INCLUDE BASIC ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STUDIES IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM – Northwest Stakeholders

Stakeholders in Northwest Nigeria rose from a NAGGW forum in Kano with a call on relevant authorities in the educational sector to include basic environmental management studies in the nation's school curriculum.

Making the call in a 10-point communique at the end of their meeting at the agency's Operational Office (KOO) in Kano on 25th April, 2024, the forum said it was making a special appeal to relevant authorities in the sector to stimulate environmental management in the country.

The communique also called for partnerships between all relevant government and international organisations, the private sector, civil society organisations and community-based organisations to combat insecurity, rivalry, and lack of interest amongst stakeholders in the Geopolitical Zone.

Other key points in the communique include a call on NAGGW to facilitate more capacity-building programmes to enhance the skills and knowledge of stakeholders involved in combating desertification and restoring dry lands; and an appeal to state governments to find the political will to stop bush burning.

Participants further called on the Federal and State governments to marshal the political will to declare a state of emergency on the environment as this would promote sustainable land management.

The forum, which is part of the agency's ongoing efforts in finding ways of mitigating the effects of deforestation, desertification, land degradation, and other associated climate challenges, also deliberated on ways to galvanise support to bridge the gaps militating against optimum attainment of the Great Green Wall Programme in Nigeria.

The meeting drew 120 key stakeholders from Government and non-Governmental Organisations such as Federal and States Ministries, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and Community-based Organisations (CBOs). Others in attendance were Community Leaders, Youth Leaders, Women Leaders, MACBAN, FUDECO and Persons With Disabilities.

Under the theme, "BUILDING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER RESPONSIVENESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GREAT GREEN WALL PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA, participants also brainstormed on fashioning an enabling environment for harnessing ideas from various contributors to reinvigorate the programme.

FIRST LADY LAUNCHES GREEN WOMEN PLATFORM

The First Lady, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, CON, OON, recently launched NAGGW's Green Women Platform, GWP, in Abuja.

The First Lady who was represented by Hajia Nana Shettima, wife of the Vice President, launched the platform during the 9th Council of Ministers in November, 2023.

Hajia Nana Shettima, Wife of the Vice President, launching Green Women Platform, GWP

The Green Wall

PRESIDENT TINUBU APPOINTS NEW DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF NAGGW

SALEH ABUBAKAR, *MFR, Director General/CEO, National Agency for the Great Green Wall*

President Bola Tinubu has appointed Saleh Abubakar as the new Director-General and CEO of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall, NAGGW.

Abubakar is a highly experienced public administrator with decades of experience across several sectors.

His appointment was announced in a State House Press Release on the 15th of July, 2024.

The new DG/CEO who took over from Dr Yusuf Bukar on the 26th of July, 2024, brings his wealth of experience to bear in driving the agency's mandate of empowering communities to combat land degradation, enhance food security, and build resilience to climate change through sustainable interventions and education.

NEW NAGGW DG LAUNCHES 2024 TREE PLANTING CAMPAIGN

Saleh Abubakar, MFR, the new Director General of National Agency for the Great Green Wall, hit the ground running when he flagged-off the 2024 Tree Planting campaign at Fagwalawa Dashi, in Danbatta LGA, Kano State on Wednesday 31st July, 2024.

The event, held a few days after Abubakar assumed office as the CEO of the Agency, marked the commencement of NAGGW's annual tree planting campaign in the front line states communities to reduce the menace of desertification in the state.

Speaking during the programme, the Director General said that the objectives of the tree planting was to avert desertification and other environmental challenges affecting the area.

The Chief Executive of NAGGW who was represented by the Acting Director, Afforestation and Land Management, Auwalu Yunusa, said the tree planting campaign was flagged-off in all eleven frontline states in which NAGGW is working.

He said the aim of the programme

COVER

A WALL OF GREEN TO HALT THE DESERT

DG's representative, Auwalu Yunusa, Acting Director, Afforestation and Land Management Department (Left) planting a tree at the launch of this year's Tree Planting Campaign. With him is Ahmed Muktar Kano State Field Officer

The Green Wall Newsletter is published by Information and Corporate Communications Unit of NAGGW.

