

MID-TERM EVALUATION

**of the
UNEP/FAO/GEF Project
“*Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA)*”**

(GEF Project # 1329)

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|-----------|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| BIL | Band Interleaved by Line (a GIS data format) |
| CACILM | Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management |
| CD | Capacity Development |
| CGIAR | Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research |
| CISF | Country Investment Strategic Framework |
| COP | Conference of Parties |
| CRIC | Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (UNCCD) |
| CST | Committee on Science and Technologies |
| DEWA | Division of Early Warning and Assessment |
| DGEF | Division of GEF Coordination (UNEP) |
| DPSIR | Driving forces, Pressures, States, Impacts, Responses |
| EA | Executing Agency (of a GEF Project) |
| ESRI/GRID | A raster GIS file format |
| EU | European Union |
| EOU | Evaluation and Oversight Unit (UNEP) |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| FSP | Full Size Project |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| GEFSEC | Global Environment Facility Secretariat |
| GEO | Global Environment Outlook |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| GLADA | Global Land Degradation Assessment for Drylands |
| GLASOD | Global Assessment of Human-Induced Soil Degradation |
| GM | Global Mechanism (subsidiary body of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) |
| GNU | Gnu's Not Unix (a free operating system upward-compatible with Unix) |
| IA | Implementing Agency (of the GEF) |
| ICARDA | International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas |
| ICRISAT | International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics |
| IIASA | International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis |
| ISRIC | International Soil Reference and Information Centre |
| JRC | Joint Research Centre |
| LADA | Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands |
| LUS | Land Use System |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goal |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MSP | Medium Size Project |
| MTE | Mid-Term Evaluation |
| NAP | National Action Plan |
| NCSA | National Capacity Self-Assessment |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| NDVI | Normalized Difference Vegetation Index |
| OGC | Open Geospatial Consortium |
| OP | Operational Programme |
| OSS | Observatoire du Sahara et du Sahel |
| PBEE | Evaluation Service (of the FAO) |
| PDF-A/B | Project Development Financing – bloc A/B |
| PIR | Project Implementation Review |
| PPG | Project Preparation Grant |
| PSC | Project Steering Committee |
| RAF | Resource Allocation Framework |
| RAP | Regional Action Programme |
| RBM | Result-Based Management |
| SDI | Spatial Data Infrastructure |
| SLM | Sustainable Land Management |
| SRAP | Sub-Regional Action Programme |
| SSA | Sub-Sahara Africa |

| | |
|-------|--|
| STAP | Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel |
| SWOT | Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNCBD | United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| US\$ | United States Dollar |
| WOCAT | World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies |
| WSSD | World Summit on Sustainable Development |

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DISCLAIMER

This report is the work of independent consultants and does not necessarily represent the views, or policy, or intentions of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project “*Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA)*” is a global initiative with several actors involved in the implementation. The project involves UNEP as the implementing agency, FAO as the executing agency, international organizations, universities, research centres and six countries through their national institutions: Argentina, China, Cuba, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia. The project has a total budget of US\$ 16.58M that is financed by a GEF contribution of US\$ 7.725M and by co-financing commitments of US\$ 7.98M. The project was approved by GEF on December 29, 2005, started on May 1, 2006 and the expected completion date is May 2010.

The project strategy is to help to overcome current policy and institutional barriers to sustainable land use in dryland zones that are occasioned by the lack of quality information on the extent and severity of dryland degradation. The project has two principal objectives: (i) develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scales; and (ii) build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices. These two objectives will be realized through the following four expected outcomes: (1) an improved needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated; (2) a map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with a special emphasis on areas at greatest risk; (3) detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries; and (4) A proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action.

This Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) has been initiated by UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit (EOU) in cooperation with the Evaluation Service of FAO (PBEE). The objective of the evaluation was to assess operational aspects, such as project management and implementation of activities and also the level of progress towards the achievement of objectives. It provides an in-depth reflection of project progress, priority actions for the last phase of the project and recommendations for the remaining period of the project and other future similar initiatives.

This MTE is based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with key project informants and project staffs including a one-week mission to Mendoza, Argentina to participate in a LADA training workshop and one-week in Rome, Italy and Tunis, Tunisia. The methodology included the development of an evaluation matrix to guide the entire data gathering and analysis process. The findings were triangulated with the use of multiple sources of information when possible. The evaluation report is structured around the GEF five evaluation criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results/Impacts and Sustainability.

The main findings of this mid-term evaluation are:

The overall progress of the LADA project is satisfactory. The project was developed on the premises that uncertainties exist about the seriousness and extent of land degradation and that so far the policy responses remain undirected by quality assessments. LADA is addressing these priorities by developing standardised and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment. Today the project is highly relevant within the context of the UNCCD and of the GEF as a financial instrument to implement the convention. GEF is looking into LADA results to design an assessment methodology supporting future investment decisions of GEF-5 under the land degradation focal area. The project is also highly relevant for the pilot countries, which all contain dryland areas. These 6 countries have NAPs and produced national reports as part of their obligations under the UNCCD; the LADA methodology provides a framework to better assess land degradation. In addition, several initiatives have already solicited some support from LADA such as the CACILM programme in Central Asia, the TerrAfrica programme and several countries such as Mexico, Somalia and Pakistan.

The main achievements include a set of land degradation assessment guidelines, indicators, and information systems to collect and analyze data; a global land degradation assessment (GLADA) based on an NDVI study - though the results are being reviewed to increase the accuracy; 6 national land use system maps - including the identification of “hot-spots” and “bright-spots”; and, local assessments in these “hot and

bright” spots - started in each country and, which should be finalized in 2009. However, the project contribution to capacity development is only moderately satisfactory. It focuses mainly on training of stakeholders – including training of trainers. It does not focus enough on institutional capacity and the enabling environment in the six pilot countries; in order to bring a comprehensive approach to building national capacity for land degradation assessment. There is a risk that the adoption of this methodology by countries may be faced by weak enabling environments; limiting its long-term impact in the pilot countries.

The project is well managed following FAO and UNDP/GEF procedures for project implementation. When needed the project management team applies an adaptive management approach to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design. Overall the project has been cost-effective when one considers that the project has spent so far US\$ 2.75M (39%) from the GEF grant against the current achievements. The commitments from partners to co-finance LADA are demonstrated by their actual contributions to the implementation of LADA. However, there is a need for better reporting these contributions. The participation of stakeholders in the project is good. However, the project decision-making process is marginally satisfactory. With only two meetings of the steering committee, the project management team makes most decisions pertaining to the implementation of LADA. As a result, it prevents the development of a strong ownership of the project by stakeholders. Nevertheless, it is an ambitious project and despite its good progress it could run out of time if the ending date is maintained as is. It is the Evaluation Team’s view that the allocated time may not be sufficient and an early closure could jeopardize the long-term sustainability of results if outcome 4 is not fully achieved.

The project achievements should lead to the achievement of its long-term objectives. The project is developing strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scale. These strategies, methods and tools are implemented in six pilot countries and a strategy will be developed for replicating these results in other countries with similar conditions. In addition, LADA should have an impact on the local environment, poverty and other socio-economic issues. The methodology includes the involvement of local communities to better understand the causes and drivers of land degradation and to identify the possible responses to land degradation. Finally, the long-term sustainability of LADA is really through the use of this methodology by other organizations and countries (replicability) in the future. A scientifically robust methodology to assess land degradation in dryland eco-zones is being finalized and under component #4, actions will take place for dissemination and replication of the LADA results worldwide through UNCCD, GM, GEF and countries. However, the risk exists that these actions are not fully implemented before the closure of LADA, which could limit the scaling-up and replication of LADA results and by extension its success.

Few lessons were identified:

- A participatory decision-making process for a global project bears higher costs than a typical country-based project. However, it is needed to maximize the ownership of project achievements by stakeholders.
- A good design provides project managers with a good blueprint instruments to guide the implementation.
- A good project monitoring system needs to balance the need for a comprehensive monitoring approach with a monitoring approach that is focusing on what is necessary to monitor and feasible in the project’s context (limited resources).
- A global project intervening in multiple countries faces a multi-cultural environment and language issues to communicate among the team members. It is time consuming, cumbersome at times and costly to translate at any steps of the way; however, it is important that these aspects are taken into account in the design of such projects.
- When developing products with partners such as assessments, methodologies and tools to be used globally, any project needs to be cautious in the use of initial results. Partners should be reminded that results belong to the project and quality control is key before these types of results can be applied/used consistently across countries to ensure consistency and validity of these results.

Recommendations for the Remaining Period of the Project are:

1. It is recommended that, subject to a review of the financial status of the project and a review of the remaining activities, the project should be extended until the end of 2010 to allow time to fully

complete activities and consolidate outputs. A new work-plan and budget will have to be prepared and the contract of the Technical Advisor will have to be extended until the new closing date to allow effective management of this phase.

2. It is recommended to review the period remaining and produce a detailed work plan with milestones and targets for project completion. The work plan should specify the approach for (a) the finalization and packaging of LADA's products and how to make the LADA results public and accessible; (b) the implementation of the fourth component of the project to ensure that a proper strategy for the long-term sustainability of LADA is put in place, including actions that will contribute directly to the uptake and scaling-up of LADA results; and (c) the development of an exit plan for ending the project.
3. It is recommended that project management contact the LADA partners and obtain updated figures on co-financing from each organization. A target date for documenting the amount of co-financing is suggested to be the next PIR 2009 (end of June 2009).
4. It is recommended to monitor closely the progress made in pilot countries and provide the support needed to achieve the expected results at the participating country level.
5. The project might consider undertaking additional analyses to identify the capacity gaps of how land is managed and how land degradation is controlled in each country; focusing particularly on identifying existing barriers such as lack of resources, inadequate policies and laws, etc.
6. It is recommended that the global map representing a time-series analysis of satellite measurements of vegetation be finalized and the GLADA component brought to completion as soon as possible, including making the FAO position publicly known.
7. It is recommended that the project emphasize a decision-making process that is, as far as possible, transparent and participatory to increase the ownership of the project results in pilot countries and to maximize the long-term sustainability of LADA results.
8. It is recommended that the training programme, to be delivered through regional centres worldwide, be institutionalized as much as possible within these institutions.
9. It is recommended to improve the LADA web site functionality by fixing some links; integrating the user registration of the LADA web site with the user registration of the GeoNetwork web site; improving the accessibility of the web site for disabled and blind people; improving the information access on the project through text to speech software; and setting-up a project BLOG.
10. It is recommended to improve the GeoNetwork by giving greater access to the GeoNetwork map server; reviewing and improving the GeoNetwork application performance in order to permit a speedier access to LADA project maps and other maps managed by the system; using standard URL in order to allow everyone to access LADA project maps; and other few suggestions.
11. It is recommended to improve the management and dissemination of the information produced by the project by dedicating a full time web developer to manage the LADA web site and its community of users; and looking into the implementation of a virtual training centre in order to promote the LADA approach, provide basic training in using the LADA methodology and provide online technical assistance.
12. It is recommended that the project support the development of follow up projects through MSPs and FSPs in the six pilot countries, in the context of the "*Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention (2008-2018)*", adopted by the Parties to the UNCCD.
13. It is recommended that the direct costs for the terminal evaluation of LADA should be allocated by the project within the project budget.

1. INTRODUCTION

1. This report presents the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the UNEP/FAO/GEF Project “*Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) - GEF Project #1329*”. This mid-term evaluation was performed by two independent Consultants Mr. Jean-Joseph Bellamy (Lead Evaluator) and Mr. Michele Ieradi (Supporting Evaluator) on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO).

2. Land degradation is defined in the project document as “*The reduction in the capacity of the land to perform ecosystem functions and services that support society and development*”. Land degradation has been recognised as a global problem associated with desertification and loss of biological diversity in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid zones (commonly called ‘drylands’). Land degradation probably affects about 2.6 billion people in more than a hundred countries and over 33 percent of the Earth’s land surface. Around 73 percent of rangelands in drylands are currently being degraded, together with 47 percent of marginal rain-fed croplands and a significant percentage of irrigated croplands.

3. International responses to land degradation have included the adoption of the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in 1994. Land degradation was reaffirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002 as one of the major global environmental and sustainable development challenges of the 21st Century. The Summit called on the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) to designate land degradation as a new focal area to support the implementation of the UNCCD. This proposal was embodied in the Beijing Declaration of the Second GEF Assembly and the GEF launched OP15 on Sustainable Land Management in July 2003 to make operational the designation of land degradation as a focal area.

4. Yet land degradation (and its associated term ‘desertification’) is a complex and contested topic. Different institutional actors differ in their understanding of the causes, degree, distribution and effects of land degradation. While long associated with drylands, land degradation is considered by many observers to be highly variable, discontinuous, arising from different causes and affecting people differentially according to their economic, social and political circumstances. Permanent loss of service provision by the land and irreversible biophysical change are implied. However, estimates as to the extent and impact of land degradation are conflicting.

5. This is the context within which the LADA project was designed. It supports the objectives of the three Rio conventions (climate change, biodiversity and land degradation), through the sustainable use of biodiversity and land resources. Furthermore, in structuring the project in six major world regions representing particular and specific challenges to land degradation, the up-scaling objectives of the Conventions should be met. LADA is to contribute to a better understanding of land degradation by developing standardised and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment, including the assessment of drivers and impacts on dryland biodiversity as well as on human wellbeing. ‘Best practice’ guidelines are being developed and the results widely disseminated.

6. This evaluation report includes seven chapters. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the project; chapter 3 briefly describes the objective, scope, methodology, evaluation users and limitations of the evaluation; chapter 4 presents the findings of the evaluation. Conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations are presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively and relevant appendices are found at the back end of the report.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

7. The project “*Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA)*” is a global initiative supported by GEF as the main donor of the project. Several actors are involved in the implementation. This includes UNEP as the implementing agency, FAO as the executing agency and other international organizations, universities, research centres and other projects. Six countries participate in the project with their national institutions: Argentina, China, Cuba, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia. The project has a total budget of US\$ 16.58M that are financed by a GEF contribution of US\$ 7.725M (Including US\$ 0.025M for PDF-A and 0.70M for PDF-B) and by co-financing commitments of US\$ 7.98M; including FAO for US\$ 2.00M, UNEP for US\$ 1.75M, ISRIC for US\$ 0.348M, participating countries (6) for US\$ 3.454M and others for

US\$ 0.428. The project was approved by GEF on December 29, 2005, started on May 1, 2006 and the expected completion date is May 2010.

8. The project strategy has two principal objectives:
- (i) Develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scales;
 - (ii) Build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices.

9. These objectives are expected to help to overcome current policy and institutional barriers to sustainable land use in dryland zones that are occasioned by the lack of quality information on the extent and severity of dryland degradation. Through improved decision-support, they will also assist the establishment of incentives to promote the accrual of global environmental benefits at national and local levels. These two objectives will be realized through the following four expected outcomes:

- An improved needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated;
- A map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with a special emphasis on areas at greatest risk;
- Detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries;
- A proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATION

10. This mid-term project evaluation (a requirement of UNEP/GEF Secretariat (GEFSEC) procedures) has been initiated by UNEP Evaluation and Oversight Unit (EOU) in cooperation with the Evaluation Service of FAO (PBEE). This evaluation provides an in-depth reflection of project progress, priority actions for the last phase of the project and recommendations for the remaining period of the project and other future similar initiatives.

3.1. Objectives

11. The objective of the evaluation is to assess operational aspects, such as project management and implementation of activities and also the level of progress towards the achievement of objectives. The review assessed project performance and the implementation of planned project activities and planned outputs against actual results. The risks to achieve project outcomes and objectives were also appraised. At the mid-point of the project, the evaluation is intended to make recommendations for any necessary changes in the overall design and orientation of the project and make detailed recommendations on the work-plan for the remainder of the project.

3.2. Scope

12. Particular emphasis was put on the current project results and the possibility of achieving all objectives in the established timeframe of the project, taking into consideration the speed at which the project is proceeding. The evaluation assessed the project achievements so far; highlights issues requiring decisions and actions; presents initial lessons learned about project design, implementation and management; and makes recommendations that project partners and stakeholders might use to improve the design and implementation of other related projects and programs. More specifically and based on the TORs (*see Appendix I*) the evaluation assessed:

- Project assumptions, objectives and design
 - Project Theory
 - Project Objectives and Logical Framework
 - Project Design

- Project performance with respect to GEF evaluation parameters
 - Attainment of objectives and planned results
 - Risks to achievement of project outcomes and objectives, using the risk factor table
 - Sustainability of project outcomes
 - Catalytic role and replication
 - Achievement of outputs and activities
 - Monitoring and evaluation systems
 - Processes that affected attainment of project results such as readiness, country ownership/drivenness, co-financing, etc.

3.3. Methodology

13. The methodology used to conduct this mid-term evaluation is compliant with international criteria and professional norms and standards; including the norms and standards adopted by the UN Evaluation Group.

3.3.1. Overall Approach

14. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the “*GEF Monitoring & Evaluation Policy*” as well as the UNEP approach for evaluations. The FAO Evaluation Service was also involved in the preparation of the ToRs and in the set-up of the evaluation process. The evaluation was undertaken in-line with GEF principles, which are: *independence, impartiality, transparency, disclosure, ethical, partnership, competencies/capacities, credibility and utility*. It considered the two GEF evaluation objectives at the project level: (i) promote accountability for the achievement of GEF objectives; including the global environmental benefits; and (ii) promote learning, feedback and knowledge sharing on results and lessons learned among the GEF and its partners.

15. The evaluation developed/used tools in accordance with the GEF policy to ensure an effective project evaluation. The evaluation was conducted and the findings were structured around the five major GEF evaluation criteria; which are also the five internationally accepted evaluation criteria set out by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. There are:

- *Relevance* relates to an overall assessment of whether the project is in keeping with its design and in addressing the key priorities to ensure that the obligations under the UNCCD are met and in keeping with the donors and partner policies, as well as with national and local needs and priorities.
- *Effectiveness* is a measure of the extent to which formally agreed expected project results (outcomes) have been achieved, or can be expected to be achieved.
- *Efficiency* is a measure of the productivity of the project intervention process, i.e. to what degree the outcomes achieved derive from efficient use of financial, human and material resources. In principle, it means comparing outcomes and outputs against inputs.
- *Impacts* are the long-term results of the project and include both positive and negative consequences, whether these are foreseen and expected, or not.
- *Sustainability* is an indication of whether the outcomes (end of project results) and the positive impacts (long term results) are likely to continue after the project ends.

16. In addition to the GEF guiding principles described in the TOR, the Evaluation Team also applied the following methodological principles to conduct the evaluation: (i) *Participatory Consultancy*; (ii) *Applied Knowledge*: Team’s working knowledge of evaluation theories and approaches and its particular expertise in environmental issues were applied to this mandate; (iii) *Results-Based Management*; (iv) *Validity of information*: multiple measures and sources were sought out to ensure that the results are accurate and valid; (v) *Integrity*: Any issue with respect to conflict of interest, lack of professional conduct or misrepresentation was to be immediately referred to the client; and (vi) *Respect and anonymity*: All participants had the right to provide information in confidence.

17. The methodology and the work plan to conduct the assignment were submitted to UNEP and FAO for their review prior to use by the Evaluation Team. Any changes were in-line with international criteria and professional norms and standards; including the norms and standards adopted by the UN Evaluation Group.

