

## Great Green Wall – UPSC Notes

The Great Green Wall aims at creating an enormous strip of vegetation, taking up afforestation and land restoration activities, across the African countries. It stretches from Senegal to Djibouti, seeking to boost food security, improve health, and create thousands of new jobs and income opportunities for the communities living there. It emphasizes sustainable land use, indigenous farming techniques and creating green jobs. The initiative has already planted billions of trees and supported millions of local households, generating millions of jobs.

### Why is Great Green Wall in the News?

This project has been in news owing to the renewed focus on its progress, as this ambitious initiative has become a priority for the international community. Further, a recent United Nations report points out that barely 4% of the Great Green Wall's objectives for 2030 have been achieved, with just 4 million hectares restored out of a goal of 100 million. Half of that total is in just one country: Ethiopia, which has an ambitious reforestation programme. Also, this year at One Planet Summit in Paris, donors pledged to raise \$14.3 billion (€11.8 billion) over the next five years for the project, to ensure that the Great Green Wall sees the light of day.

### What is the significance of the Great Green Wall?

- The Wall, with a length of over 8,000 kilometres, crosses 11 African countries.
- The Great Green Wall is a symbol of hope in the face of one of the biggest challenges of the present time – desertification.
- Launched in 2007 by the African Union, this initiative aims to restore Africa's degraded landscapes and transform millions of lives in one of the world's poorest regions, the Sahel.
- Once complete, the Wall will be the largest living structure on the planet – an 8,000 km natural wonder of the world stretching across the entire width of the continent.
- The Great Green Wall is now being implemented across several countries in Africa, and more than eight billion dollars have been mobilized and pledged for its support.
- The initiative brings together African countries and international partners, under the leadership of the African Union Commission and Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall.

## What are the objectives?

- This project aims to restore 100 million ha of currently degraded land, by 2030.
- Aims to sequester 250 million tons of carbon
- Looking to create 10 million green jobs.
- This will support communities living along the Green Wall in the following-
  1. Grow fertile land, one of humanity's most precious natural assets.
  2. Grow economic opportunities for the world's youngest population.
  3. Grow food security for the millions that go hungry every day.
  4. Grow climate resilience in a region where temperatures are rising faster than anywhere else on Earth.
  5. Grow a new world wonder spanning 8000 km across Africa.

## What has it achieved so far?

- The Great Green Wall covers the Sahel region from Senegal in the West to Djibouti in the East of Africa.
- The 11 countries selected as intervention zones for the Great Green Wall are Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan.
- The total area of the Great Green Wall initiative extends to 156 Mha, with the largest intervention zones in Niger, Mali, Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- Since its launch in 2007, major progress has been made in restoring the fertility of Sahelian lands.

## What are the program components across countries?

### Ethiopia

- The project area in Ethiopia ranges from north-west to Djibouti, a part of the Horn of Africa, crossing the lowlands of the north-east of the country
- The program and its allied activities were implemented as part of the government's regular natural resource management program.
- Over 5 billion plants and seeds were produced, 151 448 ha of reforested lands restored.

### **Senegal**

- In Senegal, the length of the Great Green Wall route is 545 km for an area of 817 500 ha.
- The area of intervention is dominated by pastoral activity, with extensive breeding and agricultural activity.
- The operational activities are mainly focused on the restoration and development of farm and agroforestry initiatives
- Over 18 million trees were planted and 800 000 ha of degraded land was restored for communities

### **Nigeria**

- In Nigeria, the initiative is working to prevent, reverse the degradation of ecosystems.
- Seeks to improve the living conditions of affected communities by enhancing the provision of ecosystem services.
- One of the key components of the program is the establishment of a 1,359 km contiguous shelterbelt from northwest to the northeast, serving as a windbreak.
- Around 8 million trees were produced and planted and 1 396 jobs created

### **Sudan**

- The green wall is 1520 km west to east, and 15 km wide, as adopted by the African Union.
- IT looks to address various environmental challenges, including desertification and land degradation, water pollution, deforestation, soil erosion and biodiversity loss.
- Nearly 1.9 million plants and seedlings have been produced and 85 000 ha of restored land.