NAGGW VISION, MISSION AND MANDATE

Our Vision
To Have Green and Fertile Productive Land for Sustainable Development in the Drylands

Our Mission
To Halt and Reverse Desertification, Land Degradation, Prevent Biodiversity Loss and Ensure Ecosystems Resilience to Climate Change.

Mandate
To Improve the Resilience of Affected Communities, Ecosystems, Natural Resources, Protection of Rural Heritage and Creating Rural Hubs for Sustainable Development.

NAGGW – Transforming Nigerian Drylands

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COMING EVENTS

OCTOBER 2024

UNCBD (COP 16)
21st October - 1st November, 2024, Cali, Columbia

NOVEMBER 2024

UNFCCC (COP 29)
11th -22nd November, 2024, Baku, Azerbaijani (Central Asia)

DECEMBER 2024

UNCCD (16th) Session of the Conference of Parties (COP 16)
1st -13th December, 2024, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

UNITED NATIONS

BORNO STATE FLOOD: NAGGW DG CONDOLES WITH GOV. ZULUM

NAGGW Director General/CEO, Saleh Abubakar, MFR, paid a condolence visit to Borno State Governor, HE Prof. Babagana Umaru Zulum following the devastating flood that innundated the state.

The DG who was represented by Mrs Habiba UL Ibrahim, the Director, Rural Development and Extension Services, who led NAGGW team reiterated the DG and the entire staff of the Agency's heart felt sympathy to all those who were affected by the disaster.

In his condolence message delivered by the NAGGW team, Saleh assured the Governor that his thoughts and prayers are with him, the victims and their families. He

Residents of a flooded community in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital being led to a relief camp through a flooded street.

also hoped that the resilience and unity of the people of Borno State will help them overcome the adversity.

The Agency further donated assorted relief items to Borno State for onward distribution to the affected people.

Among the Agency's relief package were 80 bags of twenty-five kg Rice, 30 cartons of 4.5 litres groundnut oil, 30 cartons of macaroni, 30 cartons of spaghetti and 60 kerosene stoves.

Other items included three 73

large cooking pots, 180 mats, 175 plastic chairs, 600 rubber buckets, 578 bowls, 78 mortars and pestles, 32 prayer mats, 291 ablution kettles, and many other items.

Heavy rains in early September led to structural damage and collapse of Alau Dam on the Ngadda River, setting off flash floods that killed 30 people and affected over one million people. About 70 percent of Maiduguri was submerged in the fast moving flood water.

Aerial view of a flooded street in Maiduguri

Improved technology solving old problem
Super Saver Wood Stove
Making a Difference in Wood Conservation

The SuperSaver Wood Stove is the most efficient wood stove in the market. It is not only a durable stove that is easy to light, clean, and simmer foods on, but also cooks traditional foods like maize *tuwo*, rice, yams, and cassava in under 20 minutes.

Picture (above): Demonstration of Super Saver Wood Stove; and (left) Super Saver WoodStoves being distributed to families in the affected communities

Its technologically improved wood combustion chamber reduces the quantity of firewood needed for cooking by up to 58 percent, thereby reducing use of firewood compared to traditional open cooking fire places and charcoal fires.

HALF MOON /ZAI PITS

retention property and reduction of waste through excessive run off;
- Reduction of soil erosion;
- Improved vegetation cover and biodiversity;
- Encouragement of agro-forestry and community participation in land restoration projects under NAGGW intervention;
- Improvement of soil fertility and yield from cultivated land. Improves livelihoods of affected communities;
- Serves as effective land management measures against land impoverishment.

THE EXERCISE
The exercise was carried out in seven (7) frontline states (Kebbi, Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Yobe and Borno) in the year 2023 for the establishment of woodlot plantations (350ha), Acacia Senegal and seyal plantations (350ha), Indigenous Tree Species plantations (70ha) and Large-scale restoration of degraded lands (450ha). Seven working teams comprising of officers from NAGGW headquarters and the state offices were formed to carry out the exercise. The teams engaged the services of the local community for labour and participation to encourage as well as enlighten the communities on the benefit of the half-moon/zai pit techniques in combating desertification and increase soil fertility.

