

With EU-backed forces advancing across Mali, the need for European and other donors to accelerate the development process in Africa's poorest regions appears ever more pressing. For development experts a simple, yet unheralded solution exists - planting trees. United Nations Drylands Ambassador Dennis Garrity said that the planting of trees such as gao, an indigenous form of acacia, had "improved the region's ability to cope with drought shocks", contributing towards more political stability over the past 20 to 30 years. But now the need for resilient measures was becoming increasingly urgent as the drylands struggled to cope with climate change, he added. (...)

While humanitarian crises in the sub-Saharan regions are often linked to ethnic and religious tensions, Garrity said the principle causes were droughts, food insecurity, and poverty. "The pattern for terrorism overlaps perfectly with the drylands. These regions are bottom of the human development index, bottom of the hydrological index", he said. "There is extreme food insecurity in Mali, Niger and the Horn of Africa".

He added it was "perhaps no coincidence" that sub-Saharan literacy levels were also extremely low. He said a lack of education translated into a "lack of ability to cope with change", which in extreme circumstances such as droughts could lead to radicalisation. In some areas of the drylands, the average amount of time a girl or woman has spent in school is under one year. UN reports have found a spatial relationship between higher adult female illiteracy and higher levels of land degradation. (...)

The article:

<http://www.euractiv.com/development-policy/planting-trees-prevent-violence-news-517469>

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World Bank Urges African Agriculture Rethink:

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/03/world-bank-urges-african-agriculture-rethink/>

The Report:

<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRICA/Resources/africa-agribusiness-report-2013.pdf>