18. The evaluation was conducted following the steps presented in the table below:

Table 1: Steps Used to Conduct the Evaluation

| Phases | Tasks |
|---|--|
| I. Inception, Preparation and Planning * | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up Teleconference with UNEP-EOU Preliminary Documentation review Methodology: scope, assessment questions, data collection instruments, interview questionnaire Draft work plan including methodology, initial list of documents to review, initial list of key Stakeholders to meet/interview and missions plan; Finalize and Submit Work Plan Prepare mission to Argentina |
| II. Mission to Argentina: Consultation and Data Collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission to Argentina Meet with key Stakeholders in Argentina Participate in regional meeting on local assessments Meet country delegates and key partners Collect documents |
| III. Initial analysis and Data Collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents and files Conduct telephone/email interviews Prepare mission to Rome and Tunisia |
| IV. Mission to Rome and Tunis: Consultation and Data Collection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission to Rome Meeting with FAO Team Review list of key Stakeholders to meet/interview Collect documents and files Travel to Tunis Meeting with Key Stakeholders Collect documents |
| V. Information Analysis and Report Drafting * | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review documents and files Draft and submit detailed Table of Contents for Evaluation Report Further telephone/email interviews as needed Validation of table of contents by UNEP-EOU Analyze and synthesize missions findings and desk-review findings Draft and Submit Draft Evaluation Report to FAO/UNEP-GEF & EOU/PBEE |
| VI. Finalize Report * | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and comments of the draft report by FAO/UNEP-GEF & EOU/PBEE Integration of comments and finalize Evaluation Report; Submit Final Evaluation Report. |

3.3.2. Evaluation Instruments

19. The evaluation provides evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The findings were triangulated through the concept of “multiple lines of evidence” using several evaluation tools and gathering information from different types of stakeholders and different levels of management. In order to conduct this mid-term evaluation, the following evaluation instruments were used:

Evaluation Matrix: As part of the start-up phase, the Evaluation Team developed an evaluation matrix (see Appendix 2) based on the evaluation scope presented in the TOR, the project log-frame and the review of the key project documents. This matrix was structured along the five GEF evaluation criteria and included all evaluation questions; including the questions presented in the TORs. It provided overall directions for the evaluation, was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents and provided a basis for structuring the evaluation report. This matrix was assembled with an overview of the project, the evaluation scope and the proposed methodology to complete the evaluation work plan.

Documentation Review: This was conducted in Canada, in Italy and during the missions by the Evaluation Team. In addition to being a main source of information, all documentation was also used as preparation for the mission of the Lead Evaluator. An initial list of documents was provided in the TOR and the Evaluation Team searched other relevant documents through the world-wide web and professional/project related contacts (*see Appendix 3*).

Interview Guide: Based on the evaluation matrix, an interview guide was developed (*see Appendix 4*) to solicit information from the stakeholders. As part of the participatory approach, the Evaluation Team ensured that all parties viewed this tool as balanced, unbiased, and structured. It was also used for interviews to be conducted by phone or email when needed.

Mission Agenda: Agendas for the one-week mission to Mendoza, Argentina and the one-week mission to Rome and Tunis were developed during the preparatory phase (*see Appendix 5*). The list of persons to be interviewed were identified and reviewed to ensure they represent all project Stakeholders. Then, interviews were planned prior to the missions in collaboration with the Project Management Team and the LADA Coordination Units in Argentina and in Tunisia. The objective was to have well-organized and planned missions to ensure a broad scan of stakeholders' views during the time allocated to the missions.

Interviews: Stakeholders were interviewed (*see Appendix 6*). The semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interview guide and adapted to each interview. All interviews were conducted in person with some follow up using emails when needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings are incorporated in the final report.

Achievement Rating: The Evaluation Team rated the project achievements according to the GEF project review criteria; using the ratings as *Highly Satisfactory* (HS), *Satisfactory* (S), *Moderately Satisfactory* (MS), *Moderately Unsatisfactory* (MU), *Unsatisfactory* (U), *Highly Unsatisfactory* (HU) and *Not Applicable* (NA). All evaluation criteria mentioned in the terms of reference were rated accordingly; including the completion of the Overall Ratings Table as per Annex 1 of the TORs.

3.4. Evaluation Users

20. This mid-term evaluation (MTE) was initiated by UNEP-EOU who works independently of UNEP DGEF, the GEF Implementing Agency for the LADA project. The audience for this evaluation are mostly UNEP and FAO, members of the Steering Committee and relevant GEF focal points and government representatives in the 6 partner countries. The findings provide managers with recommendations for more effectively and efficiently achieving the project's outcomes and for replicating results. It also provides the basis for learning and accountability for managers and stakeholders.

21. As per the project document, the key Stakeholders include GEF itself; the UNCCD Secretariat and its Global Mechanism; UNEP and FAO as implementing and executing agencies respectively; international scientific and consultative organizations such as CGIAR centres for dryland agriculture (ICARDA and ICRISAT), ISRIC (based at Wageningen University), the EROS Data Center and WOCAT (based at Bern University); service agencies, training institutions and educational establishments; national governments, agencies and NARS. The principal partners and stakeholders in the project are the institutions of dryland countries involved in making assessments of land degradation for policy purposes and the implementation of remediation measures such as service/research organizations responsible for land survey and assessment (further detailed in stakeholders are in Annex E of the project document).

22. The Evaluation Team is fully responsible for this independent evaluation report; which may not necessarily reflect the views of UNEP, FAO or the GEF. The circulation of the final report will be determined by UNEP.

3.5. Limitations and Constraints

23. The findings and conclusions contained in this report rely primarily on a desk review of project documents, two one-week missions to Argentina and Rome/Tunis and few phone-interviews as follow-up;

including about 30 interviews with project key informants and the participation to the LADA Workshop on Local Assessment in Mendoza. Other countries were not visited; only project documents related to these other countries were consulted. Within the given resources allocated to this mid-term evaluation, the independent team of consultants conducted a detailed assessment of actual results against expected results.

24. Nevertheless, this final evaluation report successfully ascertains whether the project is meeting its main objectives - as laid down in the project design document - and whether the project initiatives are, or are likely to be, sustainable after completion of the project. It also makes a number of recommendations that would be useful to reinforce the long term sustainability of the project achievements and also identified lessons learned and best practices obtained during the implementation of the project which could be further taken into consideration during the development and implementation of other similar GEF projects.

4. EVALUATION FINDINGS

25. This section presents the findings of this mid-term evaluation. There are presented in five sub-sections following the GEF five major evaluation criteria: Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Results/Impacts and Sustainability.

4.1. What is the Relevance of the Project?

26. Within the context of land degradation recognized as a global problem associated with desertification and loss of biological diversity, the project seeks to develop standardised and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment, including the assessment of drivers and impacts on dryland biodiversity as well as on human wellbeing. This section discusses the relevance of the project within its international and national context; as well as against its original design.

4.1.1. Towards UNCCD and GEF Objectives

27. The LADA project is highly relevant within the context of the implementation of the United Nations Conventions to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the GEF as a financial instrument to implement the convention. This convention was adopted in 1994 as an international response to land degradation. In September 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), land degradation was reaffirmed as one of the major global environmental and sustainable development challenge of the 21st century. A call on GEF was made at the WSSD in 2002 to designate land degradation as a new focal area to support the implementation of the UNCCD. The GEF assembly (2002) expanded GEF's mandate by adding land degradation to its portfolio and in 2003, GEF was designated a financial mechanism of the UNCCD. As a response GEF launched an Operational Programme - OP15 Sustainable Land Management the same year to make operational the designation of land degradation as a focal area.

28. As it was well documented in the project document, on-going uncertainties exist about the seriousness and extent of land degradation. So far, the policy responses remain undirected by quality assessments at global, national and local levels and much confusion exists. Environmental issues of soil and land degradation and their impacts on dryland ecosystems and human well-being are not well integrated into key development objectives related, for example, to the Millennium Development Goals. Desertification, although widely viewed as a major environmental issue in scientific, political and even popular circles, will remain marginalized amongst the global environmental change processes until and unless there is a widely accepted underpinning of its role as a process by quality assessments of its extent and impact. If land degradation control is to have any realistic opportunity to become effective, assessments must be rendered more efficient, effective and replicable. If countries are to tackle the impoverishment of their drylands, they must have the human resource capabilities and capacities of their institutions improved.

29. LADA is addressing these priorities by developing standardised and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment, including the assessment of drivers and impacts on dryland biodiversity as well as on human wellbeing. 'Best practice' guidelines will be developed and results to be disseminated widely. This is consistent with the objective of the UNCCD, namely to "*combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, through effective actions at all levels, supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements, in the*

framework of an integrated approach which is consistent with Agenda 21, with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the affected areas”.

30. LADA is particularly addressing *Section 2 - Scientific and Technical Cooperation* of the UNCCD, which states that “*The Parties agree, according to their respective capabilities, to integrate and coordinate the collection, analysis and exchange of relevant short term and long term data and information to ensure systematic observation of land degradation in affected areas and to understand better and assess the processes and effects of drought and desertification*”. LADA is highly relevant in the context of Article 16 – *Information collection, analysis and exchange*, Article 17 – *Research and development* and Article 18 – *Transfer, acquisition, adaptation and development of technology*.

31. In addition to respond to UNCCD, the LADA project also addresses the guidance from the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD). The third Conference of Parties (COP3) of UNCBD asked GEF to provide financial resources for, amongst other aspects, “*capacity building for initial assessment and monitoring programs...; supporting efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity important to agriculture*”. It is recognized that the control of land degradation is fundamental to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, especially in areas of land use such as pastoralism (arid) and in dryland agriculture (semi-arid to dry sub-humid).

32. In 2005, the GEF Council recommended a review and revision of the GEF six focal area strategies. As a result, strategic long-term objectives were reviewed, strategic long-term programmes were identified for each focal area and the GEF Council adopted them in 2006 for guiding the programming of resources during GEF-4. It is worth noting, the Global Land Degradation Assessment for Drylands (GLADA) developed by the LADA project is mentioned as a source of verification to measure the overall decrease in trend and/or severity of land degradation, an indicator to measure the achievement of the first strategic objective for land degradation. The strategies for land degradation are:

Table 2: GEF Strategies for Land Degradation Under GEF-4

| Strategic Objectives | Strategic Programmes |
|--|--|
| 1. An enabling environment will place Sustainable Land Management (SLM) in the mainstream of development policy and practices at the regional, national and local levels 2. To upscale SLM investments that generate mutual benefits for the global environment and local livelihoods | 1. Supporting sustainable agriculture and rangeland management 2. Supporting sustainable forest management in production landscapes 3. Investing in innovative approaches in SLM |

33. The purpose of the land degradation focal area is “*to foster system-wide change to control the increasing severity and extent of land degradation in order to derive global environmental benefits*”. GEF identified its tool as sustainable land management (SLM) and recognized that investing in SLM to control and prevent land degradation in the wider landscape is an essential and cost-effective way to deliver other global environmental benefits, such as maintenance of biodiversity, mitigation of climate change and protection of international waters. Under GEF-4, the priority areas address the three major direct drivers for terrestrial ecosystem degradation identified by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: (i) land use change, (ii) natural resources consumption and (iii) climate change. All project proposals incorporate the effect of climate change as an integral part of measures for sustainable land management.

34. However, it is interesting to note that under GEF-4 - which was finalized after the approval of LADA under GEF-3 - few types of intervention were not accorded priority for financing by the GEF land degradation focal area¹, including:

- Development, testing and validation of SLM and land degradation control technologies.
Reason: CGIAR system has a comparative advantage in these types of activities; strong collaboration will be sought.
- Assessment unrelated to uptake and use in achieving wider impact.
Reason: agencies such as UNEP or FAO have a comparative advantage in undertaking such assessments within their work plans.

¹ GEF/C.31/10, May 11, 2007, *Focal Area Strategies and Strategic Programming for GEF-4*, page 43

35. Finally, as GEF is now preparing GEF-5 (2010-2014), a Technical Advisory Group was set up to elaborate the land degradation strategy for this focal area under GEF-5. The main change with GEF-4 is the possible introduction of a Resource Allocation Framework (RAF) for land degradation. The RAF tool was implemented under GEF-4 for two focal areas: climate change and biodiversity. It may now be extended to the land degradation focal area starting next year under the GEF-5 cycle. To this end, GEF is looking into LADA results to design an assessment methodology supporting the future investment decisions of GEF under the land degradation focal area. The concept would be to invest in land degradation control and restoration activities in degraded areas but not in highly degraded areas. Therefore, assessment of land degradation in countries is necessary.

36. In order to provide a framework for these assessments, GEF, in collaboration with LADA, is currently developing an index of vulnerability for land degradation, which will be used as a valuable tool to allocate resources (RAF). From the knowledge accumulated under the LADA project, five key indicators are being tested to identify problems, drivers contributing to land degradation and possible actions.

37. Additionally, discussions within the Technical Advisory Group are advancing for GEF-5 to finance national land degradation assessments as Project Preparation Grant (PPG). GEF is looking into LADA results as well as results from a UNDP/GEF related project² to establish a standardized assessment methodology.

4.1.2. Towards UNEP and FAO Objectives

38. The LADA project is relevant for both UNEP (the implementing agency) and FAO (the executing agency). For more than 20 years, UNEP has been actively involved in worldwide efforts to combat dryland degradation. Although desertification still remains a major environmental problem, impeding dryland development, there are also many projects and community-based initiatives which have successfully addressed these problems. These successes are publicized by UNEP to show that land degradation/desertification can be controlled, and positive experiences can be replicated. FAO has a vast experience in executing project of this nature particularly those concerned with land resources. It plays an important role in major environment-development initiatives and other assessment projects, such as the Global Forest Resources Assessment and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment. The latter was a large initiative implemented from 2001 to 2005, coordinated by UNEP and funded by multiple donors including the GEF and the World Bank. Its objective was to assess the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being and the scientific basis for action needed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of those systems and their contribution to human well-being.

39. UNEP policy on land is “*to address existing and emerging issues and consequences of land use, key strategies and policies are in place to facilitate a coordinated and effective approach in dealing with possible challenges, and to encourage and ensure agreed upon standards are met*”. UNEP is supporting practical action to combat land degradation through GEF recognizing that land degradation leads to a significant reduction of the productive capacity of land. UNEP's portfolio of land degradation projects revolves around the following themes: Capacity building; Environmental assessment and generation and dissemination of knowledge; Development, replication and up-scaling of tools, methodologies and good practices; and Integrated natural resources management in trans-boundary ecosystems. Any information on land degradation is also integrated into the Global Environment Outlook – including some LADA results in GEO-4 - to provide a comprehensive, reliable and scientifically credible, policy-relevant, up-to-date assessment of, and outlook for, the state of the global environment.

40. As part of its constitution, FAO shall collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to nutrition, food and agriculture. It shall promote and, where appropriate, shall recommend national and international actions with respect to [among other areas] (c) the conservation of natural resources and the adoption of improved methods of agricultural production. The LADA project is consistent with the three interrelated global goals of FAO as set out in its Strategic Framework (2000-2015); particularly the third one that is “*the conservation, improvement and sustainable utilization of natural resources, including land, water, forest, fisheries and genetic resources for food and agriculture*”. The corporate strategies - named D1

² UNDP, GEF, MSP: *Ensuring Impacts from SLM – Development of a Global Indicator System*

and D2 - include relevant components such as “developing and strengthening monitoring, assessment and valuation of natural resources to optimize decision-making for the efficient management and sustainable use of natural resources” and “developing norms, definitions, methodologies and tools for the improved collection and use of data and information in order to make available the best analytical and decision support tools; this includes introducing a wider range of technological reference frameworks (e.g. geo-referenced spatial information management systems)”. The evaluation of Strategic Objective D2 in 2006, included LADA in its assessment as fully relevant to FAO’s mandate and thrust.

4.1.3. Towards Pilot Countries Objectives

41. Six countries representing 6 world regions were selected to be part of the LADA project. Each of these countries has some dryland areas and LADA is highly relevant in their development context. These countries are all parties to UNCCD and a brief status of the UNCCD process in each country is presented below:

Table 3: UNCCD Status in the LADA Six Countries

| Country | Ratification of UNCCD | NAP | National Reports |
|--------------|-----------------------|------|------------------|
| Argentina | 1997 | 1997 | 2000, 2002, 2006 |
| China | 1997 | 2000 | 2000, 2002, 2006 |
| Cuba | 1997 | 2003 | 2000, 2002, 2006 |
| Senegal | 1995 | 2000 | 1999, 2002, 2004 |
| South Africa | 1997 | 2004 | 1999, 2002 |
| Tunisia | 1995 | 2000 | 1999, 2002, 2004 |

42. A brief review of these plans and reports indicate that the emphasis is mostly on planning and implementing land degradation control and restoration actions. Most NAPs include some analysis of the current situation but assessing the land degradation status is not a strong point of these plans and reports. Nevertheless, through partnerships with the LADA project, these countries are addressing a critical aspect of combating desertification; that is to identify the degraded areas (hot spots (severe degradation) and bright spots (degradation largely controlled)). Once these national assessments will be completed, they will provide valuable information to relevant decision-makers for decisions/investments to be made for the control of land degradation.

4.1.4. Towards Other Programs/Projects

43. LADA’s goal is to provide decision-makers with methodological elements and tools to assess land degradation and to be used by a broad range of stakeholders worldwide involved in land degradation. LADA is highly relevant towards related programmes and projects implemented by these stakeholders. It includes international organizations such as GEF, UNEP and FAO, but also organizations in countries such as the Direction des Sols in Tunisia or the National Bureau to Combat Desertification, State Forestry Administration/Secretariat of China National Committee for the Implementation of UNCCD in China, which are responsible to assess and monitor land degradation in their respective country.

44. Furthermore, this standardized methodological framework could be part of the GEF-5 process where, under land degradation, an emphasis might be put on national land degradation assessments. LADA is currently seen as an important project for GEF to develop the RAF for land degradation (*see Section 4.1.1*) along the UNDP/GEF project MSP: Ensuring Impacts from SLM – Development of a Global Indicator System. Finally, as it was stated in the STAP technical review (August 2004), the LADA project reviewed all the important assessments of land degradation that have taken place worldwide and several of the well known organisations in the field of land degradation are actual partners with the LADA project.

4.1.5. Project Objectives, Logic and Design

45. Based on the review of the project concept and the project design (prodoc), the internal logic and the rationale of the project identified during the design phase are still relevant today. As the STAP review stated, the LADA project brief comprises a comprehensive, coherent and clearly written document. It evidently

stems from considerable intellectual and scientific input, and develops a convincing case for standardisation of land degradation assessment and to highlight positive experience (best practices) with land degradation mitigation.

46. The design elements of the project (project components, partners, project structure, delivery mechanisms, scope and budget) are coherent with the set of expected results (log-frame). The project was well designed and the project document is a good blueprint to implement the project. Based on the interviews, the project document reflected well the intention of key stakeholders at the time and is now contributing to an effective implementation of the project (*see Section 4.2.1*).

47. As a consequence of this good design, no changes were made to the project strategic expected results (goal, objective and outcomes) over the lifetime of the project. The table below shows the set of expected results of the LADA project:

Table 4: Set of Project Expected Results

| LADA Expected Results |
|--|
| <p>GOAL: The overall goal of LADA has been seen as a contribution to few GEF Operational Programmes (OP) such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conserve the biological resources of arid and semi-arid areas [OP1] • To catalyze widespread adoption of comprehensive ecosystem management interventions [OP12] • To mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems [OP15] • To sustainably use the biological resources of arid and semi-arid areas [OP1] • To integrate ecological, economic, and social goals to achieve multiple and crosscutting local, national, and global benefits.[OP12] • To contribute to improving people’s livelihoods and economic well-being. [OP15] <p>PROJECT OBJECTIVES:</p> <p>1. To develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scale.</p> <p>2. To build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices.</p> |
| <p>OUTCOME 1. An improved needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated. [<i>also defined as developing the LADA approach: land degradation assessment guidelines, network and information system</i>]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing data sources, methods and frameworks for land degradation assessment for drylands at multiple scales • Developing and testing integrated land degradation information systems at central and national level • Preparing the stratification, carrying out national hot spot analysis and populating the network and information system • Developing and disseminating guidelines for an improved needs-based and process-driven approach to dryland degradation assessment |
| <p>OUTCOME 2. Map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with an especial emphasis on areas at greatest risk. [<i>also defined as carrying out global and regional land degradation assessments</i>]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collating, geo-referencing and digitising all available relevant information on regional and global scales • Carrying out Global and regional Land Degradation studies at low resolution • Carrying out National/Regional LADA studies, including training and integration with GLADA results and identification and categorisation of areas at greatest risk of dryland degradation |
| <p>OUTCOME 3. Detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries. [<i>also defined as carrying out local assessments in hot spots and bright spots in pilot countries</i>]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing capacity of national (pilot country) professionals to carry out detailed assessments of land degradation, related to key developmental questions such as livelihoods, poverty and food security • Carrying out surveys of user needs and information system needs at national level • Carrying out Pilot detailed assessments in ‘hot spot’ and ‘bright spot’ areas; and recommending how to for scaling-up the findings to national level • Analysing National and local level policy processes for renewable natural resources information, determining |

LADA Expected Results

suitable entry points for land degradation information, and making available and operational the information system for national and district level planning and practice

OUTCOME 4. Proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action. [*also defined as carrying out a major analysis and preparation of a strategy for global action*]

- Developing and testing the framework for analysis of critical components and driving forces for land degradation based on DPSIR
- Collating and synthesising information on best practices for land conservation, and preparing a report including policy and resource needs for implementation of the best practices identified
- LADA involved with other stakeholders in assisting policy development with UNCCD through COPs, RAPs, SRAPs and NAPs at national and regional levels
- LADA works with UNEP and the GEF Secretariat to develop support advice for implementation of OP15
- Final packaging, communication and exchange of land degradation information globally, regionally and nationally

48. One weak area in the design is the set of indicators identified to monitor the project. The monitoring and evaluation plan includes a total of 50 indicators focusing too much on monitoring the progress of activities as opposed to measuring how the project achieves its expected results. As a result, too much monitoring information needs to be collected without focusing enough on how well the project is progressing towards its expected results (*see Section 4.3.7*).