Solar power

NAGGW procured and distributed **4,455** units of Solar Home Lighting Systems.

- **4,879** units of Solar Street lights were also procured and installed at various communities

- **128** units of Solar Powered Pumps with Trolley procured and installed for irrigation purposes across the eleven (11) frontline States.

In Rural Infrastructure Assisted Project/Activities,
- **265** units of Solar Powered Boreholes were constructed with accessories

Pics 1 and 2 (left):
1. NAGGW staff (demonstrating how to instal solar panel and accessories.
2. Solar power kits arrayed for distribution

Saleh Abubakar, MFR, DG/CEO:

NEW MAN ON THE WALL

Sale Abubakar, MFR, the Director General of National Agency for the Great Green Wall, NAGGW, assumed office on July 28, 2024.

In a brief handing-over ceremony at the Agency's Head Office at No. 102 Ebitu Ukiwe Street, Jabi-Abuja, he promised to deliver on the mandate of the agency in line with the Renewed Hope Agenda of President Ahmed Tinubu.

The ABU alumni, who is an experienced civil servant, hails from Gashu'a in Bade Local Government Area of Yobe State. He attended Central Primary School, Gashu'a from 1965 to 1972; General Murtala Mohammed College (GMMC) from 1972 to1976; School of Basic Studies, Zaria 1977to78; and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (1979 to 1982) where he bagged B. Sc. in Political Science.

He started his career in old Borno State Civil Service in 1983, but later joined the services of the Federal Ministry of External Affairs (now Foreign Affairs) in 1984.

He returned to the service of old Borno State in 1989 as an Administrative Officer.

At the creation of Yobe State in 1991, he moved to Yobe State as Director,

SALEH ABUBAKAR, MFR,
DG/CEO,
National Agency for the Great Green Wall

Political Affairs, in the Governor's Office.

Four years later (1995), he became the Director of Administration, also in the Yobe State Governor's Office, a post he held until his appointment as Deputy Permanent Secretary, Administration in 1999.

Five years later (2004), he was posted to Ministry of Land and Survey as Deputy Permanent Secretary.

Barely two years later, he returned to the Governor's Office (2006) as Deputy Permanent Secretary, Administration, and served in that capacity until 2007 when he was appointed Permanent Secretary/Chief of Staff to the Governor.

Saleh Abubakar served as Chief of Staff to the Governor for a decade until his appointment as Yobe State Head of Service in 2017, during the administration of Governor Ibrahim Gaidam.

The new NAGGW DG is also a seasoned speech writer and an avid cyclist.

His appointment as Director General and CEO of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall comes after his retirement from the civil service in 2018 at the end of a sparkling and illustrious career that spanned 35 years.

GROASIS WATER BOXX TECH TAKES OFF IN FRONTLINE STATES

The National Agency for the Great Green Wall recently flagged-off the use of Groasis Water Boxx Technology.

The exercise, which was part of the Great Green Wall Day activities across the eleven (11) frontline states, featured planting of assorted fruit seedlings in selected locations across the states with the participation of various state government representatives.

Groasis Waterboxx Technology is an innovative solution to save dry ecosystems and reclaim deserts by mimicking how seeds are planted and grown in the natural world. Placed on top of the ground, the Water boxx acts as a protective vessel that allows the seed – once planted – to remain moist and protected from the harsh elements.

The water boxx is designed to combat desertification through reforestation. With Groasis Technology, the survival rate for plants is said to be over 90% – with no irrigation required. It farther enhances the growth speed of young trees, reduces the amount of water required, and lowers the overall cost.

Once the plant begins to sprout, water is inserted into the top and bottom layers of the water boxx, and as the temperature changes throughout the day and evening, moisture is continuously reproduced via condensation - and small pipes in the boxx feed water to the plant as needed. Underneath the water box is a tiny wick inserted into the soil, keeping the land up to two metres below hydrated, and creating an ideal environment for the roots to spread. The vessel is also specially designed to keep the plant at optimal temperature, as well as capture rainwater without flooding the plant. Once the tree is mature enough, the water box can be removed and used on the next seed.

