

A FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANDCARE

Emily Nyanyukweni Mutota, Gobabeb Training and Research Centre, Namibia

Human-induced activities place enormous pressures on the land worldwide, creating competition and conflict, and suboptimal use of the land. Climate change, loss of biodiversity and land degradation leads to decreasing productivity, food and water shortages, and reduced economic benefits, among others. In order to address these challenges and achieve sustainability goals, the need to change the way global resources are being utilized is crucial. A holistic and integrated community-based approach such as Landcare could be a viable approach to meet this worldwide challenge.

Landcare is about committed people working together on land rehabilitation and restoration projects at the local level, transforming attitudes and stimulating new ideas among land users, generating support and building partnerships between and among local communities, governments and the private sector. Landcare initiatives have grown in a number of countries where success stories of actions on the ground clearly show the wider application of the Landcare approach in resolving many of the world's environmental problems and livelihood challenges. However, the potential of Landcare have not yet been widely exploited on a scale that really matters - as local actions build up towards global progress, there is more scope for unified efforts towards a global Landcare movement.

Following the recommendation given at the International Forum on Soils, Society and Global Change in 2007 in Iceland (<http://www.iisd.ca/YMB/SDFSS/>), an International Year of Landcare should be established. Such a year would bring into focus efforts to build local capacity and share knowledge and experiences between provinces, countries and continents on Landcare. Additionally, holding a year concerned with Landcare would greatly contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the UN environmental conventions and many other sustainability goals.

Our study supports the notion that Landcare offers a robust platform for building a global land ethic and stewardship as foundational elements for a sustainable future. Such a year is ideal to promote the importance of improving the literacy of societies on their relationship with the land. However, establishing an International Year is not a seamless process. It needs to articulate clear goals and strategic objectives. A champion international lead agency is needed to facilitate the process in order to gain support among stakeholders at all levels. Maintaining a diverse body of committed stakeholders will secure the establishment of the year by the United Nations. With those points in place, launching a Year of Landcare will be feasible and ethically, culturally and environmentally desirable.