### **Burkina Faso**

- Help the country increase its resilience to climate change and land restoration.
- Emphasis is on activities that will minimize erosion and maintain soil fertility while increasing the sustainable use of non-timber products.
- Promote revenue-generating activities for women to ensure food security for households.
- Around 16.6 million plants and seedlings were produced, 20 383 ha of reforested land created, along with dune fixing land restoration, and a windbreak system made.

### **Mali**

- The project focuses on the development of agricultural, forestry and pastoral production systems.
- The improvement of basic socio-economic infrastructures and the creation of wealth through the development of income-generating activities were prioritised.
- It aimed to achieve stable food security and the revival of sustainable economic growth.
- Around 135 472 plants and seedlings were produced, 6 297 ha of land reforested, and 120 ha of land restored.

### **Eritrea**

- The program promoted soil and water conservation in catchment areas, farmland and along the rivers and streams.
- Community mobilization practices were followed.
- Around 128.8 million tree seedlings were planted, 52,930 ha of degraded area terraced and afforested.

### **Niger**

- The project spreads from North to South in Niger.
- It covers the Saharan zone, the Sahel-Saharan zone and the Sahelian zone.
- Around 146 million plants and seedlings were produced, 364 615 ha of land reforested, 363 928 ha of land restored.

## What is the mechanism through which the project is implemented?

- The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD implemented a flagship initiative under the Great Green Wall, referred to as FLEUVE (The Local Environmental Coalition for a Green Union).
- The project was financed by the European Commission, the executive branch of the European Union, with seven million euros and was implemented from 2014 to 2019.
- FLEUVE aimed at strengthening the capacities of local communities to help boost investments in land restoration and created employment opportunities, or 'green jobs'.
- Local people drove the project themselves to strengthen community resilience to land degradation, drought and climate variability.
- Micro-investment projects were implemented under FLEUVE in 23 communities across five Sahel countries—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal.
- Regional-level activities complemented the project on capacity building and the dissemination of good practices on sustainable land management and innovative financing.
- The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD is also supporting the development of sustainable value chains, where it is working with the private sector, guaranteeing the purchase of dry land products in the Sahel.
- It leads to the creation of land-based jobs for thousands of rural women in the Sahel.

### **Role of the Irish Government**

- The Global Mechanism is simultaneously implementing a EUR 1.2 million grant from the Irish Government to support the Great Green Wall.
- It is based on two pillars-
  1. The elaboration of a “State of the Great Green Wall” Landmark Report, which provides a big picture overview and authoritative analysis to assess the state of the Great Green Wall, a decade after it was launched.
  2. Development of a portfolio of transformative projects along the Great Green Wall for future donor funding.

## What are the campaigns launched for public awareness?

- The UNCCD launched a public awareness campaign on the Great Green Wall, called "Growing a World Wonder."
- The campaign aims to boost global awareness of the initiative in public spheres, policy debates, as well as media and cultural sectors.
- It sought to project a clear view towards inspiring long-term public and private investment in the initiative.
- The campaign aims to inspire a global popular movement to deliver this urgent African-led dream by 2030.
- It centres on the core narrative that the Great Green Wall is an urgent symbol of hope in the face of the greatest challenges faced by humanity this century, from climate change to food security, migration and resource-driven conflict.

## Conclusion

The Great Green Wall is one of the best examples of international cooperation, cutting across communities and nations for the common goal of protecting the earth, preserving its natural health, reversing the dangerous trend of desertification. There is hardly any doubt that the project stands as a testimony that with smart policies, the right investments, nations can come together to chart a path of reviving economies and building resilience.

Humanity and nature must come together to create a favourable ecosystem for nature to heal, promoting a new world order based on cooperation, collaboration, sharing of resources for the present and times ahead.

This project carries a crucial message for India as well. With the rapid growth of unplanned urbanization, and adverse effects of climate change, there is a growing need to resort to the natural health of the Aravali hills, and a green belt across its territories needs to be created.

Innovations in energy and transport can steer sustainable growth, ensuring food security, livelihood, poverty reduction as well as securing progress of countries' socio-economic spheres. And therefore, nature-based solutions such as the Great Green Wall hold great promise for the global community.