49. Nevertheless, the review of the project expected results indicates an ambitious project within the given budget and particularly the timing (4 years). The internal logic is well laid out in the table above. It includes three outcomes focusing on the identification and testing of a new approach to assess land degradation based on the application/test in the six partner countries and followed by a fourth outcome focusing on a global action plan for dissemination and replication of project results. This logic is coherent and provides potential for long-term impact and long-term sustainability. However, an important critical success factor resides in the fact that outcome 4 needs to be completed fully for achieving the desired long-term impact. If LADA runs out of time and is closed before its total completion, much of its value could be lost.

4.2. What is the Effectiveness of the Project?

50. This Section presents the findings on the effectiveness of the project in achieving its expected results; it compares the actual versus the expected results. An overview of the key results achieved so far by the project is presented, followed by a review of the information systems supported by the project, the project contribution to capacity development, the participation of stakeholders, the review of any unexpected project achievements and the review of the management of risks and the mitigation measures related to the implementation of the project.

4.2.1. Achievements of Project Expected Outcomes

51. The review of the project progress toward achieving its expected outcomes is satisfactory. The project is to develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scales. It is also to build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices. These objectives are to be achieved through (i) an improved needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated; (ii) a map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with a special emphasis on areas at greatest risk; (iii) detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries; and (iv) a proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action.

52. The actual results are in line with the expected results as detailed in the log-frame. The project implementation strategy stated in the approved project document and including the work breakdown structure –four components and activities – its mode of delivery and partnerships with international partners

and pilot countries is used as the guiding strategy for implementation of the project. However, despite that the timing of these achievements are close to the anticipated timing detailed in the project document, the ambitious set of expected results (*see Section 4.1.5*) may not be fully delivered at project end.

53. The review of project achievements versus expected results as presented in the PIR 2008 (as of June 2008) and updated by the project management team indicates good progress toward achieving the expected outcomes. In term of project outputs, the project is delivering what it was supposed to deliver. A method for national land degradation assessment has been developed and is currently being tested through local assessments in the six pilot countries. The key achievements are presented in the table below:

Table 5: List of Key Achievements Delivered so Far

| Expected Outcomes | Key Achievements |
|--|--|
| 1. An improved needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The review of existing methodologies has been completed. The new LADA methodological framework has been developed but hasn't been published yet as a single document. The information system, the indicator toolbox and the assessment tools at all level have been prepared and their testing are almost completed • The compilation and analysis of information on drivers and status of land degradation at national and global level is almost completed • An improved needs-based and process-driven approach to dryland degradation assessment is almost completely accepted by participating countries • The development of a user-friendly platform for accessing baseline data is on-going (75% completed) |
| 2. A map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with a special emphasis on areas at greatest risk. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the datasets at global and national level have been collected. An internet-based platform has been constructed. • Preliminary results of the NDVI study have been received and publicized.. • Two pilot case studies on land cover change have been completed (Kenya, Senegal). Missions to China and Tunisia have been undertaken. • A baseline global and regional maps produced and widely available for eco-regions and areas represented by participating countries (90% completed) • Nationally-agreed lists of 'hot-spots' and 'bright-spots' identified, described and widely-available (90% completed) • Relevant professionals in participating countries trained in land degradation assessment, impact analysis and related developmental factors |
| 3. Detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of trainers for local professionals' capacity building started. • User's needs assessments on-going. • The needs of users of land degradation assessment and the operation of national-level integrated information system understood in all participating countries (85% completed) • Pilot national assessments completed and evaluated for scaling-up (60% completed) • An integrated information system is in place in each participating country providing relevant data on land degradation for policy, planning and control interventions (35% completed) • A generic framework for the analysis of critical components in land degradation designed and demonstrated (55% completed) |
| 4. A proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators toolbox being prepared according to the DPSIR framework • Several countries and one regional programme (CACILM) shown definite interest in applying methodology developed by the LADA project under own funding. |

Source: UNEP – PIR FY 2008 and FAO update

54. The main achievements can be summarized as follows:

The LADA methodology for land degradation assessment:

55. It consists of a set of land degradation assessment guidelines, land degradation indicators, network and information systems needed to conduct land degradation assessments. Information on drivers and status of land degradation at global level and in the six pilot countries has been compiled and analyzed. Based on a review of existing methodologies, a new LADA methodological framework has been developed and is almost completely tested. Through the project events such as training seminars and project activities, the piloting countries are using this new approach and integrating the principles in their day-to-day work.

56. However, what is left to do is the completion of the LADA methodology, incorporating the latest lessons learned from the pilot countries, including the completion of a user-friendly web-based platform to access baseline data. Then this methodology will be published and will be the main output for developing the global action plan (outcome #4). The success of LADA depends greatly on the replicability of this methodology worldwide. As discussed in Section 4.1.1, some results are already used by GEF to develop an index of vulnerability and discussions are on-going for the methodology to support countries to conduct their national land degradation assessment under GEF-5.

Global and regional land degradation assessments:

57. Under this outcome, the aim was to replace the Global Assessment of Human-Induced Soil Degradation (GLASOD) that was produced by ISRIC for UNEP in 1991 by the Global Land Degradation Assessment (GLADA). GLASOD was the only harmonized global assessment but it was an expert judgment and could not be updated. As part of this global assessment, the following has been achieved so far:

- A web-based platform has been constructed and datasets collected to produce a global map of Land Use Systems (LUS).
- This map was used as the basis for completing the mapping of the national land use systems in the 6 countries.
- A Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) study was conducted, comparing remote sensing images over a 23-year period (1980-2003). Initial results of this study have been published, including through scientific articles.
- Adaptation of the LADA/WOCAT-QM questionnaire and tested in Argentina, China, Tunisia, South Africa and Senegal.
- Other global indicators are currently being investigated to complete this global assessment.
- Two pilot case studies on land cover change (1km-definition) have been completed (Kenya & Senegal) with the collaboration of the Global Land Cover Network project based at FAO and initial missions to China and Tunisia have been undertaken to extend the study of land cover change to these two countries as well as to South Africa in 2009.
- Identification of “hot-spots” and “bright-spots” is underway as part of the national land degradation assessment conducted in each of the pilot country by the LADA partners. It is anticipated that once these “hot-spots” and “bright-spots” are identified, they will be approved nationally.
- Finally, as part of the process to elaborate GLADA, few workshops/seminars took place to train relevant professionals in pilot countries in land degradation assessment, impact analysis and other related development factors.

58. However, the results from the NDVI study are not accepted by the partner countries (6) and are hampering the process of finalizing GLADA. The interviews during this mid-term evaluation indicate that the results are perceived as inaccurate and, due to the scale used (8km-definition) too general to be of any use nationally. In order to move forward, the FAO-LADA project management team organized in January 2009 a peer review of the NDVI preliminary study results. This review was conducted by three internationally well-known experts in this field, who had to scientifically validate the results.

59. A summary of this peer review indicates that:

- The data and the approach is valid but it is measuring vegetation cover and trends over time as opposed to measuring degradation of land and degradation trends over time.
- A few technical aspects were discussed and recommendations formulated to finalize GLADA such as the use of the newest GIMMS version, the use of RESTREND in addition to RUE, etc.

- A more appropriate title was agreed for the study results as “*Time-series Analysis of Satellite Measurements of Vegetation*”; representing one indicator, among others, for land degradation.
- The study results and the debate created around these results demonstrate that the assumption that land degradation should be assessed from a global level assessment, followed by national and local assessments is not the most logical approach. Rather, land degradation assessment should start nationally, based on a standardized method. Results can then be aggregated globally and confirmed locally.
- LADA should be cautious in the use of initial results; particularly to claim that NDVI trends show global land degradation. It should remain focussed on the development of practical, proven and applied methodologies for indicators of land degradation, which can be applied consistently across countries to ensure consistency of results.

60. From these discussions and more generally from the lessons learned so far, a more comprehensive definition of what is land degradation is emerging. For LADA, land degradation is the loss of ecosystem functions, goods and services. It is the result of negative trends from a combination of factors that include: accumulated biomass, annual production of biomass, soil health, water quality and quantity, biodiversity, social benefits and economic benefits (see Figure 1).

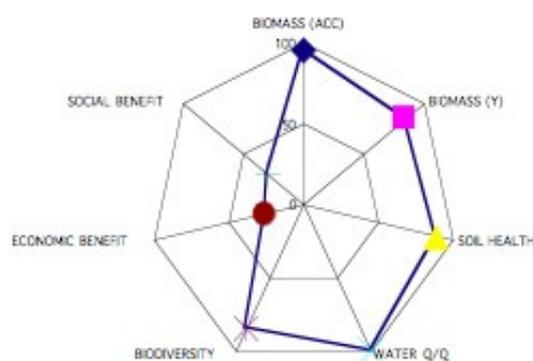


Figure 1: Land Degradation Diagram

61. What is left to do is to finalize/refine the GLADA approach: what is measured and how it can help national and local assessments and finally link GLADA results with national and local assessments; considering the attributes of the global land use system.

Local assessments in hot spots and bright spots in pilot countries:

62. This component of the project is currently underway, only 19% of the budget for these assessments has been spent as of December 31, 2008 (see Section 4.3.2). The main objective of this outcome is two-fold: conduct local assessments in “hot-spots” and “bright-spots” in the six pilot countries; and, using the pilot experiences, elaborate a manual on how to conduct local assessments. The major achievements so far are:

- Few workshops were held (including one in Mendoza during this mid-term evaluation) to train trainers from the pilot countries in order to develop national capacity (skills and knowledge) in assessing land degradation at the local level.
- Elaboration of a manual for local assessment of land degradation. Following the Mendoza workshop (Jan. 2009), the country contributions will be integrated into a new version of the manual and this tool should be finalized during spring 2009.
- Currently, local assessments have or will start in most pilot countries; using the manual.

63. What is left to do is to finalize the LADA-Local manual, complete at least one local assessment in each pilot country and create a database to capture the results of these local assessments.

Preparation of a strategy for global action:

64. Under this outcome, no real activities took place so far and 0% of the budget has been spent. The main objective under this component is to elaborate a global action plan for the dissemination and replication of the project results. It was planned for the latter part of the project and should start soon. However, several countries and one regional programme (CACILM) have shown definite interests in applying the methodology developed by LADA. FAO is a partner with ADB on the CACILM (Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management) project: its objective is to overcome the barriers to SLM and, in this way, contribute to the National Programming Frameworks. In turn, these aim at improving incomes and livelihood of the rural populations through activities that reverse the trend of land degradation, and generate at the same time broader environmental benefits. FAO will provide the LADA methodology for assessing land degradation.

65. In conclusion, LADA’s achievements are in line with expectations. However, these outputs remain scattered. Multiple information systems exist, multiple partners are working on different pieces of LADA; it is difficult to get the big picture about LADA achievements. This is the main challenge for LADA during the remaining period: to finalize all the “pieces” and put them together in a user-friendly methodology for assessing land degradation. Based on the interviews conducted during this MTE, two main “pieces” of the LADA methodological elements are seen as the most important ones:

- The **DPSIR** (Driving Forces, Direct Pressures, State, Impacts and Responses) framework used to conduct local assessments. The DPSIR approach allows for the identification of the linkages between the driving forces behind the pressures on land resources that cause the current state of degradation, the impacts of such degradation on the other components of the environment and on human livelihoods, and the responses of land users to such state of land degradation and its impacts. The DPSIR

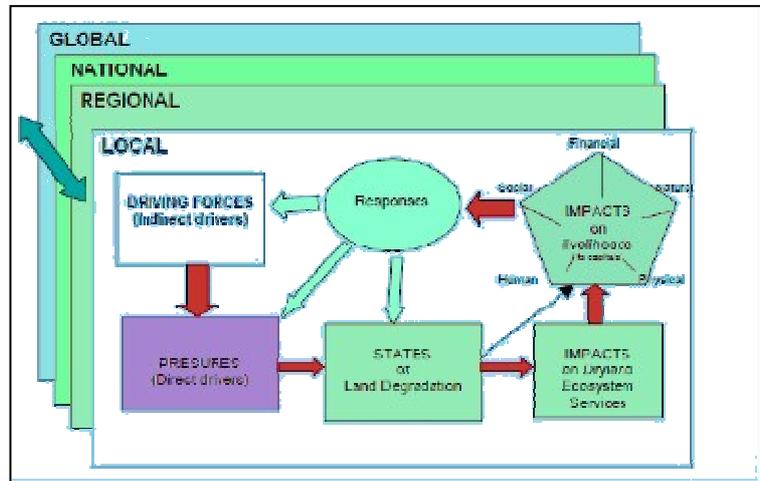


Figure 2: DPSIR Framework Applied to LADA

mechanism is used for the integration of the bio-physical and the social, economic, cultural and policy factors of land degradation, and for contextual analysis of the interplay and trade-offs between the five sets of capitals or assets (natural, social, financial, physical and human).

- The **Vs-Fast** (Visual Soil Field Assessment Tool) methodology³ proposed as a tool to assess soil properties in the manual for conducting local assessments. The methodology is designed for farmers (and their “advisors”) use with the prime aim of providing “*a cheap, repeatable, usable-by-farmers, immediate means of land degradation assessment*” in poor/developing countries. It was developed by an Australian Soil and Environmental Scientist on behalf of FAO. VS-Fast has three principal objectives:
 - Assess the nature and causes, and quantify the extent and severity of land degradation, and its impact/consequences on the environment and human society,
 - Build capacity to achieve the above, as a contribution to building capabilities to design and plan interventions
 - Improve land management towards mitigating land degradation, from the individual farm scale, upwards.

The Vs-Fast includes three parts as follows:

- Site detail
 - Previous management
 - “walk-in” clues
- Soil description
 - Depths
 - Soil structure
 - Colour
 - Earthworms
 - Root development
- Soil measurements
 - pH
 - Organic carbon (labile)
 - Soil slaking & dispersion
 - Water infiltration

66. These two “pieces” will be part of the comprehensive methodology for land degradation assessment that is underway. There are already featured in the “*LADA Local Assessment (LADA-L)*” manual.

³ Des McGarry, *A Methodology of a Visual Soil – Field Assessment Tool to support, enhance and contribute to the LADA program.*

4.2.2. Overview of LADA Supported Information Systems

67. The project also developed a LADA information system to support the management of information and knowledge produced by the project. The Evaluation Team reviewed this area and a summary is presented below; it is rated as satisfactory. A more thorough analysis is presented in Appendix 7.

68. The project has used an open approach in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of project information management activities. In particular the project has tried to use FAO standards in terms of data format (e.g. ESRI GRID raster data) and FAO software for data managing and publishing (e.g. ESRI ArcView, GeoNetwork, etc.). Additionally, several maps have been developed with some project support – such as ISRIC and IIASA maps - and they will be given general public access through the LADA information system.

LADA Web Site

69. The main LADA Information System is a web project portal. It has been developed in order to distribute information about the project to everyone. This portal was developed on the basis of: easy data access, standard map navigation tools and data inclusion in the general FAO GIS database. The site was improved in 2007 following a survey of users but the assessment indicates that few improvements could still be made (*see Section 7*).

70. A worldwide survey was conducted between December 2006 and mid-February 2007 by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, Italy on behalf of FAO to determine the kind of features and information stakeholders may be interested to obtain from a land degradation information centre, which would be offered by the planned LADA project's Virtual Centre. The project staff integrated most of users' suggestions into the LADA web site.

FAO GeoNetwork

71. The LADA project has produced maps and database information at the global, national and local levels. All Global maps are (or will be) available through the FAO GeoNetwork. National or local maps are property of the countries and their distribution depends on each country.

72. GeoNetwork provides internet access to interactive maps, satellite imagery and related spatial databases maintained by FAO and its partners. Its purpose is to improve access to, and integrated use of, spatial data and information. Through the GeoNetwork it will be possible, by the end of the project, to consult and print every project map, including maps produced by ISRIC and IIASA. Currently, it is possible to access in different ways (GeoNetwork or Google Earth) the following maps:

- World
- Australia and New Zealand
- East Asia and Pacific
- East Europe and Central Asia
- Latin America and Caribbean
- North Africa and Near East
- North America
- South East Asia
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Western Europe

73. For each map it is possible to consult:

- Metadata
- View map with Google Earth (all internet browser)
- View map with GeoNetwork (only Mozilla Firefox)
- Download maps database in raster BIL format or ESRI GRID format

74. GeoNetwork open-source implements both the Portal component and the Catalog database of a Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) defined in the OGC Reference Architecture. It provides tools for managing and publishing metadata on spatial data and related services. GeoNetwork open-source allows a distributed search providing access to a huge volume of metadata that comes from different Clearinghouses and also provides a web-based interactive map viewer that allows people to produce composite maps selecting layers from different servers on the internet. However, the GeoNetwork map server can only be accessed using Mozilla Firefox web browser. This is a major limitation considering the low use of Firefox as an internet

browser. Moreover, the slow access speed is not comparable with other current web map services such as Google Maps. It is recommended that the project review and improve this performance (*see Section 7*).

WOCAT Database

75. In addition to maps, the LADA project developed a database to capture information from questionnaires (local surveys). An online database will be used by pilot countries for entering data from questionnaires completed during the local assessments. The approach is based on the WOCAT methodology. In particular, for each of the national administrative units it is possible to choose any LUS, area trend, intensity trend and to add comment/recommendation.

76. Based on FAO experience, the decision was made to choose MySQL as the database management software; and a relational database management system (RDBMS). The program runs as a server providing multi-user access to a number of databases. MySQL is owned by a Swedish company MySQL AB, now a subsidiary of Sun Microsystems, which holds the copyright to most of the codebase. The project's source code is available under terms of the GNU⁴ General Public License, as well as under a variety of proprietary agreements. The user interface is accessible by internet with a username and a password. The internet access has to operate at a reasonable speed in order to insert, query and display data without any problems.

4.2.3. Contribution to Capacity Development

77. Capacity development is an integral part of the LADA project objectives. The second objective is *to build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices*. However, despite that capacity development is embedded into the second objective of the project, it is not really part of the four outcomes. These outcomes are focused mostly on achieving products such as maps, methodology and local assessments, as opposed to a comprehensive capacity being built. The review indicates that capacity development is translated mostly in training of key stakeholders from the pilot countries; including the “train the trainers” approach. The approach does not address the institutional, policy and legal aspects related to land degradation that is part of the required capacity of a country to address problems related to land degradation assessment. Overall this aspect is rated as moderately satisfactory.

78. A review of the literature on capacity development indicates that capacity development encompasses the acquisition of skills and knowledge for individuals, but also the improvements of institutional structures, mechanisms and procedures and finally the strengthening of an enabling environment with adequate policies and laws. It is now well recognized that capacity is the sum of a series of conditions, intangible assets and relationships that are part of an organisation or system and that are distributed at various levels⁵:

- Individuals have personal abilities and attributes or competencies that contribute to the performance of the system;
- Organisations and broader systems have a broad range of collective attributes, skills, abilities and expertise called capabilities which can be both 'technical' (e.g. policy analysis, natural resource assessment, financial resource management) and 'social-relational' (e.g. mobilising and engaging actors to collaborate towards a shared purpose across organisational boundaries, creating collective meaning and identity, managing the tensions between collaboration and competition);
- Capacity refers to the overall ability of a system to perform and sustain itself.

