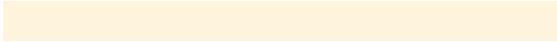


# Confronting Drought in Africa's Drylands





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## Opportunities for Enhancing Resilience

Raffaello Cervigni and Michael Morris,  
Editors

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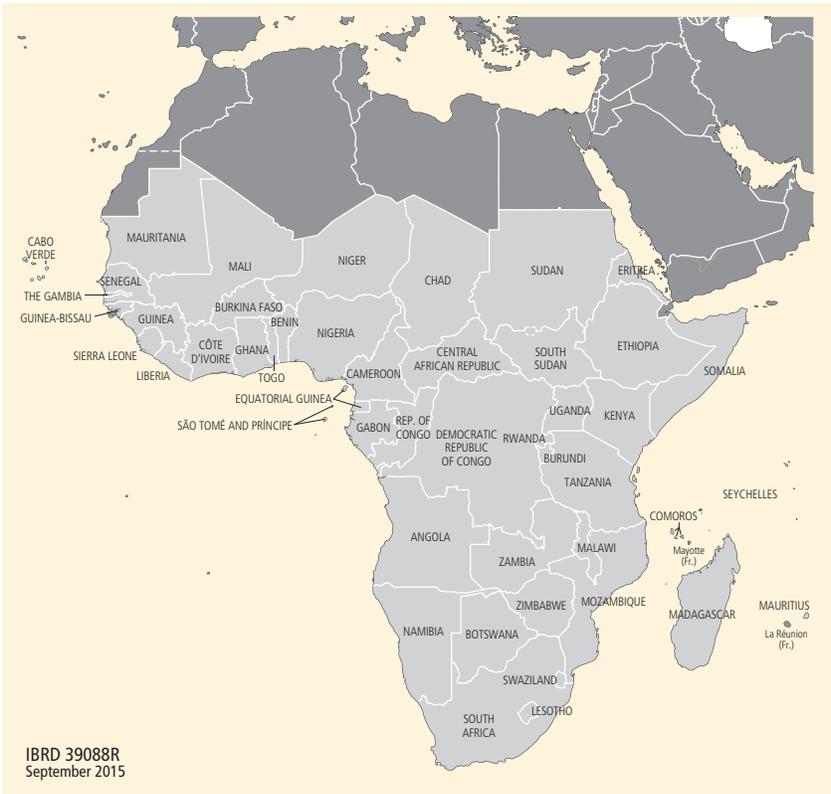
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## Foreword

Drylands—defined here to include arid, semi-arid, and dry subhumid zones—are at the core of Africa’s development challenge. Drylands make up about 43 percent of the continent’s land surface, account for about 75 percent of the area used for agriculture, and are home to about 50 percent of the population, including a disproportionate share of the poor. Due to complex interactions among many different factors, vulnerability in drylands is high and is rising, jeopardizing the long-term livelihood prospects for hundreds of millions of people. Climate change, which is expected to increase the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, will exacerbate this challenge.

Most of the people living in the drylands depend on natural resource-based livelihood activities, such as herding and farming, but the capability of these activities to provide stable and adequate incomes is eroding. Rapid population growth is putting pressure on a deteriorating resource base and creating conditions under which extreme weather events, unexpected spikes in global food and fuel prices, or other exogenous shocks can easily precipitate full-blown humanitarian crises and fuel violent social conflicts. Forced to address urgent short-term needs, many households have resorted to unsustainable practices, resulting in severe land degradation, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss.

African governments and their partners in the international development community stand ready to tackle the challenges confronting drylands, but important questions remain unanswered about how the task should be undertaken. Do dryland environments contain enough resources to generate the food, jobs, and income needed to support sustainable livelihoods for a fast-growing population? If not, can injections of external resources make up the deficit? Or is the carrying capacity of drylands so limited that out-migration should be encouraged?

To answer these questions, the World Bank teamed with a large coalition of partners to prepare this book, which is designed to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about measures to reduce the vulnerability and enhance the resilience

of populations living in drylands. Based on analysis of current and projected future drivers of vulnerability and resilience, the book identifies promising interventions, quantifies their likely costs and benefits, and describes the policy trade-offs that will need to be addressed when drylands development strategies are devised.

Sustainably developing the drylands and conferring resilience to their inhabitants will require addressing a complex web of economic, social, political, and environmental vulnerabilities. Good adaptive responses have the potential to generate new and better opportunities for many people, cushion the losses for others, and smooth the transition for all. Implementation of these responses will require effective and visionary leadership at all levels, from households to local organizations, national governments, and a coalition of development partners. This work, along with an accompanying series of background books, is intended to contribute to that effort.

*Makhtar Diop*  
Vice President, Africa Region  
The World Bank

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