



World Desertification Day 2023

For Prelims: [World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought](#), [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#), [Drought](#), Gender Action Plan

For Mains: Drought and Desertification: Causes & Impact on Women, [Gender Equality](#)

Why in News?

[World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought](#) is observed every year on the 17th of June.

- The **theme for this year is “Her Land. Her Rights”** which focuses on women’s land rights, essential for achieving the interconnected global goals of [gender equality](#) and [land degradation neutrality by 2030](#) and contributing to the advancement of several other [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#).

What are the Highlights of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought?

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- **Background:**
 - Desertification, along with climate change and the loss of biodiversity, were **identified as the greatest challenges to sustainable development during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit**.
 - Two years later, in 1994, the UN General Assembly established the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#), the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management and

declared 17 June "**World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**".

- Later on, in 2007, the [UN General Assembly](#) declared **2010-2020 the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the fight against Desertification** to mobilise global action to fight land degradation, led again by the UNCCD Secretariat.

▪ **Issues Addressed:**

- Women's control over land is crucial. However, **they often lack rights and face barriers worldwide**. This limits their well-being and prosperity, especially when land degradation and water scarcity occur.
 - Investing in **women's land access is an investment in their future** and the future of humanity.
- Desertification, land degradation and [drought](#) disproportionately impact women and girls, as they often **do not have access to and control of land resources**. They are most **affected by reduced agricultural yields and increased [water scarcity](#)**.
- In most countries, **women have unequal and limited access and control to land**. In many regions, **they remain subject to discriminatory laws and practices** that impede their right to inherit, as well as their access to services and resources.

▪ **Gender Equality: An Unfinished Business:**

- According to UNCCD's landmark study "**The Differentiated Impacts of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought on Women and Men,**" gender equality remains unfinished business in every part of the world.
 - Today, nearly half of the global agricultural workforce is female - yet **less than one in five landholders worldwide are women**.
- **Women's rights to inherit their husband's property continue to be denied** in over 100 countries under customary, religious, or traditional laws and practices.
- Globally, **women already spend a collective 200 million hours every day collecting water**. In some countries, a single trip to fetch water can take over an hour.

▪ **Initiative Taken & Recommendations:**

- **A Global Campaign:**
 - Together with partners, high-profile personalities and influencers, UNCCD has launched a global campaign to recognize excellence, leadership, and efforts in sustainable land management by women and girls.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Governments can promote laws, policies and practices that end discrimination and secure women's rights to land and resources.
 - Businesses can prioritise women and girls in their investments and facilitate access to finance and technology.
 - Individuals can support women-led initiatives that are restoring land.

What is UNCCD's Gender Action Plan, 2017?

- The gender action plan, 2017 **was adopted during the [Conference of the Parties \(COP23\)](#)**, in Bonn, Germany to incorporate gender equality and women's empowerment in climate change discourse and actions.
- The aim is **to ensure that women can influence climate change decisions and that women and men are represented equally in all aspects** of the [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#), as a way to increase its effectiveness.

What are Desertification and Drought?

▪ **Desertification:**

- **About:**
 - Degradation of land in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas. It is caused primarily by human activities and climatic variations.
- **Causes:**
 - [Climate change](#)
 - Deforestation
 - Overgrazing
 - Unsustainable Agricultural Practices
 - Urbanisation

- **Drought:**
 - **About:**
 - Drought is generally considered as a deficiency in rainfall /precipitation over an extended period, usually a season or more, resulting in a water shortage causing adverse impacts on vegetation, animals, and/or people.
 - **Causes:**
 - Variability in rainfall
 - Deviation in the route of monsoon winds
 - Early withdrawal of the monsoon
 - [Forest fires](#)
 - [Land degradation](#) in addition to Climate change

What are the Related Initiatives to Reduce Desertification?

- **Indian Initiatives:**
 - [Integrated Watershed Management Programme, since 2009-10:](#)
 - It was **launched by the Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development** that aims to restore ecological balance by harnessing, conserving and developing degraded natural resources with the creation of Rural Employment.
 - **Desert Development Programme:**
 - Launched in 1995 by the Ministry of Rural Development to minimise the adverse effect of drought and to rejuvenate the natural resource base of the identified desert areas.
 - [National Mission on Green India:](#)
 - It was approved in 2014 and **implemented under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** with the objective of protecting, restoring and enhancing India's diminishing forest cover with a deadline of 10 years.
- **Global Initiatives:**
 - **Bonn Challenge:**
 - The [Bonn Challenge](#) is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's **deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.**
 - At the [UNFCCC Conference of the Parties \(COP\) 2015](#) in Paris, India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge pledge to bring into restoration 21 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by the year 2030.
 - The target **has now been revised to restore 26 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2030.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. Consider the following pairs: (2014)

	Programme/Project	Ministry
1.	Drought-Prone Area	Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
2.	Desert Development Programme	Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change
3.	National Watershed Project Development for Rainfed Areas	Ministry of Rural Development

Which of the above pairs is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 3 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3

(d) None

Ans: (d)

Mains

Q. The process of desertification does not have climate boundaries. Justify with examples. **(2020)**

Q. In what way micro-watershed development projects help in water conservation in drought-prone and semi-arid regions of India? **(2016)**

Q. “Empowering women is the key to control population growth”. Discuss. **(2019)**

Source: UNCCD

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtiias.com/printpdf/world-desertification-day-2023>