79. LADA's main objective and its four outcomes are to develop methods and tools to assess land degradation. In order to achieve these results, six countries were selected as pilot countries to test these new methods and tools. Through the LADA project process, country representatives should acquire skills and knowledge in land degradation assessment. However, at the national levels, the existence of a robust methodology and tools will not be sufficient for changing the way the land as a resource is managed: more in-country capacity development activities would be needed to ensure sustainable changes.

80. The project document includes an activity that is to *analyse national and local level policy processes*

⁴ GNU: Gnu's Not Unix, a free operating system upward-compatible with Unix.

⁵ See the study on “*Capacity, Change and Performance*” conducted by the European Center for Development Policy Management; which explored the notion of capacity and capacity development (<http://www.ecdpm.org/>).

for renewable natural resources information, determining suitable entry points for land degradation information, and making available and operational the information system for national and district level planning and practice. Some initial work took already place in pilot countries during the PDF-B phase. However, additional analyses may be required to identify the capacity gaps of how land is managed and how land degradation is controlled in each country. This activity was planned under outcome 3 (local assessments) and it is recommended that these analyses be conducted in parallel to the local assessments currently underway (see Section 7).

81. A greater focus on capacity development in the pilot countries would enhance the methodology. The DPSIR framework was well received by the pilot countries. It describes the interactions between society and the environment and provides opportunities to identify responses (solutions). Knowing the baseline better (current capacity) would enrich the analytical process and the identification of feasible solutions.

4.2.4. Stakeholder Participation / Ownership of Results

82. The participation of Stakeholders in the implementation of LADA is good; it is rated as satisfactory. Stakeholder engagement started with the PDF-A and PDF-B phase. During these two phases, the project undertook a number of activities including: the establishment of an international technical steering committee; a review of baseline data availability; the identification of initial elements of the LADA methodology, including land degradation indicators; a review of partnership modalities for implementing LADA; thematic studies in several countries (Argentina, China, Senegal); and case studies in South Africa, Uzbekistan, Kenya, Egypt, Malaysia and Peru. Finally, training workshops took place in three regions (Africa, Caribbean and Asia) and in three of the pilot countries. A large number of stakeholders participated in these early days of the LADA project through meetings, seminars, workshops and also an email conference (October-November 2002) to which over 1,000 experts in land degradation and desertification were invited to contribute. This large consultation was opened to all, it was transparent and results were communicated regularly through publications and web sites; it was a chance for key partners to get involved in LADA.

83. Following the two PDF phases, the project implementation started with few highly relevant international partners and six pilot countries, all willing to contribute to the implementation of the LADA project. Relevant stakeholders from these organizations benefited from the work conducted during the initial PDF phases, including the training workshops. As a result, Stakeholders stayed engaged with LADA and are now contributing greatly to the achievements of the LADA project.

84. The main stakeholder organizations involved in LADA are:

- *International stakeholders:* GEF, UNCCD, its Secretariat, its CST and its Global Mechanism, UNEP, FAO and the CGIAR institutions;
- *Project Partners:* ISRIC, University of East Anglia and WOCAT
- *Pilot Countries (lead agencies):*
 - Argentina: Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible
 - China: National Bureau to Combat Desertification, State Forestry
 - Administration/Secretariat of China National Committee for the Implementation of UN Convention to Combat Desertification
 - Cuba: Centre of Information and Management of Environmental Education
 - Senegal: Centre de Suivi Ecologique
 - South Africa: National Department of Agriculture
 - Tunisia: Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Water Resources

85. Despite a good participation of stakeholders⁶, the ownership of LADA results by the participating countries is somewhat limited. They participate to the implementation of LADA through letters of agreement defining the cooperation between LADA-Headquarters in Rome and each lead agency in the six countries. They also meet together during the LADA training workshops and other events supported by LADA. However, despite a good collaboration among the project partners and the project management team, it stays as “us and them” and three factors seem to contribute to this (see also Section 4.3.5):

6 Observations by the Evaluator during the workshop in Mendoza was an opportunity to highlight this participation.

- There are project partners but not really project decision-makers. The Steering committee met only twice since the start of this implementation phase in 2006. The last meeting in November 2008 in Istanbul was mentioned many times during the interviews for this MTE; it indicates the interest in the debate and decision-making for the LADA project. More opportunities should be given to all to participate in the LADA project decision-making process.
- The LADA strategy is geared towards the establishment of a methodology for assessing land degradation worldwide and not enough oriented towards the implementation of this methodology in the six countries. A greater focus on institutionalizing LADA results in each country would be both beneficial for more country ownership and also for the method and its replicability.
- A lot of effort has already been put in the communication area but more seems to be needed. The emphasis should be on creating a network of partners where each partner would be encouraged to communicate and exchange with each other.

4.2.5. Additional Project Achievements

86. As described in Section 4.2.1, the project achievements meet the expected results. LADA will produce a robust methodology to conduct land degradation assessments. The internal logic of the project was for LADA to produce methods and tools for land degradation assessments and these instruments to be packaged into a strategic global action plan for their dissemination worldwide. However, in parallel to the development of these methods and tools, LADA has already been solicited by other projects, programmes and organizations for a transfer of their know-how. The main requests were:

- The regional programme CACILM (Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management) described above has shown definite interests in applying the methodology developed by LADA. FAO is a partner with ADB on the CACILM project and will provide the LADA methodology for assessing land degradation.
- The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is a research based policy support organisation and an integral part of the European Commission. The JRC is providing the scientific advice and technical know-how to support a wide range of EU policies. Through their DESERT action, JRC together with UNDP is developing a new World Atlas of Desertification and asked LADA to contribute on aspects related to land degradation assessment.
- Another transfer of know-how is through the UNCCD process and the GEF as a financial mechanism of the convention. Since GEF is funding LADA it is natural that the results be incorporated into further activities related to land degradation. However, it is worth noting that knowledge transfer to the UNCCD process (National Action Plans and National Reports of Parties) and to the GEF process to help inform priority setting and resource allocations decisions in support of land degradation control were not mentioned in the project document. As LADA moves towards completion, the possibilities for informing such decisions will have added significance as GEF is preparing GEF-5 in close collaboration with UNCCD (*see Section 4.1.1*).
- The TerrAfrica Initiative that is to rally government, civil society, private sector and development partners around a common vision and program, building upon existing successful approaches and partnerships for SLM. Its aim is to create the enabling environment for scaling up and mainstreaming SLM at country level in Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA). The main tool of this initiative is the Country Investment Strategic Framework (CISF) for joint programming and implementation of SLM activities by Government, local populations and partners in a given country. These CISFs will include a component that is the monitoring, assessment and evaluation of land degradation, climate change impacts and remedial actions. The initiative is planning to use the LADA methodology for the implementation of this component.
- Countries such as Mexico, Somalia, Equatorial Guinea, Dominican Republic and Pakistan have expressed a need for some support in the area of land degradation assessment and are interested by the LADA methodology.

4.2.6. Risk and Assumptions / Risk Mitigation Management

87. The management of risks and their mitigation measures is rated as satisfactory. The risks related to the implementation of this project were developed in the project document (FSP). A section in the document reviewed the risks linked with the sustainability of the project. In addition, the log-frame presented in Annex

B identified all risks involved with the implementation of each expected result. It is a comprehensive list that was a good exercise at the design stage. However, its usability could be questioned from a management perspective. A list of 30+ risks to monitor and report would take much project management resources. The table below presents this list of risks identified in the log-frame:

Table 6: List of Project Risks

| Risk |
|---|
| 1. Country commitment |
| 2. Access to data, surveys and remote sensing imagery unrestricted |
| 3. Involvement of local stakeholders and communities for detailed assessment unrestricted |
| 4. Participating countries and institutions continue to accept project goal to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of land degradation |
| 5. Institutional cooperation and willingness to develop policy for sustainable land management |
| 6. Communication and exchange of information unhindered |
| 7. Availability of relevant scientific and multidisciplinary expertise at national, regional and global levels |
| 8. Existing information sufficient and comprehensive enough upon which to build recommendations |
| 9. Existing information sufficient |
| 10. Continued support for national task forces |
| 11. Willingness of partners, non-participating countries and other networks to co-operate |
| 12. Availability of relevant scientific and multidisciplinary expertise at national, regional and global levels |
| 13. Free access to all available relevant information |
| 14. Willingness of partners to share information |
| 15. All relevant institutions continue to agree to be part of land degradation assessment process |
| 16. Involved professionals agree to balance negative and positive situations |
| 17. Availability of suitable local professionals for training and capacity building |
| 18. Enabling environment created by national institutions |
| 19. Policy-makers at all levels able and willing to enter dialogue on land degradation |
| 20. Cooperation of relevant institutions |
| 21. Willingness of national and local professional staff to develop new skills |
| 22. Trained staff released to undertake user needs and information needs assessments |
| 23. Institutions can agree on information system and allocate resources accordingly |
| 24. Trained staff released to undertake detailed assessment |
| 25. Enabling environment created by national institutions sufficient to support policy forums and analysis |
| 26. Sufficient agreement exists between partners to harmonize 'best practices' |
| 27. National experts continue to appreciate the role of critical components (such as local knowledge) and to integrate them into their planning and processes |
| 28. Partners and cooperating institutions willing and able to agree comprehensive framework |
| 29. Local, national and international findings sufficiently consistent to develop clear recommendations in the framework |
| 30. Willing cooperation of all partners and multiple sources with success narratives |
| 31. Willingness of UNCCD secretariat to continue involvement |
| 32. National partners amenable to project involvement in policy development |
| 33. OP15 is the main programme to make land degradation issues operational; and OP15 still commands GEF Council enthusiastic support and funding |
| 34. Willingness of partners and other key players in land degradation to be involved in packaging, communication and exchange of land degradation information |

88. This comprehensive list of risks identified at the design stage hasn't been monitored and reported on since the project implementation began. Instead, the project management team monitors a list of managerial risks that are reviewed once a year and reported in the PIR each year. Section 3.3 - *Risks* of the PIR contains a risk factor table that is completed by the Project Manager and the UNEP Task Manager for LADA. This same risk factor table was completed by the evaluation team and presented in Appendix 8. The few differences in rating the risks are:

- *Internal Communication*: Communication is "fluid and cordial"– particularly within the FAO project management team. However, more communication is needed with country representatives to develop and maintain some ownership of the project by these stakeholders. They are part of the project and better "internal" communication is needed.
- *Environmental Conditions*: The risk linked with environmental conditions is low, as it cannot really affect the implementation of the project. The objective of LADA is indeed to assess the degradation

of the land due to severe weather events and other environmental stress factors and possibly to human activities.

- *Social, Cultural and Economic Factors*: Same logic, the impact of social, cultural and economic factors can have only little influence on the achievement of its long-term objective that is to produce methods and tools to be used globally.
- *Decline of the Dollar*: The total budget of LADA has been affected negatively by the change of the exchange rate between the US\$ and local currencies. However, considering the financial status of LADA – only 39% of the budget spent at the MTE time vs. 67% of the time elapsed – it did not affect the overall implementation of LADA.

89. However, despite all these risks identified at the design phase and monitored annually through the PIRs, there is no mention of one strategic risk that is: “*The LADA project is producing methods and tools for assessing land degradation and that the uptake of these by key stakeholders, such as UNCCD, GEF and relevant countries may be non-existent or rather limited*”. It is a critical success factor and the risk is rated as medium due mostly to the fact of the tight schedule to complete the project. The uptake by key stakeholders can only happen once the first three outcomes are finalized. The methodology is being finalized and activities under outcome 4 should address this uptake and contribute to the long-term success of the project.

4.3. What is the Efficiency of the Project?

90. This Section presents the findings on the efficiency of the project in utilizing/mobilizing its resources. It reviews the overall management approach and the use of adaptive management, the financial management and its financial status, the technical assistance, the delivery mechanisms, the stakeholders’ participation and the monitoring approach to measure the progress of the project.

4.3.1. Project Management Approach and Tools / Adaptive Management

91. The project is properly managed; it follows FAO and UNEP-DGEF procedures for project implementation. It is rated as satisfactory. When needed, the project management team applies an adaptive management approach to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design. The project document and particularly the *Annex D – Project Work Plan* have been used to guide the implementation of the project and track its achievements. The progress is reported twice a year through semi-annual reports to UNEP and the yearly PIR to UNEP-DGEF/GEFSEC.

92. The management procedures to procure the project assets and equipment and to contract institutions (see Section 4.3.5) follow the existing FAO rules and procedures. All project transactions are recorded and properly classified and show good internal control mechanisms to manage and control project resources. Overall, the project has been cost-effective when one considers that the project has spent so far US\$ 2.8M to support the achievements as described in Section 4.2.1.

93. Adaptive management has been used regularly to adapt to a constantly changing environment and try to keep the delivery of the project on the original timeline. The project started in May 2006, however, the recruitment of the technical advisor was only completed in August 2006. Since 2006, the project management team was able to “catch-up” to the four months lost at the beginning.

94. The project has been implemented using the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach adopted by FAO. The review of the project document indicates that a set of expected results were identified and that project progress is reported against this set of results. However, the log-frame is more activity-based; for each outcome the focus is on activities to be undertaken. The budget presentation emphasizes the budget per line item. Furthermore, the implementation of LADA is emphasizing activities to be undertaken as opposed to expected results to be achieved. The RBM approach implemented on LADA needs to be understood within the FAO reform context. Through the adoption of the Strategic Framework 2000-2015, RBM was introduced but was not accompanied by a wider-reaching set of organizational reforms needed to fully promote and support the implementation of RBM at FAO. The result is that a Results-Based Budgeting is in place but not a full RBM approach. However, the new FAO Strategic Framework and the Medium Term Plan under preparation should provide a greater focus and prioritization of all FAO’s work on agreed goals. This should contribute to the use of a better RBM approach in the short term by FAO’s units and FAO

Officers.

95. The review of gender balance on the LADA project indicates that the project maintains a participatory and gender sensitive approach; it is satisfactory. The project team includes males and females. In the six pilot countries, 4 countries have women represented in the LADA Task Force. More importantly, though, the process of developing the local assessment methodology shows much gender sensitivity. One of the main FAO officers in charge of this set of activities is a female with experience in gender and Natural Resource Management: her leadership role allowed facilitating a favourable environment to involve women in Tunisia in a field (soil science and land management) generally dominated by men. Furthermore, an FAO female junior expert played a key-supporting role in developing livelihood tools for local assessments. She supported the development of socio-economic tools to capture gender differences in relation to land degradation. As a result, tools and questionnaires developed for conducting local assessments of land degradation include guidance to help identify social and gender differences. Overall, the project scores reasonably well on gender sensitivity.

96. The review of the project timetable indicates that overall the project implementation is on track as compared to the original implementation plan. However, as discussed in section 4.1.5 this is an ambitious project – with a tight schedule - and the logic of the long-term strategy relies mostly on the success of outcome 4 that is about replicating the project achievements and to be conducted at the tail end of the project. In other words, there is a risk that by the end of the official ending date, the project will have finalized the methodology but the replication strategy (“*Strategy for Global Action*”) may not be entirely completed or not fully in place for further actions. Considering the importance of this component/outcome (#4), it is recommended to review the original strategy for this component as described in the project document and to elaborate a work plan for its implementation during the remaining period of the project (*see Section 7*).

4.3.2. Financial Planning and Management

97. The accounting and financial system used by the project management team is adequate; it is rated as satisfactory. Funds are properly managed using FAO financial procedures, and accountability system and financial reports are produced accurately and timely. Nevertheless, the management of project finances has not been easy. The financial management and reporting requirements of UNEP/GEF necessitated the duplication of some financial tasks for the project management team. The finances are managed following FAO financial guidelines. The FAO system tracks project expenditures by line items. However, these lines do not directly correspond to the UNEP/GEF line items. A second reporting layer had to be developed in order to meet the UNEP/GEF requirements; this might pose risks as a potential source of inconsistencies and mistakes.

98. The review indicated that financial information is provided to UNEP on a regular basis. The overall disbursement of the GEF funds is presented on the front page of the PIRs. Based on the information reviewed by the Evaluation Team, as of the end of December 2008 it indicates that US\$ 2,747,941 was spent from the GEF budget of US\$ 7M7. As indicated in the table below, it represents a total spent of 39% of the budget versus 67% (32 out of 48 months) of the total duration of the project.

Table 7: GEF Fund Disbursement Status

| Item | Budget | Expended (a) | % Spent | Plan 2009-10 (b) | Total (a) + (b) | % |
|-------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------|
| Outcome 1 | 1,280,493 | 729,721 | 57% | 539,530 | 1,269,251 | 18% |
| Outcome 2 | 1,843,819 | 1,057,162 | 57 | 797,899 | 1,855,061 | 27 |
| Outcome 3 | 2,539,585 | 472,260 | 19 | 2,067,325 | 2,539,585 | 36 |
| Outcome 4 | 379,000 | | 0 | 379,000 | 379,000 | 5 |

7 The Evaluation Team noted that the funding for this MTE was drawn from the UNEP DGEF fee. It is normal GEF practice for direct evaluation costs for independent evaluations to be drawn from the project budget. Direct costs for the Terminal Evaluation should be allocated by the project within the project budget.

| Item | Budget | Expended (a) | % Spent | Plan 2009-10 (b) | Total (a) + (b) | % |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|---------|------------------|-----------------|------|
| Project Mgmt | 957,103 | 488,798 | 51 | 468,305 | 957,103 | 14 |
| Total | 7,000,000 | 2,747,941 | 39% | 4,252,059 | 7,000,000 | 100% |

Source: Data obtained from the FAO Project Management Team - figures are as of December 31, 2008

99. These figures raise some flags! From an average of US\$ 86k per month of project expenditures for the period May 2006 to December 2008, the monthly average needs to increase to US\$ 266K during the remaining period Jan. 2009 to April 2010 (a three-fold increase). It is indeed a large increase in processing these expenditures including the function of administering these new figures if the project is to meet its financial targets by the end of the project.

100. In addition, due to the negative change of the exchange rate (decrease of the US\$ value) over the first half of the project, less money was available in local currencies. The project management team estimated the loss at 30% of the total value of the project expended so far. However, considering the level of spending (much lower than anticipated) and the current exchange rates, devaluation effects on the total project budget are likely to be much more limited by the end of the project.

101. Before analysing further these figures, the Evaluation Team also reviewed the figures for the LADA-GEF contribution to the six pilot countries as presented in the table below:

Table 8: GEF Fund Status at Country Level

| Item | Agreed Country Allocation | | | Field Authorizations & Expenditures | Remaining | % |
|--------------|---------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----|
| | Direct | Indirect (FAO) | Total | | | |
| Argentina | 449,162 | 128,566 | 577,728 | 332,031 | 245,697 | 43% |
| China | 765,930 | 229,762 | 995,692 | 317,846 | 677,846 | 68 |
| Cuba | 342,592 | 125,307 | 467,899 | 245,522 | 222,377 | 48 |
| Senegal | 365,450 | 110,470 | 475,920 | 118,256 | 357,664 | 75 |
| South Africa | 470,947 | 139,843 | 610,790 | 209,264 | 401,526 | 66 |
| Tunisia | 309,062 | 97,117 | 406,179 | 178,776 | 227,403 | 56 |
| Total | 2,703,143 | 831,065 | 3,534,208 | 1,401,695 | 2,132,513 | 60% |

Source: Data obtained from the FAO Project Management Team and figures are as of February 1, 2009

102. These figures indicate that 40% of the GEF fund allocated to countries (US\$ 3.5M) has been spent so far⁸, that is 60% remains to be spent (vs. 33% of the time left). Furthermore, from the total remaining US\$ 4.3M (see Table 7), US\$ 2.1M (Table 8) is allocated to project activities to be implemented in the six pilot countries and half of this US\$ 2.1M represents the budget for conducting local assessments.

