



# 13 OCTOBER ISSUE 3

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## Reporting by Civil Society Organizations to the CRIC

In the CRIC meeting on 12th Oct, 2011, the agenda on format and methodological guidelines for reporting by Civil Society Organizations (2012-13) was discussed at full length. CSOs welcome the recognition given by almost all country parties to them in respect of their tremendous work done on SLM. However, with a pinch of salt, CSOs differ with the unity of voice raised by the country parties in regard to have control on the reporting practice of CSOs prevailing in the UNCCD process. We were surprised to hear a lot of Delegates had put a question mark on the legitimacy of the CSO-reports! They seem to have forgotten the decision of COP 9 which recognizes the role and competence of the civil society in combating desertification. The reporting on PRAIS portal also bears the testimony of the CSOs potential. The voice was strong enough to have a single process of reporting which contained

that CSOs would be directed to send their report to the respective National Focal Points (NFPs) and NFPs would consolidate the contributions of the CSOs in the format of reporting and a single report would be coming from the NFP to the Secretariat. Exceptions were Argentina, EU and the Secretariat who advocated on separate reporting by the CSOs which could be a supplementary to the reporting made by the NFP.

Why CSOs differ with the strong proposition of the Parties to have a single process of reporting discarding the existing one is to be understood on two aspects (1) the dynamics of working relationship of CSOs with their respective country parties and (2) specifics of the reporting which are available with the existing template. Some delegates even went extra mile in saying that CSOs projects are mainly financed by the Government

and Government should have the control on the reporting so that a harmony could be maintained. CSOs do implement their project under the Government finance and also directly under international finance. The research findings emanated from the projects other than financed by the Government may be a subject for scrutiny by the Government authorities. The process available with the Government to scrutinize the reporting of the CSOs is so routine and ceremonial that the essence of strategy and approaches would lose their luster when it would be brought under the attention of the persons who matter. If we categorically address the template earlier used for CSO reporting we see that there are some areas which deserve particular mention with reference to the project i.e. the technology, synergy with traditional practices, adaptation and resilience of the community. Can it be possible to capture the utilization of the local resources to its fullest extent in the implementation which should be the real reflection of the participatory approach? The dichotomy prevailing in the governmental process may lead to a cynical decision in regard to inclusion and exclusion of the best practices. Let

## IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Reporting by Civil Society Organizations to the CRIC
- 2 Africa lands up for grab

the validation takes place at the UNCCD level through built-in Knowledge Management System and thereafter the Secretariat decides on reporting to the COP. It may not be out of place to mention here that in the assimilation process, NFP may also inadvertently skip some of the references which should be reflected in the reporting to understand the efficacy of the implementation, its scaling up process and potential for replication. When SLM is implemented on the ground in a participatory mode, the perception developed and the learning achieved cannot be transmitted with its whole essence in the process of compilation of varied experiences.

We do strongly favour to have separate format and methodological guidelines what we have experienced in the PRAIS portal. While submitting the best practices in the PRAIS portal, CSOs can mark a copy to the NFP to facilitate a further dialogue on it. However, direct reporting of CSOs to Secretariat about their works is to be upheld by all means and this would be treated as supplementary to the national reports with the aim of widening the knowledge base of the CRIC.

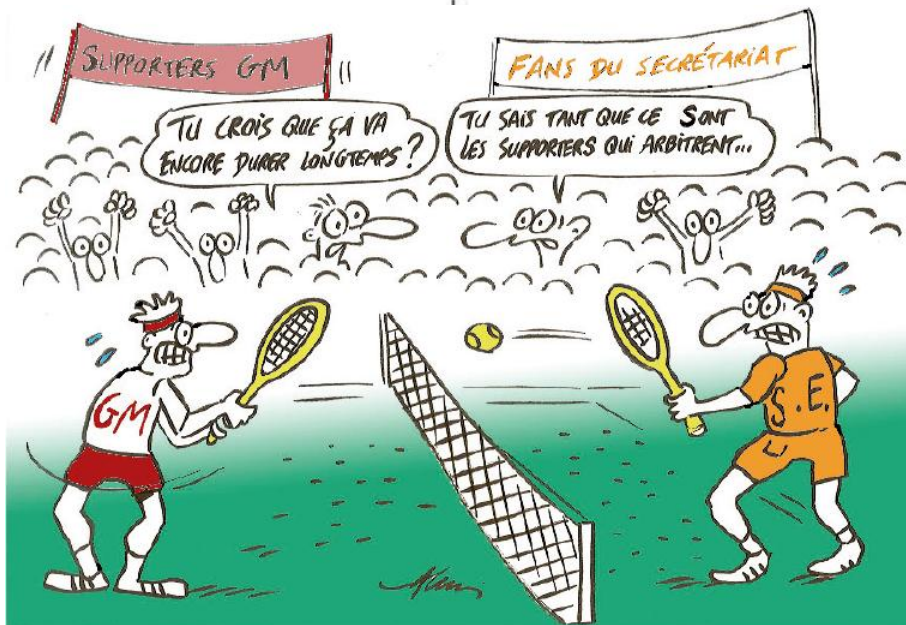
## Africa lands up for grab

While access to fertile land and water for food cultivation and livelihoods security is threatened by desertification, drought and climate change in African communities, grabbing of community farmlands by foreign investors and corporations for cultivation of non-edible crops is on the increase across Africa. The land grabs has set a direct competition between access to land for food cultivation by local communities on one hand, and access to land by foreign investors for cultivation of agro fuels for export.

This land grabs have been taking place against the backdrop of rising food prices and food crisis in African communities.

The farmlands are being acquired for fuel crops, in some cases without the consent of the local communities and often without a full assessment of the impact on the local environment.

Many of the investors are keen to vaunt the social and development benefits of their business, offering employment and the promise of development to the



**The institutional confrontation that has lasted for years between the GM and Secretariat, encouraged by their separate locations and distinct governance, generates costs and inefficiencies that have made a laughing stock of UNCCD institutions internationally.**

communities. Unfortunately, these arguments overlooked the other side of the story and leave many question unanswered. Is the push for agro fuel production in the interest of developing countries like Africa or are the real beneficiaries Northern Industrialised countries? Will the production of agro fuels actually provide more jobs and enhance economic development at the community level? Will it address the issue of food insecurity plaguing the poor African communities? What are the social and environmental costs of agro fuel production to host communities? Who stands to benefit from the entire process and who will be most impacted?

These issues need to be addressed objectively. African countries must not accept these promises from the land grabbers without subjecting them to empirical analysis.

Already, concerns about the social and environmental impacts about the land grabbing have caused a back slash in a number of countries such as in Tanzania and Swaziland. Some companies have also withdrawn their investments. But elsewhere, the enthusiasm for agro fuels continues unchecked.

Recommendation for action:

- Put a brake on land grabbing to save poor communities from food insecurity and food crisis

- Full environmental and social impacts assessments of land use changes before any land lease or land lease take place and must be carried out with full participation of local communities

- CSOs are meeting at 9:00 am and 6:00 pm in CSO Meeting Room (MET-08)
- The first Open Dialogue Session will be held from 10am to 1pm on Friday Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>



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