Inexpensive and easy to install, the Groasis Water Boxx can be used by small farmers, corporate companies, NGO's, investors and even governments.

As climate change and carbon emission continue to degrade our natural environment, especially on the frontline states, desert land is growing in the country- consuming our fruitful land space and making it more and more difficult for vegetation and

TREE PLANTING
(contd. from front page)

was to restore degraded land, curtail the menace of desertification, and improve soil fertility.

"We are planting trees on 176 hectares of land which involves two hundred thousand seedlings of different species," he explained.

Earlier, the State Field Officer, Ahmad Mukhtar, said that direct tree planting through the program plays a vital role in reviving degraded land and. averting numerous environmental challenges.

Mukhtar also explained that full participation by communities was the secret behind the success of the Agency's nation-wide tree planting program.

The Field Officer commended the commitment and dedication of the New Director General of the Agency for being prompt in flagging off this year's tree planting program in all the eleven frontline states.

The Field Officer who decried felling of trees, described the habit as a major threat to many environments.

The community leader of Dama, Malam Isah Shuaibu commended the Agency for planting four different species of trees in the area.

Shaibu who lauded the agency for the gesture, said that the exercise would go a long way in tackling desertification and climate change in the area.

BPSR SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL TRAINING FOR NAGGW STAFF

The Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) in March trained staff of NAGGW to identify common constraints faced by Federal Agencies, Parastatals and Commissions in the course of their work and to provide evidence-based recommendations to address these constraints.

The two-day exercise is part of the Bureau's ongoing training to improve efficiency and service delivery in the civil service.

To enhance effectiveness of the exercise, the Bureau developed a manual titled, "Guide: How to manage and Reform Agencies and Parastatals." The Guide provides a practical guidance to Chief Executive Officers of Agencies of Government on how to manage and deliver good services to citizens. It is also complemented by a Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) with which Agencies can assess themselves against local and International standard best practices.

This was a follow up to the directive of the Federal Government which mandated the Bureau of Public Service Reforms (BPSR) Self–Assessment Tool to be deployed in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs).

The tool is an automated online tool accessible through BPSR website and it involves an organisation assessing how it does things, the process. It also identifies an organisation's strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for improvement .

ACHIEVEMENTS
(contd. from page 12)

installed for irrigation purposes across the eleven (11) frontline States.

- **RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE ASSISTED PROJECT/ACTIVITIES:**
  - **430** Units Solar Powered Boreholes Constructed with accessories.
  - **363** Units of motorized boreholes constructed with complete accessories for irrigation purposes.
  - **5** Units of Skill Acquisition Centres constructed and equipped for off-land training.
  - **71 numbers** community plant nurseries were established for seedlings production.
  - **4.6 km** of rural feeder roads constructed for easy access to difficult terrains.
  - **110** numbers of tube wells constructed for irrigation purposes.

- **JOB CREATION/ EMPLOYMENT GENERATION:**
  - **1,397** Youths trained and engaged as Forest Guards to curtail social unrest and forced migration. Protect the Agency's investments.
  - **205** Units of Grinding Machine procured and distributed to women and youth.
  - **85** Units Motorcycles Procured and distributed in the selected irrigated sites in eleven (11) Frontline States.
  - About **210,709** youths (which consists of women) were engaged in direct tree planting and other related activities.
  - Initiation of the NAGGW Youth Volunteer Programme (NYVP) and the NAGGW Green Women Platform (NGWP).

- **CAPACITY BUILDING/ DEVELOPMENT:**
  - **1,367** rural community people (Women and Youth) trained in off-land Livelihood activities
  - **275** Farmers were trained on Climate Smart Agriculture and empowered with farm tools and inputs like assorted/improved seeds for on and o fffarming activities that would generate income and improve livelihoods.

- **MONITORING & EVALUATION (M&E):**
  - **2** numbers of Automatic Weather Stations put in place for field data collection, Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) Framework developed for implementation of M & E system for the Great Green Wall Programme in Nigeria.
  - Reviewed of National Strategic Action Plan for the Implementation of GGW Programme (2021-2025).
  - Participatory Rural Appraisal Manual for Planning and Implementation of the Great Green Wall Programme in Nigeria developed.

