

Drylands, Desert and Desertification International Conference held between 17th and 20th November, 2014 in Sede Boker at Ben-Gurion University of Negev, Israel.

The international conference on Drylands, Deserts and Desertification (DDD) has emerged as an important global gathering of scientists, practitioners, industry, government and other stakeholders from 60 countries concerned about land degradation in the Drylands and their sustainable use and development.

The 5th DDD conference focussed on *Healthy lands-Healthy People* and considered natural and anthropogenic processes and interactions between Drylands and people around them. The program combined plenary lectures and panels, parallel sessions, workshops, field trips and social events, that provided an opportunity to consider a range of theoretical and practical issues associated with combating desertification and living sustainably in the desert.

The Negev people accept that water is their most scarce yet a precious resource. They employ a variety of technologies to harness the little rainfall that ranges from 250-300mm/year. For instance, the KKL/JNF, the non-governmental organisation responsible for forest management, employs savannization method to plant trees in the desert. Savannization by use of Liman (a method of capturing runoff) improves the soil and increases plant biodiversity. The intent is to create a savannah-like landscape particularly in areas where annual rainfall is less than 250mm; embankments are created along topographical contours to capture surface runoff. By employing such technologies Israel is increasing its tree cover, currently at 5%.

Thus, for case of Kenya, adapting such technologies such as runoffs harvesting could result not only in food security but also improved tree cover particularly in the Drylands, that receive annual rainfall of more than 200mm.

Jane Mutheu Mutune

Tutorial Fellow & PhD Student

Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies, University of Nairobi.