Sahara desert - one of the poorest places on the planet.
3. There, the number of people facing **severe food insecurity** has almost doubled to 7.4 million people from previous levels of 3.9 million. **Millions more** are at risk of becoming food insecure if circumstances do not improve.
4. How can governments, civil society, the private sector, and Indigenous and local communities work together effectively to bridge the gaps between the various competing interests and work cooperatively in drylands restoration and the protection of these unique landscapes?

¹ The Sahel refers to a belt of land stretching about 6,000 km across northern Africa, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea; and touching on 14 countries.

5. How can we boost resilience to better cope with the impacts of temperatures rising **1.5 times faster** in the Sahel than in the rest of the world, resulting in alternating extremes of **droughts and floods** that displace communities and **slash agricultural yields**?
6. In what ways can local knowledge-holders, including smallholder farmers, herders, pastoralists, youth and elders, civic organizations and local governments, be more fully involved in planning, implementing and monitoring drylands restoration efforts?

The context

- More than half a billion people live and work in Africa's drylands – an area that represents 43 percent of the continent's surface, stretching across countries from Burkina Faso to Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad.
 - But the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered the deepest recession in the Sahel in decades, plunging an additional 1.3 million people into extreme poverty. Hardest-hit countries have faced a 30-50% decline in livestock exports coupled with a jump of 20-50% in imported food prices.
 - Falling commodities prices, the collapse of tourism across Africa and much lower transfers in foreign currencies has shrunk Africa's economy by an estimated 3.5%, according to the UN. The IMF is now pledging US\$500 billion in fresh aid.
 - Rainfed landscapes are rapidly degrading, partly because of the devastating force of climate change, which threatens the rich biodiversity of these fragile landscapes – landscapes which are also essential to smallholders nurturing crops and grazing livestock.
 - In a worst-case scenario, warming of 4°C by the end of the century would cut Africa's average GDP by between 7% and 12%: crop yields would decline by between 8% and 13%, warns **the World Meteorological Organization**.
 - Furthermore, climate change means temperatures in the Sahel are climbing 1.5 times faster than the global average, worsening water scarcity, reducing crop yields and livestock productivity, and affecting food security and prices.
 - Consequently, as food systems falter, farmers and farming communities struggle with reduced opportunities, especially for women and youth, and many are forced to seek new lives elsewhere.
- In fact, land degradation could force 135 million people to migrate over the next 30 years.
 - Additional waves and variants of the coronavirus intensify the disastrous outcomes and demand urgent action before it is too late.
 - Violence is also worsening conditions, as a reported 2 million people have been displaced by conflict in the frontier region where the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger meet.
 - The **Great Green Wall** initiative – a 7,000-kilometer stretching from Senegal to Djibouti – is still not well understood even though it was launched in 2007 by the African Union. The goal is to half desertification via a trans-continental mosaic of green, productive landscapes.
 - **GLF Africa 2021** occurs within the framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, an initiative of the UN Environment Programme and FAO, and with support from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.
 - Falling commodities prices, the collapse of tourism across Africa due to COVID-19 and much lower transfers in foreign currencies has shrunk Africa's economy by an estimated 3.5%, according to the UN. The IMF is now pledging 500 billion USD in fresh aid.

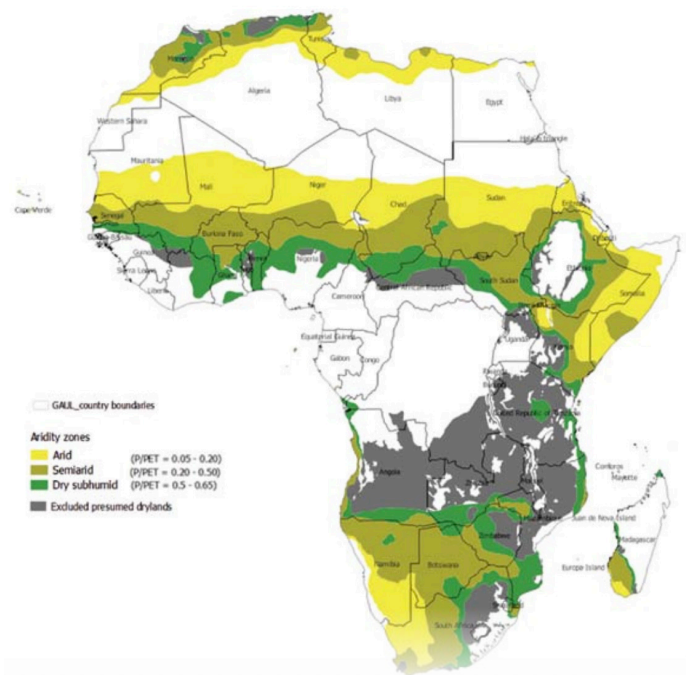


Figure 1. The drylands of Africa

Source: Adapted from UNEP-WCMC, 2007, in accordance with UNCCD and CBD and updated in 2014

Why attend or write about the GLF Africa 2021 Digital Conference?