NAGGW
– transforming Nigerian Drylands

Achievements of NAGGW at a Glance (2013-2024)
- TRANSFORMING NIGERIAN DRYLANDS

■ **AFFORESTATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT:**

- **45,251,179** number of assorted and indigenous tree seedlings raised in the Agency's Community and Central Nurseries to plant in the following Plantations:

  I. **Shelter belt: 1,819.96 km (5,459.88 hectares)** of Shelter belts were planted across the eleven (11) frontline states.

  ii. **Wood lot: 1,457.2 ha** of land was planted as woodlot to improve the livelihoods of the affected communities and the micro-climates.

  iii. **Orchard: 1,047 ha** of orchard plantations were established to improve the livelihoods of affected communities across the eleven (11) frontline states.

  iv. **Acacia Senegal/Seyal Plantation: 950 ha** of land was planted with Acacia Senegal/seyal seedlings.

  v. **Large Scale Restoration of Degraded Land: 800 ha** of degraded lands were planted to restore and improve soil fertility and halt further land degradation.

  vi. **Social Forestry: 550 ha** of land was planted with exotic/economic tree species in areas of social gathering across communities in the eleven (11) frontline states to enhance the micro-climates and improve human interaction with the outdoor space.

  vii. **Institutional Planting: 830 ha** of land in both public and private institutions were planted across the eleven (11) frontline states.

  viii. **Farm Forestry: 350 ha** of farmlands were planted to encourage agroforestry and improve soil fertility.

  ix. **Indigenous Tree Species: 775 ha** of land was planted using indigenous tree species sourced from the affected communities to reduce plant extinction and restore indigenous forests.

- **Distribution of Seedlings: 10,813,733** tree seedlings were distributed to farmers for promotion of Agroforestry practices.

- **Sand Dune Fixation: 100 ha** of sand dunes have been fixed using the straw checkerboard method.

- **Banana Plantations (Musa Sapientum): 25 ha** of banana plantations are being established to encourage Agroforestry and generation of income in Bauchi, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, and Yobe State.

■ **RENEWABLE ENERGY DELIVERY:**

- **4,879** Units of Solar Home Lighting Systems procured and distributed.

- **1,917** Units of Solar Street Lights procured and installed at rural markets, boreholes and plant nursery sites.

- **6,300** Units of Super Saver Wood Stoves were procured and distributed to families of inhabitants of the communities to discourage indiscriminate tree logging for domestic purposes.

- **128 Units** Solar Powered Pumps with Trolley procured and

New NAGGW DG/CEO's Visit to the Ministry of Environment

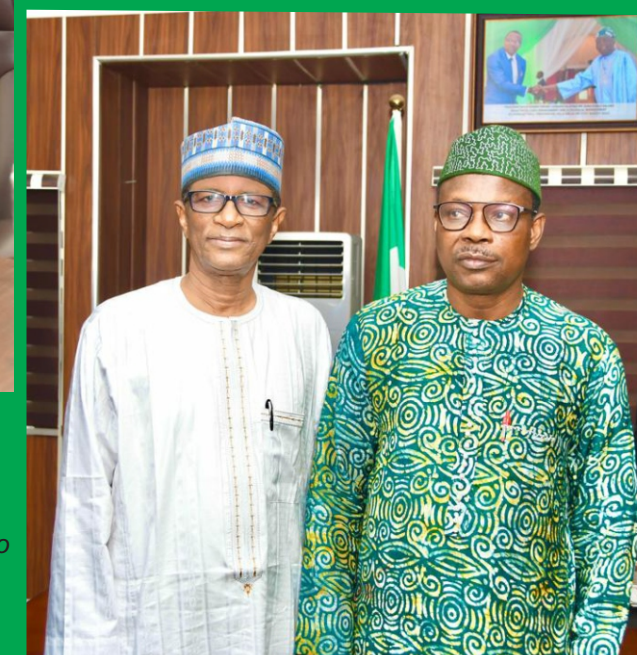After his appointment, the DG/CEO of NAGGW paid a courtesy call on Honourable Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal.