103. In conclusion, the analysis of the financial information regarding the LADA project indicates a great possibility that the project will not spend its entire budget by the official end date. The interviews with the project management team indicates that the US\$ 1M allocated to local assessments has been completely processed administratively; that now it is left to countries to conduct their activities and utilize this budget. Overall, there is a total remaining of US\$ 4.3M to expend between now and the end of LADA in 16 months; it is unlikely that this amount will be expended by May 1, 2010.

104. If we try to align the project expenditures with the project activities and achievements, these seem to

⁸ Note that the "cutting" date for both tables (7 & 8) are slightly different (Dec. 31, 08 vs. Jan. 31, 09). However, a one month of expenditures would not change the analysis presented above.

be in line. In other words, the budget was not over estimated. The explanation for this delay in expending the GEF budget is the short timeframe of this ambitious project (4 years). As already discussed in Section 4.1.5 and 4.2.1, the project may not be fully delivered by the end of its planned closure date. It is important that this issue be reviewed as soon as possible and, if confirmed, that a time extension be given to the LADA project to complete its activities; remembering that the last part of LADA will contribute greatly to its long-term impact and long-term sustainability through replication of its results worldwide. Clearly, the time extension of LADA will require a corresponding extension of the involvement of the FAO project management team.

105. A final note on LADA financial matters. The project document states a budget of US\$ 7M to be funded by GEF and the project was approved for this same amount. However, two different budget allocation figures are presented in the project document. The first one is on page 23 and the second one is in *Annex D – Project Work Plan*.

Table 9: GEF Budget Allocation per Component

| Component | Prodoc Page 23 | Annex D |
|--------------|----------------|-----------|
| Outcome 1 | 450,000 | 1,280,492 |
| Outcome 2 | 1,700,000 | 1,843,818 |
| Outcome 3 | 3,740,000 | 2,539,585 |
| Outcome 4 | 690,000 | 379,000 |
| Project Mgmt | 420,000 | 957,103 |
| Total | 7,000,000 | 6,999,998 |

Source: Project Document and update from FAO

106. These discrepancies were identified during this MTE. The FAO project management team has executed the project by following Annex D – Project Work Plan. This is the allocation the project management team followed since its start-up and that these figures were used by the Evaluation Team for the financial analysis of the LADA project.

4.3.3. Fund Leveraging / Co-financing

107. The capacity of the project to leverage co-financing of project activities is rated satisfactory. The project document included a total amount of co-funding commitments of US\$ 8,000,000 secured from the LADA partners through commitment letters. This good level of co-funding is confirmed from the participation of all partners in the LADA project. The commitments are presented in the Table below:

Table 10: Co-financing from Project Partners

| Partner | Commitments (US\$) | Actual (US\$) | % Spent |
|-------------------|--------------------|---------------|---------|
| FAO | 2,000,000 | | |
| UNEP | 1,675,000 | | |
| ISRIC | 348,000 | | |
| GLCN | 200,000 | | |
| UN-UNU | 140,000 | | |
| WOCAT | 88,000 | | |
| Partner Countries | Argentina | 863,000 | |
| | China | 1,100,000 | |
| | Cuba | 260,000 | |
| | Senegal | 379,000 | |

| Partner | Commitments (US\$) | Actual (US\$) | % Spent |
|--------------|--------------------|---------------|---------|
| South Africa | 400,000 | | |
| Tunisia | 554,000 | | |
| Total (US\$) | 8,007,000 | | |

Source: Project Document, UNEP-PIR 2008 and update from FAO as of December 31, 2008

108. No reporting on these commitments has been done so far. The figure shown on the last PIR is only a calculated co-financing amount proportionate to the time elapsed. A breakdown of these commitments exists with the official letter of commitments. What is needed now is to communicate with each respective entity and request the amounts contributed so far.

109. Nevertheless, the commitments from these partners appear to be fulfilled according to the original commitments and may exceed them in some cases. This partnership and the respective contributions are part of the strengths of the LADA project and the sooner this is documented the better. The MTE recommends that the next PIR 2009 (end of June 2009) be a target date for documenting the actual amounts of co-financing. As per GEF guidelines, the financial table for reporting co-financing contribution is provided in Appendix 9.

4.3.4. Quality of Technical Assistance / Use of Country Capacity

110. The quality of technical assistance implementing the project, including the national partners is good; it is rated satisfactory. The project is implemented in each country by a team of professionals who are often the key professionals and/or decision-makers in the sector of soil protection/land degradation in these countries. The international partners are representatives from well-known institutions in the area of land degradation. These partners bring the necessary scientific expertise needed to develop a robust methodology applicable in all drylands worldwide. With this approach the project has a self-validation process for its results.

111. The overall project is coordinated by an effective team of Senior FAO Officers; including a contract position paid by the project as the LADA Project Coordinator. The project staffs are motivated and dedicated to the success of the project; they lead the project and contribute to the project achievements through the timely and accurate mobilization of project resources. The time spent on the LADA project by the Senior Officers represents the major part of the FAO contribution to the project. However, it is noted that, as of August 2009, the LADA Project Coordinator – the only full time position paid by the GEF fund – will step down as only three years were budgeted in the project budget for this position. It is recommended to extend the financing of this position in order to support the completion of all project activities and the consolidation of outputs (*see Section 7*).

112. The choice of partners is critical for the success of the project. In countries, LADA is directly “connected” with the decision-making centres for land degradation. For instance the project team in China includes the Director of the National Bureau to Combat Desertification, State Forestry Administration/Secretariat of China National Committee for the Implementation of UNCCD, in Tunisia the LADA team is led by the Director of Soil, in Argentina the LADA project is led by the UNCCD focal point, etc. The partners in the six countries are the ones who need to be involved. Once the methodology has been finalized, there is an excellent opportunity for institutionalizing the results in these 6 countries.

113. From the point of view of international partners, the same logic applies. Most of the work is done by institutional partners instead of private consultants. The expertise of these institutions is already known worldwide in their respective areas and the work conducted under the LADA project is “automatically” institutionalized within these institutions; contributing to the long-term sustainability and replicability of the LADA results. This is also the case for ISRIC, WOCAT and University of East Anglia, all LADA institutional partners.

114. One area that could be improved would be to make greater use of national expertise available from the six countries; including expertise in regional centres such as OSS or the CGIAR institutions. They are

already bringing a large amount of experience for the development of the LADA methodology. However, they could be engaged to a greater degree, which would increase the ownership of the project results in countries and contribute to a better institutionalization of these results.

4.3.5. Project Delivery Mechanisms / Partnerships

115. LADA is a global project intervening directly in six countries representing six world regions. Due to its nature, it also needs to balance the scientific side of developing a new land degradation assessment methodology with the development side of implementing and institutionalizing this new methodology in the six pilot countries. The mechanisms to deliver the project are complex but overall effective; they are rated satisfactory.

116. The project document stated clear roles and responsibilities for all parties to be involved in the project; some highlights are:

- The project is executed by FAO. A senior FAO staff member coordinates the project (Project Manager) assisted by a Technical Advisor and supported by a LADA Task Force, comprised of representatives of all relevant FAO technical units⁹.
- The project is to be executed primarily by national teams of experts drawn from national research institutions, universities, government agencies and development and policy-making institutions in the participant countries. The scientists in each national team cover a range of skills and disciplines relevant to land degradation assessment, analysis and impact.
- At a global level, LADA will co-ordinate with the UNCCD framework to ensure a key support role in implementing RAPs, SRAPs and NAPS. This will enable action plans to have a better quantitative basis and allow calculation of resources for mobilization of land degradation control and remediation.
- LADA aims to provide a supportive role for the implementation of the priorities of the GEF, UNCCD and UNCBD pertaining to drylands. The project has also established initial linkages with other major regional and global initiatives, such as NEPAD, MA, MDGs and JPOI/WEHAB. These linkages will be progressively strengthened in LADA as the project develops its Outcome 4 products.

117. In the six pilot countries a LADA Task Force was created to oversee the progress of the project in the respective countries. One institution per country (except Argentina where 5 institutions are involved in the implementation of LADA) is leading the implementation and FAO establishes “*Letter of Agreement*” for each major work packages that is a type of contract defining the expected outputs to be delivered and the corresponding resources needed. The money is either transferred through the local FAO office or directly to the institutions.

118. The partnership with the international partners is the same model as the partnerships with the six pilot countries. The FAO project management team establishes a “*Letter of Agreement*” for each work package that is a contract with expected outputs and the corresponding budget from GEF. The terms of payment are mostly output-based, that is money is transferred to this institution against a set of expected outputs delivered.

119. The project was to be overseen by a project steering committee (PSC) – including a smaller group serving as executive committee - and a scientific committee. These committees were set up at project inception. However, these committees did not work as anticipated as oversight and decision-making bodies. The PSC met only twice so far with the first meeting in November 2006 after a few months into the implementation and the second meeting in November 2008 in Istanbul. The scientific committee never met formally as such. Most members met during other LADA events but not in a formal meeting set-up. As a result, the PSC did not steer the LADA project; at most members were consulted for advice. One reason advanced for the PSC not meeting more regularly was the cost. It is true that for a global project a higher cost for participatory decision-making process is unavoidable but it is needed to maximize the ownership of project achievements by stakeholders. Also, budget availability was not a problem for the project so far. We now know that it would have been more effective to spend more dollars on PSC meetings to maximize the

⁹ An additional Officer was added to the FAO implementation team with 30% of her time to be spent on LADA activities.

ownership of LADA achievements.

120. The implication of not having PSC meetings is that the FAO project management team makes most decisions pertaining to the implementation of the LADA project in consultation with UNEP-DGEF. It is not a participatory decision-making process and it prevents to keep a strong ownership of the project by all Stakeholders. The FAO Team Members are the only ones who have the “big picture” by communicating regularly with all country representatives and the LADA international partners.

4.3.6. Roles, Capacity and Efficiency of Implementing and Executing Agencies

121. The efficiency of the agencies responsible for the implementation of the LADA project is rated as satisfactory. FAO, as the executing agency, provides the necessary project management support such as ensuring an efficient use of the GEF resources; providing a professional progress reporting system through semi-annual progress reports and annual PIRs reflecting the progress made but also if there are any issues to be dealt with; and ensuring the efficient use of FAO procedures for procurement, hiring and contracting. UNEP, as the implementing agency, is providing an oversight role and also a technical role through the Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) of UNEP. Both roles are separated by a “firewall” to ensure neutrality of these two processes: technical input to the project and oversight.

122. Moreover, the involvement of FAO and UNEP provide the project with a global link to access relevant international experiences and resources and explore relevant lessons learned and best practices applicable in the context of the LADA project. Each organization has access to their own constituencies, which should contribute to the uptake and scaling-up of the project results. For instance, UNEP has a constituency of Environmental Ministers from around the world, a vehicle that could be used to disseminate LADA results.

4.3.7. Project Monitoring and Progress Reporting

123. The review of the monitoring and progress reporting of the LADA project indicates a complex monitoring system with lots of indicators, which due this complexity cannot be really implemented properly; it is rated as moderately satisfactory. As a result, using the performance indicators from the log-frame, the project management team identified baseline levels, mid-term targets, end of project targets and indicator status at the time of reporting. The project management team simplified the monitoring and evaluation plan and uses this set of targets to measure the progress of the project and report to UNEP and GEF.

124. According to the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (Annex H of the project document), measuring the implementation progress of the project was to be done through:

- *Project execution*: The management and supervision of project activities was to be monitored by the FAO LADA Task Force at global and generic levels, and by national Task Forces in the participating countries.
- *Project performance*: Internal evaluation by the Task Force, Steering Committee and Scientific Committee was to assess the delivery of Log-frame Outcomes.
- *Impact evaluation*: The Scientific Committee may commission impact studies at national and global levels to investigate the degree to which LADA products and information are being used and integrated in decision-making processes. Key indicators will be: (1) the range of stakeholder involvement; (2) the uptake of LADA products, processes and procedures; and (3) the introduction into policy and practice of land degradation assessment and analysis. Ultimately, impact evaluation will seek to assess the degree to which processes such as soil erosion and vegetation destruction of drylands have been controlled through a better engagement with the base of information provided by LADA.

125. On the basis of monitoring the project in the areas of project execution, project performance and impact evaluation, the plan provided four distinct categories to be monitored:

- *Execution performance*: Monitoring will concentrate on the management and supervision of project activities, seeking to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation.
- *Delivered outputs*: Ongoing evaluation will assess the project’s success in producing each of the programmed outputs, both in quantity and quality.

- *Project performance*: Performance evaluation will assess the project's success in achieving its objectives
- *Project impact*: Two major areas have been identified for impact assessment, namely: i) development of standardised and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment and ii) provision of best practice guidelines for dryland degradation assessment that will be disseminated widely. Impact assessment in these two areas will depend upon the phases and milestones of the project.

126. Despite the thoroughness of this monitoring and evaluation plan, its implementation was not feasible. It included too many areas to be monitored and not focussed enough on the achievement of project's expected results. For each of these categories above, a set of indicators was identified for a total of about 25 indicators. Then the log-frame included an additional set of indicators for the two objectives, four outcomes and sixteen activities for a total of 25 indicators. The monitoring and evaluation plan included a total of 50 indicators to monitor the LADA project. The review indicates that it was not implemented as planned.

127. Instead, the project management team simplified the monitoring and evaluation plan and used only the performance indicators from the log-frame to measure the progress of the project and to report to UNEP and GEF. It identified baseline levels, mid-term targets, end of project targets and indicator status at the time of reporting. The nine indicators identified for measuring the project performance against the two objectives are presented in the table below:

Table 11: List of Performance Indicators for Project Objectives

| Performance Indicator |
|--|
| Objective 1: <i>To develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scale.</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardised methodological framework for the process of dryland degradation assessment developed and accepted by ALL participating national groups • Guidelines for dryland degradation assessment developed and in use in ALL participating countries • Baseline dryland degradation assessments completed at a scale no smaller than 1:1 million in ALL participating countries • Global assessment of actual dryland degradation completed mainly through proxy assessments, the drivers identified and key 'hot-spots' located where potential impact on ecosystems, watersheds, river basins and carbon storage is severe • Detailed assessments and analysis of land degradation, focusing on areas of greatest risk and areas where degradation has been successfully controlled, completed in ALL participating countries • Monitoring systems in place to provide warning of land degradation and its impact in ALL participating countries |
| Objective 2: <i>To build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices</i> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis to assess and understand the causes of land degradation areas at risk in ALL participating countries in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Types of dryland land degradation ○ Extent and severity of land degradation (changes in soils, land cover, ecosystems, and agro-ecological zones) on the resources used for agriculture (cropping; livestock) and for conservation of biodiversity ○ Biophysical and socio-economic processes, driving factors and causes ○ Impacts on environment (ecosystem function, carbon storage, watershed integrity, international waters etc) ○ Developmental impact (food security, livelihoods, poverty etc.) • Best practices for the identification, control and prevention of land degradation in drylands in ALL participating countries and institutions facilitated and integrated in policy and decision-making, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Multi-stakeholder involvement and participation, especially of land users, farmers and the rural poor at the local level and of policy-makers at national and global levels ○ Inclusion of local professionals and extension agents in field assessment of land degradation through adopting a farmer-perspective and using a sustainable rural livelihoods approach ○ Identification of synergies between different global benefits (biodiversity, climate change, international fresh water basins / river systems etc.) and between global and local benefits (food security, livelihood support, poverty alleviation etc.) ○ Adoption and adaptation of scientific knowledge at global, regional and national levels and its integration with local knowledge where local people have successfully controlled land degradation ○ Building into implementation project design a capacity for policy guidance and for scaling-up lessons and |

Performance Indicator

- recommendations to a wider target group and non-project areas
- Establishment of monitoring systems to sustain improvements in land use and management practices
- Communication and exchange of land degradation information, and its linkage to policy process and decision-making, through:
 - Policy guidance (in, for example, UNCCD Regional, Sub-regional and National Action Programmes)
 - GEF and implementation agency interventions in land degradation control
 - Identification of priority actions, such as policy and institutional reforms and development investments at all levels
 - Implementation of best practices to identify land degradation issues and employ lessons to check and reverse problem issues
 - Development of communication provisions for monitoring at all levels the effectiveness of land degradation and remedial control measures.

128. The analysis indicates that the log-frame is too activity driven and not enough results-based (*see Section 4.3.1*). As a result, monitoring activities necessitated the identification of numerous indicators, and some of them are redundant from a results-based point of view. Additionally, the indicators to measure the progress for each activity are rather targets/milestones set along the timeline such as “*by month 17, an information system designed and tested*” or “*Starting by month 19 and completed by month 42, pilot national assessments completed and evaluated for scaling-up*”. Most of these indicators are valid but ultimately they do not provide much information as to how well the project is progressing and achieving its objectives. For instance, measuring that by month 17, an information system is designed and tested does not provide much information about how well the project is progressing towards achieving an improved, needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated. However, despite the shortcomings of the current monitoring framework in place, it is not recommended to change it since the project has only one more year of implementation before its closure.

129. Finally, it is noted that the set of indicators to monitor the progress against the objectives is much focused on the adoption/institutionalization of LADA results in the six pilot countries such as “... *adopted by ALL participating countries*” or “... *completed by ALL participating countries*”, etc. They indicate that LADA is not only about developing a methodology for land degradation assessment but a methodology that is adopted and institutionalized in the six pilot countries; hence the importance of the adoption of this methodology by these countries as a critical success factor.

4.4. What are the Impacts of the Project?

130. This section discussed the progress made so far toward the achievement of the objective of the project and the likelihood that the project achievements will have a long-term impact on providing better methods and tools for assessing the land degradation process in countries with dryland areas.

4.4.1. Potential to Achieve Long Term Project Goal and Objectives

131. The potential exists for LADA to achieve its long-term goal and objectives. The goal of the project is to contribute to few GEF Operational Programmes (OP) such as conserving the biological resources of arid and semi-arid areas [OP1]; catalyzing widespread adoption of comprehensive ecosystem management interventions [OP12]; mitigating the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems [OP15]; sustainably use the biological resources of arid and semi-arid areas [OP1]; integrating ecological, economic, and social goals to achieve multiple and crosscutting local, national, and global benefits.[OP12]; and contributing to improving people’s livelihoods and economic well-being. [OP15]. The objectives of the project are: (i) to develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scale; and (ii) to build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices.

132. The review shows a good potential for the project to achieve its long-term goal and objectives; it is

rated as satisfactory. The progress made so far indicates that the project should have a long-term impact on land degradation assessment in dryland eco-zones. It is developing strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scale. This methodology is being tested in six pilot countries where local land degradation assessments are taking place. Through the development process, training is taking place through workshops and seminars and finally, datasets were collected and maps are produced to support the local assessments. A strategy will be developed for replicating these results in other countries with similar conditions. In addition, the project management team is in contact with other countries through the FAO's regional networks and several initiatives are already underway for implementing LADA results in other countries (*see Section 4.2.5*).

133. From an incremental perspective, the assumption without the project was that the continuing state of uncertainty over land degradation would remain, and the policy paralysis relevant to land degradation would continue. As a result, land degradation control would get sporadic, inequitable and ineffective attention. Therefore, LADA is providing a set of strategies, methods and tools to undertake land degradation assessments in dryland eco-zones, which, in turn, should contribute to a greater attention by governments to develop policies and measures to control land degradation.

4.4.2. Potential Impacts on Local Environment, Poverty and Other Socio-Economic Issues

134. LADA should have an impact on the local environment, poverty and other socio-economic issues; this potential is rated as satisfactory.

135. The methodology for assessing land degradation at the local level is based on the DPSIR framework (*see Section 4.2.1*). It includes the identification of the socio-economic causes and impacts of land degradation; also recognized as one of the most significant drivers of land degradation. The steps to conduct a local assessment include the identification of local communities living in the area (the area and the land management practices they use) and the assessment of the land degradation impacts on their local livelihoods. As part of these local assessments, the objective of conducting a household level livelihood analysis is to improve the understanding of how socio-economic, cultural and institutional factors influence land-users' views and management of their land resources.

136. Therefore, the LADA methodology to conduct local assessments includes the involvement of local communities to better understand the causes and drivers of land degradation. Then, as part of the process, responses to land degradation are identified - as part of DPSIR - and will help in formulating strategies and programmes to address land degradation issues. As a result, programmes and projects controlling land degradation should take place involving these communities and impact positively their livelihoods in the long-term.

