Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

Against all odds.

The winding path from multidimensional fragility to drought resilience in drylands

Friday 13th May 2022, 13:00-15:00 GMT
Room: MET11

Photo credit: @FAO/Luis Tato

Background

Fragile systems worldwide feature a combination of exposure to risks and insufficient coping capacity to mitigate, manage and absorb them. Restricted and unequal access to natural resources and their improper management, coupled with environmental constraints, are putting efforts for sustainable development at risk. Under these conditions, the capacity of the poorest to deal with global pressures on resources is undermined, and food security is threatened. It is estimated that around 2 billion people nowadays live their lives affected by fragility, and half of the world's poor will live under fragile conditions by 2030. More than half the people seriously affected by natural disaster live in fragile states. The emerging consensus is that environmental factors and natural resource scarcity can be amongst the main drivers of fragility, as ecosystems with limited coping capacities are less resilient to stresses and shocks.

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As a result, even moderate natural disasters can lead to a hard-to-reverse contraction, thus depriving the poorest of productive assets. Drylands are amongst the most vulnerable areas to drought events, and if not properly managed in a fragile context, recurring and prolonged droughts can push dryland systems beyond its natural regenerative capacity. Fragility is a context-specific and multidimensional condition, having very specific and typical dynamics in drylands. Escaping the fragility trap is imperative to effectively address global poverty and food security, particularly in drought-prone drylands. Extending over 43% of total global areas, and spreading across all continents, drylands generally refer to arid, semi-arid and dry subhumid areas. Subject to limited water availability, high temperature fluctuations, and average annual precipitation rates below two thirds of the annual potential evapotranspiration, drylands are home to 2.1 billion people, or one in three people in the world. Drylands are key to global food and nutrition security for the whole planet, with up to 44% of the world's cultivated systems, around 60% of food crops, and 50% of livestock production located in these areas. Despite their vital socio-economic and environmental roles, drylands are not spared from increasingly frequent and high-magnitude drought events. In the context of drylands, drought and fragility are double-edged threat, whereby fragility can compromise the means in hands to manage droughts, while drought can induce fragility. In short, drought can exacerbate the interaction between drylands and fragility. Nevertheless, challenges can be transformed into opportunities, and scarcity into prosperity. Investing in dryland ecosystems can stimulate positive socio-economic and environmental developments. And why does building resilience in drought-prone drylands become intricately challenging amid pre-existing vulnerability? Because long-standing resilience can only be achieved if all dimensions of fragility are laid bare and jointly resolved.

The design of the session

The objective of the event is to address the challenges of drought-prone drylands in fragile contexts. To explore the winding pathways from including drylands in the fragility context to building resilience, the event is built around the following milestones:

- key features of drought-prone drylands: a global outlook;
- integration of drought-prone drylands in the definition of multidimensional fragility: introduction of metrics;
- drought resilience roadmap in drylands: the planning strategies to overcome fragility.

The session brings together global actors to support the dialogue around drought management, drylands, and fragility from multiple perspectives. Representative voices from institutions, civil society, academia, and internal organizations will outline the complexities of fragile systems and examine the specificities of drought-prone drylands to foster the elaboration of a roadmap for resilience. Outcomes of the session will convene a diversity of stakeholders at different levels to reverse the narrative of fragility in drylands by giving prominence to our capacities to learn and overcome all odds, in line with the call to action of the Conference.

Tentative agenda*

Time	Title	Speaker
13.00-13.05	Welcoming remarks	Mr Lifeng Li Director, Land and Water Division, Food and Agriculture Organization
13.05-13.15	Setting the scene: why drylands and their natural resources matter	Mr Maher Salman Senior Land and Water Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization
13.15- 13.30	The natural resources dimension of fragility	Mr Nick Voulvoulis, Professor of Environmental Technology, Imperial College London
13.30- 13.45	The policy dimension of fragility	Ms Hind Aissaoui Bennani, Regional Specialist of Migration, Environment and Climate Change, International Organization for Migration
13.45-14.00	The economic dimension of fragility	Mr Anupam Anand, Senior Evaluation Officer, Global Environment Facility
14.00-14.10	Enhancing the existing knowledge: Valuing, restoring, and managing presumed drylands: Cerrado, Miombo–Mopane woodlands and the Qinghai–Tibetan Plateau	Ms Fidaa Haddad Forestry Officer, Food and Agriculture Organization

Time	Title	Speaker
14.10 - 14.40	Discussing a roadmap for resilience: multiple perspectives to overcome fragility in drought-prone drylands	Ms Leigh Ann Winowiecki, Global Research Theme Leader, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR-ICRAF) Ms Aissata B. Sall Sylla, Coordinator of the Climate Finance Unit, Centre de Suivi Ecologique Ms Sibongile Mavimbela, Senior Programme Officer, Southern African Development Community Mr Jes Weigelt, Head of Progammes, Töpfer Müller Gaßner– Think-Tank for Sustainability Ms Soumaya Zaddem, North-Africa Representative, Youth Advisory Board on Disaster Risk Reduction of African Union
14.40-14.55	Q&A	
14.55-15.00	Closing remarks	Mr Michael Bruentrup Senior Researcher, German Development Institute, Germany

**Refreshment will be offered by the organizers during the event*