Balarabe Abbas Lawal, Minister of Environment (right) receiving the new DG/CEO of NAGGW in his office

Honourable Minister of State for Environment, Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako (right) receiving the new DG/CEO of NAGGW in his office

Green Matters:
NAGGW activities in pics

Active community participation in tree planting at launch of the 2024 tree planting campaign in Fagwalawa Dashi, in Danbatta LGA, Kano State

NAGGW Field Staff overseeing members of a community planting trees at the launch of the tree planting campaign

Deputy Director, Resource Mobilisation and Partnership Building, Habiba Tumsah (Centre) assisted by Field Officer, Yobe, planting a tree at the launch of 2024 Tree Planting Campaign in Damaturu

Chairman, House Committee on Ecological Fund. (middle) flanked by two members of the Committee listening to briefing by NAGGW staff during their interactive session with NAGGW earlier this year

Group photograph of participants at the Northwest Stakeholders' Forum in Kano

GROASIS WATER BOXX
(contd. from page 4)

animals to survive. Dry ecosystems are the most susceptible to desertification, and according to GreenFacts, 10 to 20% of dry lands are already degraded. This ongoing desertification threatens the world's poorest populations as well as the prospects of poverty reduction.

Utilising Groasis Technology, experts say, will support NAGGW's effort in halting land degradation, resolving food insecurity, addressing poverty, preventing migration, and result in improved effectiveness. It will also increase efficiency of the Agency's activities in the establishment of shelter belts, wood lots, orchards and institutional planting, social forestry, farm forestry, marketable gardens and large-scale restoration of degraded land.

CAPACITY TRAINING FOR WETLAND FARMERS' COOP

National Agency for the Great Green Wall has conducted a three-day Capacity Training on Pilot Cattle Ranching, Fodder Farming and Orchard Planting at Gajamo Community in Dumsai Ward, Nguru Local Government Area of Yobe State.

The programme is to facilitate the building and strengthening of community organisations for collective action, extending technologies and knowledge to promote sound resources management to develop enterprise management skills that will improve rural livelihood. It is also to teach farmers modern agricultural practices that will help yield better crops and revenue.

Participants were taken through a practical onsite training with various demonstration on drip irrigation and halfmoon planting method. The were also enlightened on animal healthcare and fattening, and urged to work together for peaceful coexistence between farmers and herders.

Presentation of certificates to participants

Dr Mahmud demonstrating to participants how to check the health of livestock

Demonstration of half moon method of planting

Group Photograph of participants and NAGGW staff

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM (NORTH-EAST)

National Agency for the Great Green Wall Organised and coordinated the Northeast regional stakeholder's forum in Kano. The two-day meeting, was held on the 18th and 19th December, 2023 in Kano Operational Office, KOO, Kano State.

The forum which was attended by key stakeholders from Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, and Yobe states, also attracted other participants from across governmental organisations and NGOs, CBOs, Community leaders, Women Leaders, and the media, for meaningful engagement and support in sustainability.

Deliberations focused on the critical issues of land degradation and desertification in Nigeria's frontline states.

(Above) Dr Gushit presenting a paper to participants

Group photograph of participants at the North-East Stakeholders' Forum

Participants during the lecture

ADOPTION OF HALF MOON /ZAI PITS IMPROVING WATER RETENTION CAPACITY AND SOIL FERTILITY OF DEGRADED LANDS

The dry lands of Northern Nigeria are subject to forest and vegetation loss, land degradation and desertification, driven by a combination of climate change and unsustainable land use. These are interlinked with many challenges in the region such as poverty, migration, conflict, poor agricultural yields, and lack of recognition of women's rights and roles. Addressing these multiple challenges through nature-based solutions that target sustainable management of the region's ecosystems can reduce carbon emissions, promote sustainable livelihoods; and help the country as a whole to develop a climate resilient national economy.

Following the mandate of the Agency to combat the challenges of desertification and alleviate poverty in rural areas of the eleven (11) frontline States of Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Adamawa, Yobe and Borno, NAGGW is in the front role putting in place various measures and mechanisms that will ensure containment and reversal of the ravaging impact and challenges of desertification, especially in the Northern region of Nigeria. To this regard, the Agency constructed Half-moon/Zai pits as a technique to collect water and make moisture

Aerial view of Half-moon/Zai pits

available for vegetation for a longer time in the year 2023. This technique is widely used for large restoration of degraded landscape to improve soil structure and fertility. It can also be used for agro-forestry purpose where farmers can cultivate their crops within the cavity of the moon created, while the trees thrive from the suitability of the created micro vegetation of the half-moon.

The construction process involves manual labour using basic farming tools/equipment that encourages community participation and enlightenment while creating sources of income for their families.

OBJECTIVE
The main goal of water harvesting is to collect water and make moisture available for vegetation for a longer time. However, the introduction of the half-moon technique in the restoration of degraded lands in NAGGW Frontline States has the following additional advantages:

- Restoration of degraded lands through improvement of soil texture;
- Improvement of soil water

DG/CEO teaching NAGGW Management Staff the Half-moon/Zai pits

A Wall of Green to Halt the Desert
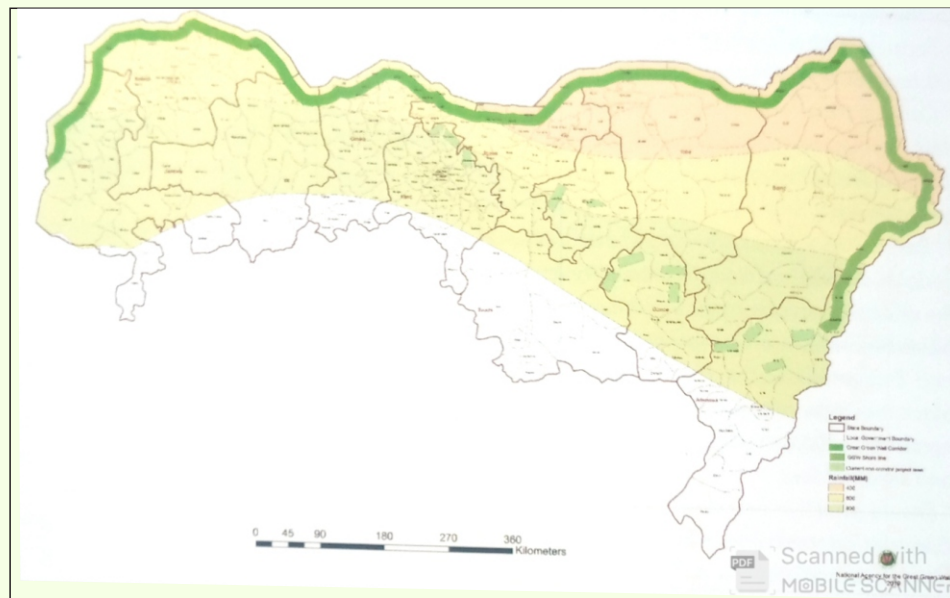
By Pauline Sule

The Northern states of Nigeria, endowed with expansive arable land that were vital agricultural resources, have lost their past glory to the devastating effects of desertification, a degradation process which turns dry lands into deserts.

Desertification affects the eleven frontline states of Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Bauchi, Gombe and Adamawa, Yobe and Borno which are at the southern fringes of the Sahara desert. Its devastating impact unleashes socio-economic problems that threaten over 40 million people spread over the states. Other factors like the adverse effects of climate change, poor land use practices, overgrazing,

SALEH ABUBAKAR, MFR,
DG/CEO,
National Agency for the Great Green Wall

limited to the north. Unpredictable rainfall, shorter rainy seasons, longer dry seasons and dwindling harvests in

NAGGW's 15km deep wall of drought resistant trees stretches the 1,500 km belt across 11 front line states between Arewa Local Government Area in Kebbi State and Abadam Local Government Area in Borno State that comprise Nigeria's segment of the PanAfrican Green Wall.

destruction of arable land through bush burning, and inordinate felling of trees for firewood combine to worsen an already grave situation. These have led to loss of agricultural productivity which is making the belt increasingly unsuitable for human and animal habitation.

But desertification is no longer

Benue, Nasarawa, Niger, Kaduna, Kogi, Kwara, Taraba and Plateau states, herald the imminent onslaught of the relentless desert. Further South in the country, uncontrolled logging, pressure on vegetation occasioned by urbanisation and rapid population growth further accelerate desertification. Studies show that

Nigeria loses about 350,000 hectares of land every year to the southward advance of the desert.

