

RETHINKING GOVERNANCE: UNITING GENERATIONS FOR REAL DROUGHT RESILIENCE



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Rethinking Governance for DROUGHT:

In today's shifting climate landscape, can we achieve true drought resilience and sustainable water management through a holistic, intergenerational, and inclusive approach?

Governance has long been a key foundational element of effective land management under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), establishing the groundwork for conservation and resilience [COP16's agenda]. Yet as global challenges grow, new voices especially from younger generations, indigenous communities, and Afro-descendant groups are stepping forward to shape a more inclusive, collaborative approach. These emerging perspectives are essential to rethinking drought resilience and sustainable water management, as seen in models like the Drought Status Interpretation Model (DSiM).

The importance of a more inclusive, intergenerational approach to drought resilience and sustainable water management is underscored by years of investigation during my doctoral research in Ecuador. There, I observed firsthand how local communities, and their traditional knowledge have reshaped our understanding of drought resilience, offering practical, community-driven solutions that can now inform global strategies. This experience highlighted the need for a new governance model—one that moves beyond top-down frameworks to embrace a more horizontal and collaborative approach, ensuring that all voices, especially those of marginalized groups, are heard and that solutions are both adaptable and sustainable across diverse local contexts.

Building on my research at Wageningen University (WUR), and extensive experience across Latin America, including as a UNCCD CLP for the region, I've seen firsthand the impact of community-driven initiatives and the crucial role of indigenous and Afro-descendant knowledge in tackling climate challenges. These insights have shaped a new approach that combines traditional wisdom with modern frameworks like the Drought Status Interpretation Model (DSiM). In regions of South America, where communities face high vulnerability to climate impacts, this collaborative, intergenerational model can strengthen resilience and foster more effective responses to drought and land degradation. This approach directly aligns with and advances the UNCCD's long-term goals for sustainable land management and climate resilience.

My Thoughts on Reshaping Governance in the Face of a New Era of Drought and Climate Change Uncertainties

By situating drought management within the DSiM framework, governance becomes part of a larger, more collaborative approach that values diverse perspectives and experiences. Indigenous and Afro-descendant youth, alongside established community leaders, bring unique insights and traditions to the table, helping to reframe drought resilience as a shared endeavor. This blend of new and traditional knowledge fosters an intergenerational governance model that is less

hierarchical, encouraging a two-way flow of insights between seasoned experts and younger generations.

➤ **Horizontal Collaboration and Cultural Exchange**

The DSiM model promotes horizontal, inclusive governance by integrating indigenous, Afro-descendant, and youth voices, alongside the wisdom of older generations. This collaboration ensures solutions are rooted in local realities and strengthen resilience, reshaping governance to combat desertification and drought in the face of climate uncertainties.

➤ **Data-Driven Drought Management and Intergenerational Learning**

Real-time environmental data is central to the DSiM framework, enabling adaptive decision-making in drought management. By combining the technological skills of youth with the local knowledge of older generations, this model ensures culturally relevant and scientifically sound solutions. Adequate funding is necessary to implement these systems, with early warning systems tailored to each country's capacity and resources.

➤ **Empowering Community Engagement for Collective Resilience**

True drought resilience comes from inclusive, community-driven engagement. The DSiM framework values the ecological and cultural insights of indigenous, Afro-descendant, and youth leaders, supported by elders, to shape policies that reflect collective responsibility. By fostering intergenerational collaboration and respecting local dynamics, the model strengthens local capacity and empowers communities to lead in drought management, contributing to effective governance in the fight against desertification

Finally, As climate challenges intensify, the need for adaptive and inclusive governance becomes more urgent. Frameworks like the Drought Status Interpretation Model (DSiM) showcase the value of rethinking governance as a collaborative, intergenerational practice. This model fosters a spirit of partnership, empowering both youth leaders and traditional communities to play an active role alongside policymakers and scientists.

This vision aligns directly with the new agreement on Article 8J of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which underscores the crucial role of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge in environmental governance. By promoting horizontal collaboration, cultural exchange, data-driven decision-making, and inclusive community participation, the DSiM model presents a pathway for sustainable water management that integrates traditional wisdom with modern scientific approaches.

Join the global encounter at #UNCCDCOPI6 to explore how inclusive, intergenerational models can support the UNCCD's objectives, helping create a resilient and sustainable future for both communities and ecosystems around the world.