4.5. What is the Project Sustainability and Replicability?

137. This section discusses whether the outcomes (end of project results) and the positive impacts (long term results) are likely to continue after the project ends and if these results are/will be replicated worldwide.

4.5.1. Sustainability Strategy and Project Exit Strategy

138. The strategy for long-term sustainability presented in the project document includes the identification of a set of assumptions with their respective management responses. It includes three main assumptions:

- The continuing commitment of the core participating countries and their institutions to engage in a unified and standardized process of land degradation assessment;
- The access to data, surveys and remote sensing imagery by stakeholders involved in the assessment process;
- The free flow of information and exchange of communication between all stakeholders, but especially the lead institutions in the core participating countries and their regional collaborators for uptake and up scaling.

139. Therefore, the sustainability was very much seen as a risk analysis where the commitment from the pilot countries was key, as well as access to data and the free flow of information. The financial sustainability was assumed to come mostly from the local governments ensuring their land degradation assessments through their regular sector budgets. Finally, the impact of assessing land degradation should lead to improving land management practices, which in turn will become more economically and environmentally viable.

140. However, the key element for the long-term sustainability of LADA is the existence of component #4 as part of the project strategy of expected results that is about replicability. The expected outcome of this component is “*a proposed global action plan incorporating the main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further actions*”. This component can be seen as the main mechanism to ensure the long-term sustainability of LADA with a two-step process: one, develop a robust methodology to assess land degradation; two, prepare a global action plan for replicating the methodology and best practices worldwide. This strategy for long-term sustainability is rated as satisfactory.

141. The replication is seen through two mechanisms inherent in the LADA design. First, the project is structured around six pilot countries and their lead institutions for conducting land degradation assessment and analysis for drylands. These countries are focal regional countries with an already-acknowledged interest and expertise in assessment processes: Argentina – for the South America region; China – for East Asia region; Cuba– for Central America and the Caribbean region; Senegal – for Francophone West Africa; South Africa – for Southern, Central and Eastern Africa region; Tunisia – for Near East, North Africa and Mediterranean region. These countries fully subscribe to Outcome 4 of the Project, which involves their undertaking of regional promotion, training, dissemination and other collaborative ventures to replicate LADA results.

142. Secondly, the project, through its Outcome 4, will deliver ‘best practice guidelines’, including full reviews of good practices and successful implementation, and finalized best practice advice. It will include actions to rehabilitate severe land degradation and actions where land degradation is effectively controlled, highlighting the generic social, economical and biophysical conditions for this to happen. The dissemination of these best practices will, therefore, offer potential replication in similar dryland eco-zones where there are major problems of land degradation.

4.5.2. Sustainability of Results Achieved by the Project

143. The potential for LADA results to be sustainable exists. As noted above, the design includes the fourth component that is about replicating the results. It is anticipated that results will be replicated through the involvement of numerous people such as those involved in control, prevention and policy making for land degradation at national level, scientists and decision-makers involved at the global level through the UNCCD and GEF processes. Some of these people will also actively participate to international meetings and get involved in the UNCCD and its related processes such as NAP and national reports. LADA Scientists will actively assist the implementation of the related GEF-Ops.

144. The review indicates that sustainability should not be an issue once the overall methodology will be finalized; it is rated as satisfactory. As discussed in Section 4.1.1, decision-makers involved in the UNCCD and GEF processes monitors the development of this methodology. These institutions are represented on the project steering committee of LADA and presentations on the LADA progress have been made to various forums such as the CRIC meeting in Istanbul in November 2008 or the UNU/FAO Conference on “*Desertification and the International Policy Imperative*” held in December 2006 in Algeria.

145. The country partners will also be major contributors to the sustainability and replicability of LADA results. As discussed in Section 4.3.4, LADA is directly “connected” with the decision-making centres for land degradation in the six pilot countries. For instance the project team in China includes the Director of the National Bureau to Combat Desertification, State Forestry Administration/Secretariat of China National Committee for the Implementation of UNCCD, in Tunisia the LADA team is led by the Director of Soil, in Argentina the LADA project is led by the UNCCD focal point, etc. These partners – who are in charge of land degradation in their countries – provide an excellent opportunity for institutionalizing LADA results in these countries. Moreover, interviews indicated that these partners are also regional “promoters” of LADA

results through various regional events they participate in. It is also recommended as a channel for replicability of results to explore in the near future.

146. Despite a risk that this methodology will not be replicated as anticipated, the large participation of stakeholders into LADA events and also the participation of the LADA project management team to various international events will contribute to the replication of this methodology regionally from where each pilot country is located and also internationally through mechanism such as the UNCCD process and the GEF as a financial mechanism for the implementation of this convention. One of the basic reasons of this project is to respond to a need for a methodology to assess land degradation in drylands. It is needed and recognized by all parties involved in the implementation of the UNCCD; LADA is fulfilling a gap. Through its communications and events, the project is visible and, as a result, many actors involved in land degradation assessment are aware of the development of this methodology. Once this methodology is finalized and accessible, its replication and up scaling should happen through the existing channels such as the COPs of the UNCCD and the GEF Council.

4.5.3. Financial and Human Resources Sustainability

147. No particular financial and human resources issues are anticipated for the long-term sustainability of the LADA project; it is rated as satisfactory. The incremental costs associated with the development of the methodology are funded by the LADA project. Once this methodology is finalized, it will be up to the relevant stakeholders in country but also in international processes such as UNCCD and GEF to use it. Some training is taking place under the LADA project to increase the skills and knowledge in the pilot countries and further training should take place in regional centres to kick-start the adoption and use of the LADA methodology regionally. Financially, it is expected that the future costs to conduct land degradation assessments will be supported by the country national budgets for land degradation control and prevention.

4.5.4. Enabling Environment – Policy, Legislation and Institutions

148. The core result of the LADA project is about the development of a methodology to assess land degradation in drylands; it is not to improve directly the enabling environment such as the policy, legal and institutional frameworks. However, in order to develop this methodology, six pilot countries were selected to contribute to the development of this methodology through piloting, testing and refining the outputs of LADA. As discussed in Section 4.3.7, the participation of these six countries to the LADA process was seen as a critical indicator of success and was to be monitored through a set of specific indicators to measure the achievements at the country level. These performance indicators (*see Section 4.3.7*), specify that:

- Standardised methodological framework for the process of dryland degradation assessment should be developed and accepted by ALL participating national groups;
- Guidelines for dryland degradation assessment developed and in use in ALL participating countries;
- Baseline dryland degradation assessments completed at a scale no smaller than 1:1 million in ALL participating countries;
- Detailed assessments and analysis of land degradation, focusing on areas of greatest risk and areas where degradation has been successfully controlled, completed in ALL participating countries;
- Monitoring systems in place to provide warning of land degradation and its impact in ALL participating countries;
- Analysis to assess and understand the causes of land degradation areas at risk in ALL participating countries;
- Best practices for the identification, control and prevention of land degradation in drylands in ALL participating countries and institutions facilitated and integrated in policy and decision-making.

149. For the project to meet these indicators, it is to say that the overall LADA methodology and approach be adopted in the six pilot countries. However, for this methodology to be adopted and properly institutionalized in the pilot countries, an enabling environment should exist in each country. However, no

mention or focus is made in the LADA project of the policy, legislation and institutional environment (*see Section 4.2.3*). Thus, the socio-political sustainability of the project is rated as moderately satisfactory.

150. At this point, limited information exists as to how good this enabling environment is in pilot countries. Considering that it is a critical area for the success of LADA it is recommended to assess how good the enabling environment is in pilot countries and what are the capacity gaps (*see Section 7*).

5. CONCLUSION / RATINGS SUMMARY

151. In conclusion, a summary of the ratings is given in the table below for each evaluation criteria.

Table 12: Overall Ratings Summary

| Criterion | Summary Comments | Rating |
|--|--|---------------------|
| Attainment of project objectives and results (overall rating) Sub criteria (below) | The attainment of project objectives and results is satisfactory. The project is highly relevant in the context of the implementation of UNCCD and GEF focal area on land degradation. It delivers what it is supposed to deliver and the results are in line with the expected results. It is delivered efficiently using the FAO procedures. However, the decision-making process is mostly done by the project management team, which contributes to a weak ownership of the project achievements by country representatives. Finally, the project spent only 39% of the GEF grant (vs. 67% of the time). Its official ending date is May 2010 and it is the Evaluation Team's view that the allocated time may not be sufficient to deliver the entire project. Moreover, its early closure could jeopardize the long-term sustainability of results. | Satisfactory |
| Effectiveness | The achievements of the project so far are satisfactory. There is good progress toward achieving its expected outcomes detailed in the project log-frame. The main achievements include a set of land degradation assessment guidelines, indicators, and information systems to collect and analyze data; a global land degradation assessment (GLADA) based on an NDVI study - though the results are being reviewed to increase the accuracy; 6 national land use system maps - including the identification of "hot-spots" and "bright-spots"; and, local assessments in these "hot and bright" spots - started in each country and should be finalized in 2009. However, the project contribution to capacity development is focusing mainly on training of stakeholders. It does not focus enough on institutional capacity and the enabling environment in the six pilot countries. The participation of stakeholders in the project is good but the ownership of project results by stakeholders is limited due mainly to a limited role as project decision-makers. Finally, the success of LADA depends mostly on the uptake by relevant international organisations such as UNCCD, the Global Mechanism and GEF, by national institutions in countries with dryland areas and by other initiatives such as CALCIM in Central Asia. | Satisfactory |
| Relevance | The LADA project is highly relevant within the context of the implementation of the UNCCD and of the GEF as a financial instrument to implement the convention. The project was developed on the premises that uncertainties exist about the seriousness and extent of land degradation and that so far the policy responses remain undirected by quality assessments at global, national and local levels. LADA is addressing these priorities by developing standardized and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment. GEF is looking into LADA results to design an assessment methodology supporting the future investment decisions of GEF-5 under the land degradation focal area. The project is also highly relevant for the pilot countries. They all have a NAP and produced national reports as part of their obligations under the UNCCD. However, assessment of land degradation is a weak area, which the LADA results should address in the medium term. | Highly Satisfactory |

| Criterion | Summary Comments | Rating |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Efficiency | The efficiency of the project is satisfactory. The project is well managed following FAO procedures for project implementation. When needed the project management team applies an adaptive management approach to secure project outcomes while maintaining adherence to the overall project design. Overall the project has been cost-effective when one considers that the project has spent so far US\$ 2.75M (39%) from the GEF grant against the current achievements. The commitments from partners to co-finance LADA are demonstrated by their actual contributions to the implementation of LADA. However, there is a need for better reporting these contributions. The project decision-making process is marginally satisfactory. With only two meetings of the steering committee, the project management team makes most decisions pertaining to the implementation of LADA. As a result, it prevents the development of a strong ownership of the project by stakeholders. Nevertheless, it is an ambitious project and despite its good progress it could run out of time if the ending date is maintained as is. It is the Evaluation Team's view that the allocated time may not be sufficient and an early closure could jeopardize the long-term sustainability of results if outcome 4 is not fully achieved. | Satisfactory |
| Sustainability of Project outcomes (overall rating) Sub criteria (below) | The prospect for the long-term sustainability of project outcomes is satisfactory. It has a good strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of project achievements. A key element of this strategy is the existence of component #4 that is to propose a global action plan incorporating the main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further actions. The overall logic for sustainability is first to develop a scientifically robust methodology to assess land degradation in dryland eco-zones; and second to prepare a global action plan for the dissemination of results and the replication of these results worldwide | Moderately Likely |
| Financial | No particular financial issues are anticipated for the long-term sustainability of the LADA project. The incremental costs associated with the development of the methodology are funded by the LADA project. Once this methodology is finalized, it will be up to the relevant stakeholders in country but also in international processes such as UNCCD and GEF to use it. Financially, it is expected that the future costs to conduct land degradation assessments will be bear by the country national budgets supporting land degradation control and prevention. | Likely |
| Socio-Political | There are, currently, political opportunities in the context of the UNCCD process and GEF-5. It is expected that LADA results will be mainstreamed through the UNCCD process and the preparation of GEF-5 by providing a solution through standardized and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment. | Likely |
| Institutional framework and governance | The overall LADA methodology and approach is to be adopted in the six pilot countries. However, it is noted that LADA does not address directly in-country institutional capacity and the enabling environment such as policy and legislation frameworks. There is a risk that the adoption of this methodology by countries may be faced by weak enabling environments; limiting its long-term impact. | Moderately Likely |
| Environmental | No particular sustainability issue is anticipated in this area. On the contrary by developing methods and tools to better assess land degradation, it could be expected that, in the long-term, LADA will have a positive impact on the ecology of dryland eco-zones. | Likely |
| Achievement of outputs and activities | Activities are executed as planned in the project document. The project management team uses the work plan identified in the project document as the main guide for the implementation of day-to-day activities. | Satisfactory |
| Monitoring and Evaluation (overall rating) | The monitoring of the project is based on a complex monitoring system with lots of indicators and it prevents to easily visualize how well the project is meeting its expected results. The tracking of all | Moderately Satisfactory |

| Criterion | Summary Comments | Rating |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| Sub criteria (below) | indicators would have been very costly. The project management team adapted and simplified the M&E system, using the performance indicators from the log-frame, the team identified baseline levels, mid-term targets, end of project targets and indicator status at the time of reporting. | |
| M&E Design | It is a complex M&E system with over 50 indicators to monitor. Despite its comprehensiveness, it was not feasible to implement this extensive M&E system. As a result, the project management team adapted a shorter version to fulfill the UNEP/GEF requirements. This complexity was also accentuated by the fact that the project is not fully results-based. Activities were described in the log-frame, which multiply the number of indicators to measure them. | Moderately Satisfactory |
| M&E Plan Implementation (use for adaptive management) | There is an M&E Section in the project document describing how the project will be monitored, accompanied by an Annex detailing the M&E plan. It is a comprehensive plan, however the list of indicators was too long, preventing a greater focus on few important performance indicators and provide critical monitoring information to project managers. | Satisfactory |
| Budgeting and Funding for M&E activities | No budget was specifically allocated to M&E in the project document. However, it is part of the overall budget for the LADA project and the project management team ensures the monitoring of these performance indicators. UNEP is paying, from its own fee, for the independent Mid-Term Evaluation and Terminal Evaluation of the LADA project. | Satisfactory |
| Catalytic Role | Its uniqueness in developing a methodology for assessing land degradation and also its response to a global need for such a methodology make the LADA project a catalyst for moving the LD agenda forward. The strategy to have selected 6 pilot countries in 6 different regions in the world also contributes to its catalytic role in each region. Faced with uncertainties about the seriousness and extent of land degradation and that so far the policy responses remain undirected by quality assessments at global, national and local levels. LADA acts as a catalyst in providing a solution through standardized and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment. | Satisfactory |
| Preparation and readiness | The internal logic and the rationale of the project described in the approved project document are still highly relevant today. As it was stated in the STAP review, the project document is comprehensive, coherent and clearly written. It is used as a blueprint to implement the project. | Highly Satisfactory |
| Country ownership / drivenness | The ownership of LADA results by the participating countries is somewhat limited. Three factors seem to contribute to this: (i) with only two PSC meetings, the project management team makes most decisions pertaining to the implementation of LADA. As a result, it prevents the development of a strong ownership of the project by stakeholders; (ii) a greater focus on the establishment of a methodology for assessing land degradation worldwide and not enough oriented towards the implementation of this methodology in the six countries; (iii) a lot of effort has already been put in the communication area but more seems to be needed, emphasizing cross communication among partners (network). | Moderately Satisfactory |
| Stakeholders involvement | The participation of Stakeholders in the implementation of LADA is good. Stakeholder engagement started with the PDF-A and PDF-B phase. During these two phases, the project undertook activities such as thematic studies, pilot/case studies and a review of partnership modalities to prepare for the implementation phase. A large number of stakeholders participated in these early days of the LADA project through meetings, seminars, workshops and also an email conference (2002) to which over 1,000 experts in land degradation and desertification were invited to contribute. This large consultation was a chance for key partners to get involved in LADA. | Satisfactory |

| Criterion | Summary Comments | Rating |
|--|--|--------------|
| Financial planning | The accounting and financial system used by the project management team is adequate. Funds are properly managed using FAO financial procedures, and accountability system and financial reports are produced accurately and timely. However, it is noted the necessity to duplicate some financial tasks due to some financial management and reporting requirements different between FAO and UNEP/GEF systems. | Satisfactory |
| UNEP Supervision and backstopping | As the implementing agency, UNEP provides an oversight role to LADA. Under its DGEF division, UNEP monitors the progress of the project and report this progress to GEF. One Senior Officer is constantly in contact with the project management team based in FAO-Rome and contributes to the annual reviews compiled in the Project Implementation Reviews (PIRs). In addition to this oversight role, UNEP is also providing technical input to LADA through the DEWA division. To prevent any conflict of interest, UNEP has “firewalls” set up to maintain independence of the two processes. | Satisfactory |

6. LESSONS LEARNED

152. A summary of lessons learned is presented below. There are based on the review of project documents and interviews with key informants, and analysis of the information collected:

- A participatory decision-making process for a global project bears higher costs than a typical country-based project. It is unavoidable but it is needed to maximize the ownership of project achievements by stakeholders. Without a participatory decision-making process, project management teams end up making most decisions. As a result, this prevents the project partners to develop a greater ownership of the decisions and achievements. The higher cost linked to this type of global project needs to be balanced against a stronger partnership and ownership of results by stakeholders.
- A good design provides project managers with a good blueprint instruments to guide the implementation. A good set of expected results (goal, objective and outcomes) provides a strong basis for applying a results-based management approach and also flexibility for the project management team to adapt its day-to-day implementation of activities and stay on time and on budget.
- A good project monitoring system needs to balance the need for a comprehensive monitoring approach including an exhaustive list of indicators with a monitoring approach that is focusing on what is necessary to monitor, that is feasible in the project’s context (limited resources) and that provides a clear picture of how the project is doing in achieving its objectives and outcomes (not its activities and outputs). A list of 10 to 15 performance indicators is generally an optimum. It would provide the project management team with a comprehensive yet realistic monitoring system offering pertinent information to project managers and project decision-makers.
- A global project intervening in multiple countries faces a multi-cultural environment and language issues to communicate among the team members. When developing a methodology (or any other type of tools) to be used globally the communication among project actors is critical. However, it is time consuming, cumbersome at times and costly to translate at any steps of the way. It is important that these aspects are taken into account in the design of such projects.
- When developing products with partners such as assessments, methodologies and tools to be used globally, any project needs to be cautious in the use of initial results. Partners should be reminded that results belong to the project. Before these types of results (and any intermediary results) can be disseminated, the project should remain focussed on the quality of these products until they can be applied/used consistently across countries to ensure consistency and validity of these results.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

153. Based on the findings of this final evaluation, the following recommendations for the remaining implementation period of the project are suggested:

Recommendation #1

Issue to Address

Currently only 39% of the GEF grant is disbursed and despite an existing plan indicating that the entire budget will be spent and that the project will be completed by May 2010, the Evaluation Team is of the view that this timing is tight to finalize all project activities; including the maximization of the long-term sustainability of the results through component #4. Additionally, the three year contract for the Technical Advisor – the only full time position on the LADA project management team – terminates in August 2009; adding pressure on the project to be completed by May 2010. It is an ambitious project and ending it at the wrong time may jeopardize its long-term impact and sustainability.

It is recommended that, subject to a review of the financial status of the project and a review of the remaining activities, the project should be extended until the end of 2010 to allow time to fully complete activities and consolidate outputs. A new work-plan and budget will have to be prepared and the contract of the Technical Advisor will have to be extended until the new closing date to allow effective management of this phase.