Nigeria was not alone in the quest to find a solution to the problem. Eleven African countries whose territories are all threatened by the expanding desert also faced the same problem. These include Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea The knotty multinational problem remained a dilemma that defied practical solution for decades until 2007 when the African Union endorsed President Obasanjo's Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative. The objective of this pragmatic initiative is for participating countries to team up and plant a belt of drought resistant trees across the continent, all the way from Senegal in the west to Eritrea in the east. Once completed, the Great Green Wall will be the largest forest plantation on earth.

Nigeria, which had launched the Great Green Wall Programme 2 years earlier (in 2005) commenced effective implementation in 2013. Domestication of the Great Green Wall initiative followed in 2015 with the establishment of the National Agency for the Great Green Wall, NAGGW. At inception, the agency was charged with the responsibility of "transforming Nigerian dry lands".

The core mandate of the Agency is to combat desertification and land degradation. Others include addressing food security, natural resources conservation, poverty alleviation, employment generation, livelihood enhancement and capacity development of affected communities in the eleven frontline states to improve their resilience to the impacts of climate change.

With that, the agency embarked

on its effort to grow a 15-kilometre deep wall of drought resistant trees across the 1,500 kilometres of land between Arewa Local Government Area in Kebbi State and Abadam Local Government Area in Borno State that comprise Nigeria's segment of the Green Wall. This, it is hoped, will halt the southward spread of the desert. Though many view this as a lofty dream that would be impossible to translate into reality, NAGGW has continued to pursue its realisation with singular determination

The year, 2024 marks the ninth year of the Agency's establishment, which is ample time to enquire how the NAGGW is faring in the implementation of its objectives. Has the project remained an unrealistic dream or have its programmes made any positive impacts on the affected communities in the 11 frontline states?

In pursuit of its main objective, the Agency initiated various programmes to address afforestation and reforestation. It also provided alternative sources of cooking and energy use. Considerable progress was made in adapting to and mitigating the impact of emerging climate change risks in the frontline states by sequestering carbon dioxide (CO_2) in shelterbelts, woodlots, orchards, Gum Arabic (acacia), and indigenous tree plantations, as well as through social forestry, farm forestry,

NAGGW drought resistant trees making the dry lands bloom

institutional planting, and large scale restoration of forest lands. Other areas of direct intervention include provision and empowerment of women and the vulnerable people living within and near the GGW corridor as apparent in the summary below.

In nine years of operation, NAGGW's Restoration and Land Management Programme produced 37,251,179 tree seedlings and reclaimed over 12,000 hectares of degraded land. Over 10,000 seedlings have been distributed to farmers as trees on farms.

The period further witnessed the construction of 424.6 kilometres of rural feeder roads and 71 community plant nurseries as well as five Skill Acquisition Centres, which are all part of the agency's Rural Infrastructure Development

programme. NAGGW further procured and distributed 16 off-road motorcycles for the prevention and prohibition of tree felling.

The programme has turned out to be a massive job spinner that provides gainful employment. 210,709 youths and women were engaged in direct tree planting and other activities. In addition, its Capacity Building/Development Activities have trained 1,367 rural community people including Women and Youths in off-land livelihood activities. It also trained 275 farmers on Climate Smart Agriculture in Dryland regions.

The agency also constructed 232 Solar Powered Boreholes with accessories; and 365 motorised boreholes as part of its Renewable Energy Technologies Programme. Others include procurement and provision of 4,879 Solar Home Lighting Systems; accessories for irrigation purposes; procurement and installation of 1,917 units of solar street lights at rural markets, boreholes and plant nursery sites; and distribution of 6,300 Super Saver Wood Stoves to families in the affected communities to discourage indiscriminate cutting down of trees for domestic purposes.

In the nine years, it is apparent that NAGGW's wall of green to check the desert is not only a reality but also transforming lives and communities in the 11 frontline states.

A NAGGW nursery: The agency has raised over five million assorted afforestation and agroforestry tree seedlings