



**VOICES FROM
THE LAND:**

**RESTORING
SOILS AND
ENRICHING
LIVES**

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VOICES FROM THE LAND: RESTORING SOILS AND ENRICHING LIVES

The UN Environment Programme has been working hand-in-hand with the Global Environment Facility since 1992. Together we have implemented over 900 projects, helping governments and partners across more than 160 countries to preserve their environments and work towards a sustainable future for all.



SHIFTING TO ACTION ON DEGRADATION



Ibrahim Thiaw
Executive Secretary,
UNCCD

When the UN Convention to Combat Desertification was created at the Rio Earth Summit over 25 years ago, it became the only international convention dedicated to protecting, managing and restoring our land.

The environmental benefits of that work are already well documented, particularly when it comes to the inextricable links with climate change and biodiversity. But this book goes much further by highlighting the impact on the well-being of over three billion people – nearly half the world’s population – who are directly affected by land degradation. Through the remarkable stories of people who decided to fight back rather than become another statistic tracking poverty, conflict or forced migration, it reveals the cost-effective results that can be achieved locally and scaled up globally when the right partners come together.

Throughout the book, the unstinting contributions and complementary nature of the UNCCD’s relationship with the Global Environment Facility, the UN Environment Programme and other key partners are clear. Not only in terms of the investment, technical and political expertise that they bring to these stories and many others besides, but also in terms of the convening power that nurtures wider partnerships capable of sharing and focusing their combined knowledge and experience through an international network of governments, scientists, businesses and citizens.

The individual and cumulative impact of these stories provides a tantalizing insight into how much is possible. From smallholders like Khatmah who are working with IUCN to restore traditional rangeland management in Jordan and Egypt, to tea growers like Thanh who are working with the Rainforest Alliance to restore natural soil fertility in Vietnam, China, India and Sri Lanka, it's clear that when we invest in the stewardship of our land, we automatically create some incredible opportunities for much wider sustainable development.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to these stories and to the thousands of other success stories around the world, which illustrate the shift from planning for a better world to taking action that will make it a reality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized, overlapping loops and lines, positioned above a horizontal line.

Ibrahim Thiaw

JOINT FOREWORD FROM GEF & THE UN ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



Inger Andersen
Executive Director,
UNEP

As vital to our existence as air or water, land is one of our greatest shared assets – and degradation of that land one of our most pressing common challenges.

Unchecked degradation threatens not only human wellbeing but that of the entire planet, contributing to accelerating climate change and loss of biodiversity. Today, with a quarter of our land already degraded and almost half the global population directly affected by land degradation, we are losing this precious resource at a time when we can least afford the social, economic or environmental impacts of this loss.



Naoko Ishii
CEO and Chairperson,
GEF

The continued wellbeing of both people and planet relies on our ability to protect, manage and restore our land more quickly than we degrade it. The stories in this book provide a timely reminder of how local and global collaboration to achieve land degradation neutrality can tip the balance in our favor, offering a foundation on which to build a healthy, equitable and prosperous future.

Too often, environmental narratives focus on what we stand to lose through inaction. Yes, this threat is real, but so are the opportunities. Efforts to restore the two billion hectares of degraded land globally have enormous potential not only to increase productivity, sequester carbon and preserve biodiversity, but to boost employment in rural areas, strengthening our economies and creating opportunities for some of the most vulnerable people in society.

Restoring and sustainably managing degraded land globally could save between USD 4.3 and USD 20.2 trillion annually through the provision of ecosystem services alone.

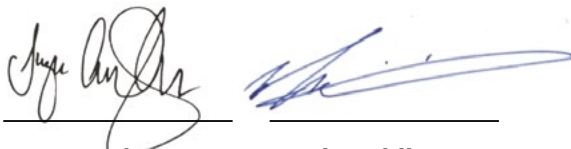
Research consistently shows how well land recovers when the right management practices are introduced, as do the communities whose livelihoods depend on it. But to fully seize the opportunities offered by restoration, we need to build public awareness, support forward-looking policy, back innovation and scale up proven solutions.

All of these aims require effective partnerships to be fully realized – science-policy partnerships to bring together the very best in research, technology, traditional knowledge and legislative approaches, and public-private partnerships to connect that expertise with small and medium-sized enterprises that hold potential solutions.

Facilitating partnerships that build capacities and link local will to global knowledge and resources is central to the work of the Global Environment Facility, the UN Environment Programme and our many collaborators around the world. The challenges we face cannot be addressed by any one actor, but when we combine our resources, knowledge and commitment, the opportunities of restoration become accessible to all.

We hope the stories that follow are a fitting testimony to both our commitment and that of our existing partners in the fight against land degradation, as well as an inspiration to others to redouble these efforts.

Together, a land degradation-neutral world is within our reach.



The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is for Inger Andersen, and the signature on the right is for Naoko Ishii. Both signatures are written over a horizontal line.

Inger Andersen & Naoko Ishii



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