Recommendation #2

Issue to Address

Same issue to address as stated for recommendation #1

It is recommended to produce a detailed work plan with milestones and targets for the remaining period until project completion. This work plan should include the budget needed to complete the project and a detailed timeline. The work plan should specify the approach for:

- a. Finalization and packaging of LADA's products. Whilst it is part of the current work plan to finalize the LADA methods and tools, the sooner this starts the sooner the final products will be available. It is anticipated that to getting a consensus among all project partners with regard to packaging these products will be a time-consuming process. An initial brainstorming session among the project partners is suggested to explore the possibilities such as toolbox, manuals, and web sites. A comprehensive review of how to make the LADA results public and accessible is needed to guide the packaging process.
- b. Implementation of the fourth component of the project to ensure that a proper strategy for the long-term sustainability of LADA is put in place. The project document describes the expected outcome of this component as “*a proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action*”. It is recommended that instead of focusing on an action plan, this component should undertake actions that will contribute more directly to the uptake and scaling-up of LADA results. The work plan for the remainder of the project should detail possible ‘Ambassadors’ to promote uptake of LADA products and specific events where such uptake can be promoted. The work plan should detail the opportunities in the near future for the promotion of LADA results such as:
 - i. The promotion of LADA products at the COP-9 of UNCCD planned for October-November 2009 in Buenos Aires. The LADA focal point in Argentina has proposed to put LADA on the agenda of the conference; this should be actively pursued. Moreover, a resolution should be prepared for the COP-9 to endorse the methodology as a global tool providing a global standard for assessing land degradation. His participation (as a country-party and the national focal point for UNCCD in Argentina) and his presentation of LADA should be supported by the LADA project.
 - ii. An approach to promote uptake of LADA tools and methods could be prepared for the next COP-10 of the UNCBD planned to be in Japan in October 2010 (assuming the project is extended).
 - iii. UNEP and FAO have relevant constituencies among which the promotion of LADA results, tools and methods could increase its uptake by countries. This is the case, for instance, with the Environmental Ministers, a constituency of UNEP. An event could be flagged as an opportunity

to present LADA results and other communication instruments may be developed to target these constituencies.

- iv. GEF is now preparing for its fifth replenishment, GEF-5; a series of meetings will be held in 2009 and 2010 to finalize GEF-5. As part of this process, a technical advisory group exists to elaborate the land degradation strategy for this focal area, including the possible introduction of a Resource Allocation Framework (RAF). As discussed in Section 4.1.1, GEF is looking into LADA results to design an assessment methodology supporting its future investment decisions. LADA should communicate with this group and support their work by providing information on LADA results.
 - v. LADA is already part of an Inter-Agency Task Force under the UNCCD. It should also increase its presence within the UNCCD process through the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) process. Currently this committee is conducting a survey on impact indicators in use by countries. It is part of a process to review the reporting guidelines for national reports on progress to implement the UNCCD nationally. LADA should participate in this process and provide its valuable information already available on land degradation indicators.
 - vi. The project partners in 6 pilot countries are key stakeholders in their home countries and should play a major role in the institutionalization of LADA results in their respective country. Moreover, they also provide an excellent opportunity for institutionalizing LADA results in international and regional organizations and forums. The project should support them in a capacity as “LADA Ambassadors” to help disseminate the project results.
 - vii. Other opportunities should be explored to promote LADA approach for land degradation assessment; including regional meetings where the participating countries could play an active role.
- c. Development of an exit plan for ending the project. This should include the process of project assets handover, public access to all information produced by the project, administrative closing and any other activities related to the closure of the LADA project.

Recommendation #3

Issue to Address

Currently, the LADA partners do not report their co-financing. However, signs exist that the contribution of partners do exist and may be greater than the commitments made before the approval of the project. It is in the interest of LADA as a project but also of the partners to report their (good) contribution

It is recommended that project management contact the LADA partners and obtain updated figures on co-financing from each organization; using the breakdown provided in the official letters of commitments as a baseline. A target date for documenting the amount of co-financing is suggested to be the next PIR 2009 (end of June 2009).

Recommendation #4

Issue to Address

The implementation of LADA results in the 6 pilot countries is recognized as a critical success factor for LADA. The performance indicators included in the log-frame to monitor the progress of the project focus mainly on the adoption, use, analysis and identification of LADA results in ALL participating countries.

It is recommended to monitor closely the progress made in pilot countries and provide the support needed to achieve the expected results at the participating country level.

Recommendation #5

Issue to Address

Same issue to address as for recommendation #4

The project might consider undertaking additional analyses to identify the capacity gaps of how land is managed and how land degradation is controlled in each country; focusing particularly on identifying existing barriers such as lack of resources, inadequate policies and laws, etc. Conducted in parallel to local assessments, these analyses should allow each country to identify how to bridge the new LADA approach for land degradation assessment with its existing national framework related to land degradation control. A

SWOT analysis to identify the existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the land and soil degradation control and preservation area and a review of existing studies and assessments (such as the outputs of the National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA) process, the NAPs and the other national reports) may be possible options.

Recommendation #6

Issue to Address

The late involvement of the pilot countries within the GLADA process and the publication by ISRIC of initial results from the NDVI study “pushed” the pilot countries to distance themselves from GLADA. The initial interpretation was not accepted by the pilot countries and has since hampered the process to finalize it and affected the ownership of LADA by the pilot countries. No major difference of view on this topic seems to exist between the pilot countries and the FAO team and together.

It is recommended that the global map representing a time-series analysis of satellite measurements of vegetation be finalized and the GLADA component brought to completion as soon as possible, including making the FAO position publicly known.

Recommendation #7

It is recommended that the project emphasize a decision-making process that is, as far as possible, transparent and participatory. Investing in a participatory decision-making process for the remaining period of the project will contribute to the objective of increasing the ownership of the project results in pilot countries to help maximize the long-term sustainability of LADA results through these countries but also through the international members of the PSC such as GEF and UNCCD Secretariat.

Issue to Address

The planned committees (PSC and Scientific Committee) for scientific oversight and decision-making did not work as anticipated as oversight and decision-making bodies.

Recommendation #8

Issue to Address

The long-term impact of an institutionalized training programme is much greater than a training programme delivered one or a few times as part of a project agenda.

It is recommended that the training programme, to be delivered through regional centres worldwide, be institutionalized¹⁰ as much as possible. During the selection of these centres a particular focus should be on the capacity of these centres to institutionalize this programme supported by LADA within their existing training programmes such as integration of this programme within their training catalogues and delivery of this training programme over time.

Recommendation #9

Issue to Address

The Evaluation Team assessed the LADA information system and identified few improvements that could be made in three areas: LADA web site, GeoNetwork and information management and dissemination.

It is recommended to improve the LADA web site functionality as follows:

- a) Fix some links in the web site. Some links in the web site direct the user to old links at: <http://lada.virtualcentre.org>. For instance accessing all maps from the “download database” page and the metadata from the “Distribution info” page have to be updated.
- b) Integrate the user registration of the LADA web site with the user registration of the GeoNetwork web site. Currently, if one enters a username and password in www.fao.org/nr/lada/ and tries to access the interactive map, the system gives back an error message.
- c) Improve the accessibility of the web site for disabled and blind people. In particular a “text only” and a “high contrast” web site version doesn’t exist;
- d) Improve the information access on the project through text to speech software.

¹⁰ Institutionalizing a training programme implies a programme adopted by the highest authority of a training institution, that is part of the training catalogue of this institution, that could be part of a larger training programme such as a bachelor or master programme and that is sanctioned by the same authority through an assessment of the learning process (exams or other).

- e) Suggest setting-up a project BLOG where potential LADA methodology users could discuss with project staff and begin to work with LADA.

Recommendation #10

Issue to Address

Same issue to address as for recommendation #9

It is recommended to improve the GeoNetwork as follows:

- a) Give greater access to the GeoNetwork map server. The target should be to give access to Internet Explorer users. Currently, accessing the GeoNetwork map server can only be done with Mozilla Firefox, which is a web browser that is only used by a small percentage of computer users.
- b) Review and improve the GeoNetwork application performance in order to permit a speedier access to LADA project maps and other maps managed by the system. GeoNetwork access speed is not comparable with the current web maps service standard (ex. <http://maps.google.com>).
- c) Use standard URL in order to allow everyone to access LADA project maps. This access limitation should be solved as soon as possible; including finding a different solution for maps distribution if needed.
- d) It would be useful for registered LADA users to be able to memorize their maps preferences in their own user profile.
- e) In order to improve the interface accessibility it is suggested that a script to redirect users from the URL link www.fao.org/lada to www.fao.org/nr/lada/ be added.

Recommendation #11

Issue to Address

Same issue to address as for recommendation #9

It is recommended to improve the management and dissemination of the information produced by the project, as follows:

- a) A full time web developer should be dedicated to manage the LADA web site and its community of users in order to improve the distribution/dissemination of the LADA knowledge.
- b) Data communication among project staff and project partners could be improved by using a data sharing through remote disk services and P2P software. It would also be very useful to use a VoIP software (Skype, MS Messenger, etc.) to reinforce communication between Project staff and project partners.
- c) It is suggested to look into the implementation of a virtual training centre in order to promote the LADA approach, provide basic training in using the LADA methodology and provide online technical assistance.

Recommendation #12

Issue to Address

Assessing land degradation has not been emphasized under the UNCCD so far. However, the strategic plan adopted by COP-8 and the current negotiation for preparing GEF-5 indicate that there will be funding opportunities for follow-up projects to be funded by GEF such as pursuing land degradation assessments in the LADA pilot countries and/or developing remediation projects addressing land degradation issues in hot spots and bright spots.

It is recommended that the project support the development of follow up projects through MSPs (medium size project - <\$1M) or FSPs (full size project - >\$1M) in the six pilot countries. In the context of the “*Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention (2008-2018)*”, adopted by the Parties to the UNCCD at COP-8¹¹ and the preparation of GEF-5 there might be new opportunities for continuing these assessments in the pilot countries and for remediation activities addressing land degradation issues.

11 In particular its operational objective 3: Science, technology and knowledge, which is to become a global authority on scientific and technical knowledge pertaining to desertification/land degradation and mitigation of the effects of drought and the operational objective 4: Capacity-building that is to identify and address capacity-building needs to prevent and reverse desertification/land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought

Recommendation #13

Issue to Address

The Evaluation Team noted that the funding for this MTE was drawn from the UNEP DGEF fee. It is normal GEF practice for direct evaluation costs for independent evaluations to be drawn from the project budget.

It is recommended that the direct costs for the terminal evaluation of LADA should be allocated by the project from within the project budget.

Appendix 1: MTE - Terms of Reference

Mid-term Evaluation of the UNEP GEF project “Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA)”

1. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

Project rationale

LADA will develop tools and methods to assess and quantify the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on dryland ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, carbon storage and biological diversity at a range of spatial and temporal scales. It will also build the national, regional and international capacity to analyse, design, plan and implement interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices.

These objectives will contribute to the **Environmental Goal** of GEF’s Operational Program 1, namely the conservation and sustainable use of the biological resources of arid and semi-arid areas; OP12 – to catalyse widespread adoption of comprehensive ecosystem management interventions – and; to OP15 - mitigating the causes and negative impacts of land degradation on the structure and functional integrity of ecosystems through sustainable land management practices. *LADA* is consistent with the Strategic Priority on Targeted Capacity-Building in Sustainable Land Management (SLM-1).

A contribution will be made to the **Developmental Goals** of UNCCD and UN multi-lateral agencies to improve people’s livelihoods and economic well being. To achieve these objectives, *LADA* will develop standardised and improved methods for dryland degradation assessment, with guidelines for their implementation in a range of scales. Using these methods, it will assess the regional and global baseline condition of land degradation with the view to highlighting the areas at greatest risk. These assessments will be supplemented by detailed local assessments that will focus on root cause analysis of land degradation and on local (traditional and adapted) technologies for the mitigation of land degradation. Areas where land degradation is well controlled will be included in the analysis. ‘Best practice’ guidelines will be developed and the results widely disseminated in various media. The project is intended to make an innovative generic contribution to methodologies and monitoring systems for land degradation, supplemented by empirically-derived lessons from the six main partner countries involved in the project – Argentina, China, Cuba, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia – up-scaled to countries within their regional remit.

The first principal objective of the project is:

“to develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scales.”

The second principal objective of the project is:

“to build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices.”

Executing Arrangements

The Implementing Agency is UNEP and the Executing Agency is FAO. The project was planned for a duration of four years from May 2006.

The Project Manager, a senior FAO staff member, is assisted in the coordination of the project by a Technical Advisor and advised by a *LADA* Task Force, comprised of representatives of all relevant technical units within FAO. The Project Manager and the Technical Advisor oversee the global assessment and the generic parts of *LADA* (methodology, conceptual framework, networking) and liaise with national partners. The project is carried out primarily by national teams of experts drawn from national research institutions, universities, government agencies and development and policy-making institutions in the participant countries. The scientists in each national team cover a range of skills and disciplines relevant to land degradation assessment, analysis and impact. At a global level, *LADA* co-ordinates with the UNCCD

framework to ensure a key support role in implementation of Regional Action Plans (RAP), Sub-Regional Action Plans (SRAP) and National Action Plans (NAP).

Project Activities

Land degradation assessment requires robust and verified techniques, based upon sound conceptual and integrated models that combine technical, social and economic issues. These models must respond to the needs of users and reflect the processes that drive land degradation and its impact on society. Therefore, the first of the four LADA project components is “*Development of the LADA approach: land degradation assessment guidelines, network and information system*”. This includes the adoption of a standardised methodological and conceptual framework for the assessment of land degradation and its impact as well as needs assessments conducted by national task forces. Existing information sources are utilised wherever possible, along with key indicators of the proximate causes of degradation. A number of proxy and new assessment sources and datasets are available, to apply at a variety of scales. Three key requirements are: the methods must have diagnostic capability; they must monitor impact on human development and poverty alleviation; and they must provide the basis for an explicit link to policy and decision-making processes.

The second project component is “*Carrying out global and regional land degradation assessments*”. The outcome of this component will be a map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with an especial emphasis on areas at greatest risk. Identifying the baseline at a variety of scales is critical to measure how far remedial actions for both the processes of land degradation and its impacts have changed the degradation status. The steps towards achievement of this component outcome are baseline collecting data and storing it in an accessible and user-friendly platform, producing baseline maps, and listing nationally-agreed ‘hot-spots’ and ‘bright-spots’. In undertaking this baseline compilation, project objectives are supported in both the areas of tools and methods and in capacity building. Among the final activities under this component are regional and sub-regional workshops to inform potential end-users of the scope and the system and the baseline situation. Areas for more detailed assessment will also be identified against criteria for remediation priority.

The third project component is “*Carrying out local assessments in hot spots and bright spots in pilot countries*”. The outcome of this component will be detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries. In order to balance the addressing of critical areas for land degradation (‘hot spots’) with the learning from areas that largely control land degradation (‘bright spots’), local assessments will select from both situations. Training and capacity-building in detailed assessments and analysis is undertaken along with in-country user-needs assessments. Each participating country initiates detailed assessments for at least two sites, supported by national-level policy forums to create the linkage processes to local bye-laws, national planning and development practice. The activities include the training of relevant professionals in land degradation assessment, impact analysis and related developmental factors. User needs will be surveyed and pilot national assessments completed and evaluated for scaling-up. An integrated information system is put in place to provide relevant data on land degradation for policy, planning and control interventions.

The fourth project component is “*Carrying out a major analysis and preparation of a strategy for global action*”. The outcome of this component will be a proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action. Activities include analysis of key critical conditions for successful control and prevention of land degradation in drylands, user surveys, review of examples of ‘best practice’ and successful implementation, and the packaging, communication and exchange of land degradation information globally, regionally and nationally. Success narratives are analysed and presented. At global level, it is anticipated that an international meeting will be convened by the EA, IA and Convention secretariats, and attended by those involved in control, prevention and policy development for land degradation. Contributors and scientists involved in LADA will become actively involved in UNCCD, RAP, SRAP and NAP further development and support for implementation of these plans. At international level, in liaison with GEF Secretariat, LADA scientists will actively assist implementation of relevant GEF operational programmes.

Budget

The total budget is US\$ 14,980,000 including US\$ 7,000,000 of GEF funding, and US\$ 7, 980,000 in-kind and cash co-financing. US\$3,454,000 of the in-kind and cash co-financing is provided by the participating countries: Argentina, China, Cuba, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia. The other half of the co-financing is committed by participating agencies and institutions (FAO, UNEP, UNU, GLCN, ISRIC and WOCAT).

II TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

1. Objective and Scope of the Evaluation

The LADA project document (PD) foresees that a mid-term and a final evaluation be conducted during project life. UNEP and FAO agreed to carry out the former in the second half of 2008.

The objective of this mid-term evaluation (MTR) is to assess operational aspects, such as project management and implementation of activities and also the level of progress towards the achievement of the objectives. The review will assess project performance and the implementation of planned project activities and planned outputs against actual results. The risks to achievement of project outcomes and objectives will also be appraised (see Appendix 5).

At the mid-point of the project, the evaluation is intended to make recommendations for any necessary changes in the overall design and orientation of the project and make detailed recommendations on the work-plan for the remainder of the project.

2. Methods

This mid-term evaluation will be conducted as an in-depth evaluation using a consultative approach whereby the FAO Project Staff, the UNEP/DGEF Task Manager, and other relevant staff are kept informed and regularly consulted throughout the evaluation. The evaluator will liaise with the UNEP/EOU, the FAO Evaluation Service and the UNEP/DGEF Task Manager on any logistic and/or methodological issues to properly conduct the evaluation in as independent a way as possible, given the circumstances and resources offered.

The findings of the evaluation will be based on the following:

1. A desk review of project documents including, but not limited to:
 - (a) The project documents, outputs, monitoring reports (such as progress and financial reports to UNEP and GEF annual Project Implementation Review reports) and relevant correspondence.
 - (b) Notes from the Steering Group meetings.
 - (c) Other project-related material produced by the project staff or partners.
 - (d) Relevant material published on the project web-site: <http://lprlada.fao.org/lada>
2. Face-to-face interviews with project management and technical support including the current team based at FAO in Rome and key actors involved.
3. Interviews and telephone interviews with intended users for the project outputs and other stakeholders involved with this project, including in the participating countries and international institutions. The evaluator shall determine whether to seek additional information and opinions from representatives of donor agencies and other organisations. As appropriate, these interviews could be combined with an email questionnaire.
4. Face-to-face interviews with the UNEP/DGEF project task manager and Fund Management Officer, and other relevant staff in UNEP dealing with land degradation-related activities as necessary. The evaluation shall also gain broader perspectives from discussions with relevant GEF Secretariat staff.
5. Attend any relevant project meetings. Efforts will be made to allow the evaluator attend a workshop on land degradation assessment at national level is being organized in South Africa from 16 to 18 September 2008. All six LADA countries have been invited to attend. The purpose of the workshop is to share the experiences in each country on the national level assessment, and to finalise the

methodology to be described in the national level manual/questionnaire). Room should be made in the workshop to allow a general meeting with the evaluator plus individual interviews with representatives of each country.

Key Evaluation principles.

In attempting to evaluate any outcomes and impacts that the project may have achieved, evaluators should remember that the project's performance should be assessed by considering the difference between the answers to two simple questions "*what happened?*" and "*what would have happened anyway?*". These questions imply that there should be consideration of the baseline conditions and trends in relation to the intended project outcomes and impacts. In addition it implies that there should be plausible evidence to attribute such outcomes and impacts to the actions of the project.

Sometimes, adequate information on baseline conditions and trends is lacking. In such cases this should be clearly highlighted by the evaluator, along with any simplifying assumptions that were taken to enable the evaluator to make informed judgements about project performance. It is understood that at Mid-Term, impacts are unlikely; however every effort should be made to assess the project's progress towards the intended outcomes.

Scope of the evaluation

3. Assessment of project assumptions, objectives and design

The evaluation will examine the following:

Project theory

Assessment of the assumptions and of the theory of change (causal pathways) underpinning the project idea and design, including its coherence, internal and external validity.

Project objectives and Logical Framework

Analysis of the project Logical Framework and variations over time if any, including:

- the links and causal relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact (specific and development objectives);
- relevance and appropriateness of indicators;
- validity of assumptions and risks
- existence of formal approvals to any modifications of the logical framework

Project design

Analysis of the project strategy and structure including:

- approach and methodology;
- time frame and resources;
- institutional set-up;
- management arrangements;
- stakeholders and beneficiaries identification.

