



#UNited4Land

**OUR LEGACY.
OUR FUTURE.**

DESERTIFICATION AND
DROUGHT DAY • 17 JUNE 2024

Desertification and Drought Day 2024

“United for Land: Our Legacy. Our Future”



Today marks the International Day on Desertification and Drought, officially declared by the United Nations General Assembly in 1994 and observed annually on June 17. This day aims to raise public awareness of desertification, land degradation, and drought, and to highlight human-led solutions to combat these pressing issues.

This year’s global theme, **“United for Land. Our Legacy. Our Future,”** emphasizes the transformative power of sustainable land management (SLM) and land restoration in addressing critical global challenges, including land degradation, climate change, and biodiversity loss. These challenges pose significant threats to our environment, food security, livelihoods, and future prosperity.

Globally, land degradation affects millions of hectares each year, diminishing arable land productivity and threatening the livelihoods of countless farmers. Drought exacerbates water scarcity, reduces crop yields, and stresses natural ecosystems. The combined effects of land degradation and drought can be devastating, especially for rural communities that heavily depend on agriculture.

In Bhutan, while drought occurrences are sporadic, land degradation caused by water-induced soil erosion and landslides is a significant issue. The rugged terrain, with 31% of agricultural land located on steep slopes, results in the loss of approximately 3 tons of fertile topsoil per acre each year. This silent crisis largely goes unnoticed by farmers and is a major cause of declining crop productivity in the country.

To tackle these issues, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock has been promoting SLM interventions and land restoration efforts since 2005. Supported by various donor-funded projects and internal resources, Bhutan has successfully implemented SLM and land restoration initiatives across the country to avoid, reduce, and restore degraded and vulnerable agricultural land.

In August 2003, Bhutan joined the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the global voice for land. As a party to the UNCCD, Bhutan has prepared and implemented two National Action Programs to Combat Land Degradation (2010 and 2014) and was one of the first countries to pledge towards achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN) by 2030. As of 2023, Bhutan has improved and restored about 28,185 acres of highly vulnerable and degraded land.

Despite significant progress, land degradation continues to increase and remains a major local and global threat. As we observe the 30th Anniversary of the UNCCD on this important International Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to protecting our scarce and precious land resources. Good stewardship of the land is vital for climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, and a resilient agri-food system.

Let us continue to collaborate and partner. Together, we can make a difference.



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification