

A fundamental part of Canada's response to the threat of land degradation and desertification in the Prairie provinces is the promotion of rural economic security through diversification. For example, the Partnership Agreement on Rural Development (PAR) is a four-year, \$13.3 million program to encourage economic stability in rural Saskatchewan which has funded more than 160 projects. It has four focal areas: project planning assistance, human resource development, marketing activity assistance, and strategic/systematic initiatives.

Support for the Desertification Convention

Canada recognizes that desertification and drought are problems of global concern. For that reason, it played an active role during negotiations for the Desertification Convention.

Canada funded the secondment of a legal expert to the Desertification Convention Secretariat to assist with Convention negotiations and now intends to extend this funding for the period leading to the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP). Canada contributed about \$109 540 to support the participation of developing countries in the Convention negotiations, and \$135 000 to fund the negotiations themselves. CIDA is currently exploring with its partners on the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) the kinds of priority activities that could be undertaken at the regional level that would both respond to the resolution on Urgent Action for Africa and allow the organization to meet obligations set out in the Convention. CIDA is in a position to provide immediate funding for certain of these priority activities within the framework of an ongoing CILSS project.

IDRC has a special mandate to assist developing countries in the implementation of Agenda 21. IDRC currently supports 53 projects related to desertification, with \$16 million in funding. IDRC has supported and organized a number of activities specifically geared to strengthening the negotiating capacity of African countries. These activities include workshops on key issues related to desertification and drought, assistance to key African NGOs, support to regional institutions and national governments, and the compilation and dissemination of a synthesis of IDRC's own projects on desertification in Africa that highlight lessons learned and identify knowledge gaps.

IDRC is supporting or planning to support a number of post-Convention activities that aim to strengthen the global knowledge base, encourage popular participation in policy making and planning, and contribute to the promotion of alternative livelihoods. These initiatives include support to local institutions in Africa to empower rural community organizations; assistance to African countries in the formulation of national action plans; a contribution to the establishment of an information network monitoring drought and disseminating information on mitigation of land degradation; and research on how to combine indigenous knowledge/traditional coping strategies and modern technologies to develop sustainable land use practices.