



Somalia Water and Land Information Management System
 Funded by the European Commission and implemented by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the
 United Nations.

Feature Article #2

SWALIM has commenced a new series of information-sharing material: the SWALIM FEATURES. We have realised that a lot of information we want to share does not fit any of our existing publications. They are too long for our newsletter and just not the type of information that we would like to put into our official progress reports. These features will be sometimes of a technical nature, sometimes more personal. Anyway, with all our products our aim is to serve people, not computers and map cabinets.

Land Degradation Assessment in Somaliland

A Workshop

“Land degradation is the reduction in the capacity of the land to perform ecosystem functions and services (including those of agro-ecosystems and urban systems) that support society and development” (LADA, 2005; <http://lada.virtualcentre.org/>)

Land degradation in Somaliland is a reality that needs to be addressed with the urgency it deserves. Various forms of land degradation were observed during the land resources field survey conducted by the SWALIM land team in May - June 2006.

Based on these findings, SWALIM produced a concept paper for the land degradation assessment in Somaliland following world accepted approaches like Land Degradation Assessment in drylands (LADA). The implementation of the concept paper started in 3rd March 2007 with a one day workshop on “Land degradation assessment in Somaliland” held at the SWALIM offices in Hargeisa Somaliland.

The objectives of the workshop included the following:

- To commence the Land degradation assessment activity.
- To review land degradation assessment methods, background and elements.
- To identify land degradation types present in the study area according to local expert knowledge.
- To establish the Somaliland land degradation task force.

The workshop was attended by representatives of government ministries, local and international NGOs and community based organizations (CBO's). Local actors have to be involved in a participatory approach because follow-up and sustainable management of resources cannot take place without them. Preceding the workshop was a brief introduction to the findings (products) of the May-June 2006 field surveys in Somaliland by the SWALIM land team.

The workshop participants felt that the products should be

packaged in a form that can be easily understood by the farmers and pastoralists, and then disseminated to them.

The concepts of land degradation assessment in drylands and the different theoretical land degradation types were introduced to the workshop participants. Later, using a participatory exercise, the workshop participants first identified the main land degradation types that are found in Somaliland and later deliberated on the formation of the Somaliland land degradation task force, comprising of relevant institutions engaged in land degradation-related activities.

The formation of this task force was based on the following underlying principles: Land degradation is a negative process that is directly related to the resources management and has a significant impact on livelihoods; the need to take action against land degradation and the need for a technical body to spearhead the actions against land degradation

The role of the Somaliland land degradation task force is to:

- Participate in the land degradation assessment
- Implement the assessment findings and
- Monitor land degradation in the country.

All the institutions represented in the workshop became members of this task force. They included, Barwaaqo Voluntary Organisation-BVO, Candlelight, SPSDRA, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Pastoral Development & Environment, UNOPS/ICDP/IFAD, and Ministry of Livestock Department of Planning and Training, NAGAAD and UNHCR. However other institutions are welcome to join the task force.

A future participatory workshop and field assessment is planned for April 2007 where different tools and frameworks for the assessment of the different land degradation types will be applied.



Workshop participants - FAO-SWALIM Office, Hargeisa.

Article by: Ronald Vargas