- Increase your knowledge and understanding of drylands issues, including the Great Green Wall initiative, learning from a wide range of knowledge holders: from heads of UN agencies to farmers in the field to experts in restoration, migration and landscape approaches.
- Hear more about some of the latest science and knowledge on drylands restoration, biodiversity and sustainable landscapes, the impacts of climate change and migration, as well as such concepts as Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).
- Connect with influential speakers and organizations, improving your range of contacts.
- Learn what the Sahel region is all about: more than a dozen countries, their contributions and their struggles.
- COVID-19 has driven home to many African countries the importance of functioning digital infrastructure, with **suggestions from the UN** that African countries remake their economies, with digitalization leading the way. GLF has made this event free for all residents of Africa with opportunities to access a low-bandwidth version.

The global conversation on drylands restoration, climate change, and livelihoods:

Voices in the press: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), UNEP, WWF, WHO, FAO, World Food Programme, UN Convention on Biological Diversity, IPBES, World Meteorological Organization, World Economic Forum, IUCN, WRI, and top experts in environment, medicine, economics and conservation.

Key terms (from the press/reports): Biodiversity, climate change, desertification, COVID-19, drylands, ecosystem service, extinction, ecological restoration, famine, Great Green Wall, green recovery, livelihoods, migration, nature-based solutions, pandemics, supply chains, warming.

Key themes emerging from the global discourse:

- Restoration of Africa's drylands is an urgently needed measure in order to protect and preserve fragile and biodiverse ecosystems that are being threatened by climate change and warming temperatures.
- Drylands restoration is critically important to improving livelihoods and food and water security; to reducing perilous migration and related human exploitation and violence; and improving resilience in the face of climate change.
- Rising levels of social upheaval, violence, famine and insecurity are closely intertwined with each other, and linked to the devastation caused by climate change and increasing desertification.
- Fixing the broken relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world is essential to reduce the risk of future pandemics. It is also necessary to protect the diversity and abundance of life forms on Earth, which underpin the planet's life-support systems.
- A **circular economy** aims to maintain the value of products, materials and resources for as long as possible by returning them into the product cycle at the end of their use, while minimizing the generation of waste.

How does the GLF Africa Digital Conference fit into the global conversation on drylands restoration, climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and migration?

1. The **GLF Africa Digital Conference** will address the urgent need to rapidly increase and improve efforts to restore the world's drylands -- almost half of which are located in Africa. This includes some of the poorest countries on that continent, which are suffering the extreme effects of climate change as well as the severe economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. All of this is triggering a much greater risk of famine, worsening violence and driving dangerous migration by millions of people from the region.

3. It is therefore critically important to explore ways to bridge gaps between restoration communities and networks, to intensify efforts to sustainably manage, restore and protect ecosystems so that these can continue to support human well-being and provide biodiversity benefits. More resilient landscapes and societies will help drylands populations to better withstand crises.
4. The GLF Africa Digital Conference 2021 will convene a wide range of sectors, and will seek to inform major global initiatives such as the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and green recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. It will explore key issues at the intersection of environment and human wellbeing: restoring fragile drylands ecosystems through integrated landscape approaches; learning from Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Sources:

- [Peril in the Desert: Irregular Migration through the Sahel](#)
- [FMU Policy Brief No. 02/2018: Why Securitising the Sahel Will Not Stop Migration](#)
- [Land degradation could force 135 million to migrate in next 30 years](#)
- [Africa is suffering the most from the climate crisis](#)
- [Africa goes digital](#)



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Global Landscapes Forum

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Climate Agreement. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihoods, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with its co-founders UNEP and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter Members: CIAT, CIFOR, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, EcoAgriculture Partners, EFI, Evergreen Agriculture, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, ILRI, INBAR, IPMG, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, RRI, SAN, TMG - Think Tank for Sustainability, UNEP, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, part of Wageningen Research, WFO, World Agroforestry, World Bank Group, WRI, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative

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