4. Project Performance with respect to GEF Evaluation Parameters

A. Attainment of objectives and planned results (progress to date):

The assessment of project results seeks to determine the extent to which the project objectives have been, or are expected to be achieved, and assess whether the project has led to any other positive or negative consequences. While assessing a project's progress towards the intended outcomes / objectives as stated in the project document (PD), the evaluation will also indicate if there were any changes to the outputs and performance indicators in the PD and whether those changes were approved. If the project did not establish a baseline (initial conditions), the evaluator should seek to estimate the baseline condition so that achievements and results can be properly established (or simplifying assumptions used). Outcomes are the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention's outputs. Examples of outcomes could include but are not restricted to stronger institutional capacities, higher public awareness (when leading to changes of behaviour), and transformed policy frameworks or markets.

- *Effectiveness*: Evaluate how, and to what extent, the stated project objectives have been met, taking into account the “achievement indicators” specified in the project document and logical framework.
- *Relevance*: Are the project’s actual or intended outcomes consistent with the focal areas/operational program strategies and country priorities? Ascertain the nature and significance of the contribution of the project outcomes to the wider portfolio under GEF’s OPs 1, 12 and 15.

B. Assessment of Sustainability of project outcomes:

Sustainability is understood as the probability of continued long-term project-derived outcomes and impacts after the GEF project funding ends. The evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to contribute or undermine the persistence of benefits after the project ends. *At mid-term, identification of any likely barriers to sustaining the intended outcomes of the project is especially important.* Some of these factors might be outcomes of the project, e.g. stronger institutional capacities or better informed decision-making. Other factors will include contextual circumstances or developments that are not outcomes of the project but that are relevant to the sustainability of outcomes. The evaluation should ascertain to what extent follow-up work has been initiated and how project outcomes will be sustained and enhanced over time. In this case, sustainability will be linked to the likelihood of continued use and influence of scientific models and scientific findings, produced by the project.

Four aspects of sustainability should be addressed: financial, socio-political, institutional frameworks and governance, and ecological (if applicable). The following questions provide guidance on the assessment of these aspects:

- *Financial resources*. To what extent are the outcomes of the project dependent on continued financial support? What is the likelihood that any required financial resources will be available to sustain the project outcomes/benefits once the GEF assistance ends (resources can be from multiple sources, such as the public and private sectors, income generating activities, and market trends that support the project’s objectives)?
- *Socio-political*: To what extent are the outcomes of the project dependent on socio-political factors? What is the likelihood that the level of stakeholder ownership will allow for the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? Is there sufficient public / stakeholder awareness in support of the long term objectives of the project?
- *Institutional framework and governance*. To what extent are the outcomes of the project dependent on issues relating to institutional frameworks and governance? What is the likelihood that institutional and technical achievements, legal frameworks, policies and governance structures and processes will allow for, the project outcomes/benefits to be sustained? While responding to these questions consider if the required systems for accountability and transparency and the required technical know-how are in place.
- *Environmental*. Are there any environmental risks that can undermine the future flow of project environmental benefits?

As far as possible, also identify the potential longer-term impacts considering that the evaluation is taking place at mid-term and that longer term impact is expected to be seen in a few years time. Frame any recommendations to enhance future project impact in this context. Which will be the major ‘channels’ for longer term impact from the project at the national and international scales? The evaluation should formulate recommendations that outline possible approaches and necessary actions to facilitate an impact assessment study in a few years time.

C. Catalytic role and replication

The mid-term evaluation will also describe any catalytic or replication effect of the project. What examples are there of replication and catalytic outcomes that suggest increased likelihood of sustainability? Replication approach, in the context of GEF projects, is defined

as lessons and experiences coming out of the project that are replicated or scaled up in the design and implementation of other projects. Replication can have two aspects, replication proper (the project approach, lessons and experiences are replicated in different geographic area) or scaling up (the project approach, lessons and experiences are replicated within the same geographic area but funded by other sources). If no effects are identified, the evaluation will describe the catalytic or replication actions that the project carried out, or possible strategies for this purpose. No ratings are requested for the catalytic role.

D. Achievement of outputs and activities:

- Delivered outputs: Assessment of the project's performance in producing each of the programmed outputs to date, both in quantity and quality as well as usefulness and timeliness.
- Among other outputs, the evaluation will assess to what extent the project has taken or is planning to take into account gender and social development issues in the development of methods to monitor impact on human development and poverty alleviation (Component 1) and of detailed local assessments and analysis of local degradation and its impact in pilot countries (Component 3)
- Assess to what extent the project outputs produced so far have the weight of authority / credibility, necessary to be used as harmonized assessment methods to establish baselines to monitor success in combating land degradation, and to influence policy and decision-makers, particularly at the national or regional levels.

E. Assessment of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

- **M&E design.** Did the project have a sound M&E plan to monitor results and track progress towards achieving project objectives? The Mid-term Evaluation will assess whether the project met the minimum requirements for project design of M&E and the application of the Project M&E plan (Minimum requirements are specified in Annex 4 of the Evaluation TORs). The evaluation shall include an assessment of the quality, application and effectiveness of project monitoring and evaluation plans and tools, including an assessment of risk management based on the assumptions and risks identified in the project document. The M&E plan should include a baseline (including data, methodology, etc.), SMART (see Annex 4 of the Evaluation TORs) indicators and data analysis systems, and evaluation studies at specific times to assess results. The time frame for various M&E activities and standards for outputs should have been specified.
- **M&E plan implementation.** Was an M&E system in place and did it facilitate tracking of results and progress towards projects objectives throughout the project implementation period. Were Annual project reports complete, accurate and with well justified ratings? Was the information provided by the M&E system used during the project to improve project performance and to adapt to changing needs? Did the project have an M&E system in place with proper training for parties responsible for M&E activities to ensure data will continue to be collected and used after project closure?
- **Budgeting and Funding for M&E activities.** Were adequate budget provisions made for M&E made and were such resources made available in a timely fashion during implementation?
- **Long-term Monitoring.** Is long-term monitoring envisaged as an outcome of the project? If so, comment specifically on the relevance of such monitoring systems to sustaining project outcomes and how the monitoring effort will be sustained.

F. Assessment of processes that affected attainment of project results.

The evaluation will consider, but need not be limited to, consideration of the following issues that may have affected project implementation progress towards, and attainment of, project results:

- i. **Preparation and readiness.** Were the project's objectives and components clear, practicable and feasible within its timeframe?
- ii. Were capacities of the executing institutions and counterparts properly considered when the project was designed? Were lessons from other relevant projects properly

incorporated in design? Were the partnership arrangements properly identified and the roles and responsibilities negotiated prior to implementation? Was availability of counterpart resources (funding, staff, and facilities), passage of enabling legislation, and adequate project management arrangements in place at project entry?

- Ascertain to what extent the project implementation mechanisms outlined in the project document have been closely followed. In particular, assess the role of the various committees established and whether the project document was clear and realistic to enable effective and efficient implementation, whether the project was executed according to the plan and how well the management was able to adapt to changes during the life of the project to enable the implementation of the project.
 - Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency and adaptability of project management and the supervision of project activities / project execution arrangements at all levels (1) policy decisions: Steering Group; (2) day to day project management; (3) GEF guidance: UNEP DGEF
- iii. **Country ownership/Driveness.** This is the relevance of the project to national development and environmental agendas, recipient country commitment, and regional and international agreements. Examples of possible evaluative questions include: Was the project design in-line with the national sectoral and development priorities and plans? Are project outcomes contributing to national development priorities and plans? Were the relevant country representatives, from government and civil society, involved in the project? Did the recipient government maintain its financial commitment to the project?
- iv. **Stakeholder involvement.** Did the project involve the relevant stakeholders through information sharing, consultation and by seeking their participation in project's design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation? For example, did the project implement appropriate outreach and public awareness campaigns? Did the project consult and make use of the skills, experience and knowledge of the appropriate government entities, NGOs, community groups, private sector, local governments and academic institutions in the design, implementation and evaluation of project activities? Were perspectives of those that would be affected by decisions, those that could affect the outcomes and those that could contribute information or other resources to the process taken into account while taking decisions? Were the relevant vulnerable groups and the powerful, the supporters and the opponents, of the processes properly involved? Specifically the evaluation will:
- Assess the mechanisms put in place by the project for identification and engagement of stakeholders in each participating country and establish, in consultation with the stakeholders, whether this mechanism was successful, and identify its strengths and weaknesses.
 - Assess the degree and effectiveness of collaboration/interactions between the various project partners and institutions during the course of implementation of the project.
 - Assess the degree and effectiveness of any various public awareness activities that were undertaken during the course of implementation of the project.
- v. **Financial planning.** Did the project have the appropriate financial controls, including reporting and planning, that allowed management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allowed for timely flow of funds. Specifically, the evaluation should:
- Assess the strength and utility of financial controls, including reporting, and planning to allow the project management to make informed decisions regarding the budget and allow for a proper and timely flow of funds for the payment of satisfactory project deliverables throughout the project's lifetime.
 - Present the major findings from the financial audit if one has been conducted.
 - Did promised co-financing materialize? Identify and verify the sources of co-financing as well as leveraged and associated financing (in co-operation with the IA and EA).
 - Assess whether the project has applied appropriate standards of due diligence in the management of funds and financial audits.

- The evaluation should also include a breakdown of final actual project costs by activities compared to budget (variances), financial management (including disbursement issues), and co- financing. This information will be prepared by the relevant DGEF Fund Management Officer of the project for scrutiny by the evaluator (table attached in Annex 2 Co-financing and leveraged resources).
- vi. **UNEP Supervision and backstopping.** Did UNEP staff identify problems in a timely fashion and accurately estimate its seriousness? Did UNEP staff provide quality support and advice to the project, approved modifications in time and restructure the project when needed? Did UNEP Agencies provide the right staffing levels, continuity, skill mix, frequency of field visits?
 - vii. **Co-financing and Project Outcomes & Sustainability.** If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for this? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability, and if it did affect outcomes and sustainability then in what ways and through what causal linkages?
 - viii. **Delays and Project Outcomes & Sustainability.** If there were delays in project implementation and completion, the evaluation will summarise the reasons for them. Did delays affect the project's outcomes and/or sustainability, and if so in what ways and through what causal linkages?

The *ratings will be presented in the form of a table* with each of the categories rated separately and with **brief justifications for the rating** based on the evidence and findings of the main analysis. An overall rating for the project should also be given. The rating system to be applied is specified in Annex 1:

5. Evaluation report format and review procedures

The report should be brief, to the point and easy to understand. It must explain; the purpose of the evaluation, exactly what was evaluated and the methods used. The report must highlight any methodological limitations, identify key concerns and present evidence-based findings, consequent conclusions, recommendations and lessons. The report should provide information on when the evaluation took place, the places visited, who was involved and be presented in a way that makes the information accessible and comprehensible. The report should include an executive summary that encapsulates the essence of the information contained in the report to facilitate dissemination and distillation of lessons.

Evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations should be presented in a complete and balanced manner. The evaluation report shall be written in English, be of no more than 50 pages (excluding annexes), use numbered paragraphs and include:

- i) An **executive summary** (no more than 3 pages) providing a brief overview of the main conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation;
- ii) **Introduction and background** giving a brief overview of the evaluated project, for example, the objective and status of activities, it's relevance and project theory / intervention logic;
- iii) **Scope, objective and methods** presenting the evaluation's purpose, the evaluation criteria used and questions to be addressed;
- iv) **Project Performance and Impact** providing factual evidence relevant to the questions asked by the evaluator and interpretations of such evidence. This is the main substantive section of the report and should provide a commentary on all evaluation aspects (A – F above).
- v) **Conclusions and rating** of project implementation success giving the evaluator's concluding assessments and ratings of the project against given evaluation criteria and standards of performance. The conclusions should provide answers to questions about whether the project is considered good or bad, and whether the results are considered positive or negative;
- vi) **Lessons learned** presenting general conclusions from the standpoint of the design and implementation of the project, based on good practices and successes or problems and mistakes. Lessons should have the potential for wider application and use. All lessons should 'stand alone and should:
 - Specify the context from which they are derived

- State or imply some prescriptive action;
 - Specify the contexts in which they may be applied (if possible who when and where)
- vii) **Recommendations.** High quality recommendations should be *actionable* proposals that are:
1. Implementable within the timeframe and resources available
 2. Commensurate with the available capacities of project team and partners
 3. Specific in terms of who would do what and when
 4. Contain results-based language (i.e. a measurable performance target)
 5. Include a trade off analysis, when its implementation may require utilizing significant resources that would have otherwise been used for other project purposes.
- viii) **Annexes** include Terms of Reference, list of interviewees, documents reviewed, brief summary of the expertise of the evaluator / evaluation team, a summary of co-finance information etc.. Dissident views or management responses to the evaluation findings may later be appended in an annex.

Examples of UNEP GEF Mid-term Evaluation Reports are available at www.unep.org/eou

Review of the Draft Evaluation Report

The draft report submitted to UNEP EOU. It is then immediately shared with the FAO Evaluation Service, the FAO project staff, the UNEP DGEF Task Manager and his or her supervisor for initial review and consultation. The FAO and DGEF staff are allowed to comment on the draft evaluation report. They may provide feedback on any errors of fact and may highlight the significance of such errors in any conclusions. Feedback on the draft recommendations may also be presented. Any comments or responses to the draft report will be sent to UNEP - EOU for collation and, after EOU discusses these with the FAO Evaluation Service, the evaluator will be advised of any errors of fact and / or suggestions to improve the quality of the evaluation report.

All UNEP GEF Evaluation Reports are subject to quality assessments by UNEP EOU. These incorporate GEF Office of Evaluation quality assessment criteria and are used as a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluator (see Annex 3) The FAO Evaluation Service may also apply these (or other) evaluation quality assessment criteria.

6. Submission of Final Mid-term Evaluation Reports.

The final report shall be submitted in electronic form in MS Word format and should be sent to UNEP EOU:

Segbedzi Norgbey, Chief, Evaluation and Oversight Unit
 UNEP, P.O. Box 30552-00100
 Nairobi, Kenya
 Tel.: (254-20) 7624181
 Fax: (254-20) 7623158
 Email: segbedzi.norgbey@unep.org

EOU will then disseminate the report to the following persons:

Ms. Maryam Niamir-Fuller
 Director
 UNEP/Division of GEF Coordination
 P.O. Box 30552-00100
 Nairobi, Kenya
 Tel: + 254-20-7624686
 Fax: + 254-20-7624041/4042
 Email: maryam.niamir-fuller@unep.org

Ms. Tessa Goverse
 UNEP Task Manager
 UNEP/Division of GEF Coordination

P.O. Box 30552-00100
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: + 254-20-7623469
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Dr. Freddy Nachtergaele
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Tullia Aiazzi
Evaluation Officer
FAO Evaluation Office (PBEE)
FAO
Rome
Tel: +39-06-570-55424
Email Tullia.Aiazzi@fao.org

The mid term report will be published on the Evaluation and Oversight Unit's web-site www.unep.org/eou. Subsequently, the report will disseminated to: The relevant GEF Focal points, Relevant Government representatives, UNEP DGEF Professional Staff, The project's Executing Agency and Technical Staff.

7. Resources and schedule of the evaluation

This Mid Term Evaluation will be undertaken by an evaluation team of a lead evaluator and one supporting evaluator. The lead evaluator is responsible for coordinating the work of the evaluation team, leading the evaluation and preparing the final evaluation report covering the Terms of Reference.

The supporting evaluator is responsible for preparing in-depth evaluations of the LADA database and information systems.

Lead evaluator:

The evaluator should not have been associated with the design and implementation of the project. The evaluator will work under the overall supervision of the Chief, Evaluation and Oversight Unit, UNEP. The evaluator should have the following minimum qualifications: (i) experience in land degradation assessment and capacity building; (ii) experience with management and implementation of global projects and in particular with a particular emphasis on monitoring and assessment technologies to provide access to information relevant to decision-making; (iii) experience with project evaluation. Knowledge of UNEP and/or FAO programmes and GEF activities is desirable. Fluency in oral and written English is a must.

The contract for the lead evaluator will begin on 16th January 2009 and end on 3rd April 2009 and will be for twenty five (25) days spread over 11 weeks (13 days of travel, to Argentina, Italy and Tunisia and 12 days desk study). The evaluator will submit a draft report on 13th March 2009 to UNEP/EOU, FAO Evaluation Service the UNEP/DGEF Task Manager, and key representatives of the executing agencies. Any comments or responses to the draft report will be sent to UNEP / EOU for collation and the consultant will be advised of any suggested revisions. Comments to the final draft report will be sent to the consultant by 27th March 2009 after which, the consultant will submit the final report no later than 3rd April 2009.

The evaluator will after an initial telephone briefing with EOU and UNEP/GEF travel to Argentina to attend a regional meeting, after which a field mission to FAO in Rome to meet with project staff and a field mission to Tunisia to meet with representatives of the project executing agencies and the intended users will be completed.

Supporting evaluator:

The supporting evaluator will, under the supervision of the Lead Evaluator, assist in conducting an evaluation of the LADA project information systems. Specifically, the supporting evaluator would review one of the four components of the project namely "*Development of the LADA approach: land degradation assessment guidelines, network and information system*". The evaluation of this component will also examine all the evaluation parameters specified above. The supporting evaluator will visit the LADA staff and offices at FAO, Rome.

The supporting evaluator should not have been associated with the design and implementation of the project. The evaluator should have the following minimum qualification: (i) detailed knowledge of computer-based databases and geographic information systems (ii) experience with management and implementation of global projects and in particular with a particular emphasis on monitoring and assessment technologies to provide access to information relevant to decision-making; (iii) experience with project evaluation (iv) experience in land degradation assessment and capacity building. Knowledge of UNEP and/or FAO programmes and GEF activities is desirable.

The contract for the supporting evaluator will begin on 16th January 2009 and end on 27th February 2009 and will be for eight (8) days spread over six (6) weeks. The supporting evaluator will submit a report to the lead evaluator (copied to EOU) before 27th February but a time mutually agreed between the lead evaluator and the supporting evaluator.

8. Schedule Of Payment

The consultant shall select one of the following two contract options.

Lump-Sum Option

The evaluator will receive an initial payment of 30% of the total amount due upon signature of the contract. A further 30% will be paid upon submission of the draft report. A final payment of 40% will be made upon satisfactory completion of work. The fee is payable under the individual Special Service Agreement (SSA) of the evaluator and IS **inclusive** of all expenses such as travel, accommodation and incidental expenses.

Fee-only Option

The evaluator will receive an initial payment of 40% of the total amount due upon signature of the contract. Final payment of 60% will be made upon satisfactory completion of work. The fee is payable under the individual SSAs of the evaluator and is **NOT** inclusive of all expenses such as travel, accommodation and incidental expenses. Ticket and DSA will be paid separately.

The consultant's choice of payment option will be specified in the signed contract with UNEP.

In case, the evaluator cannot provide the products in accordance with the TORs, the timeframe agreed, or his products are substandard, the payment to the evaluator could be withheld, until such a time the products are modified to meet UNEP's standard. In case the evaluator fails to submit a satisfactory final product to UNEP, the product prepared by the evaluator may not constitute the evaluation report.

MTE TOR - Annex 1: OVERALL RATINGS TABLE

| Criterion | Evaluator's Summary Comments | Evaluator's Rating |
|--|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Attainment of project objectives and results (overall rating) | | |
| Sub criteria (below) | | |
| Effectiveness | | |
| Relevance | | |
| Efficiency | | |
| Sustainability of Project outcomes (overall rating) | | |
| Sub criteria (below) | | |
| Financial | | |
| Socio Political | | |
| Institutional framework and governance | | |
| Ecological | | |
| Achievement of outputs and activities | | |
| Monitoring and Evaluation (overall rating) | | |
| Sub criteria (below) | | |
| M&E Design | | |
| M&E Plan Implementation (use for adaptive management) | | |
| Budgeting and Funding for M&E activities | | |
| Catalytic Role | | |
| Preparation and readiness | | |
| Country ownership / driveness | | |
| Stakeholders involvement | | |
| Financial planning | | |
| UNEP Supervision and backstopping | | |
| Overall Rating | | |

RATING OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

Highly Satisfactory (HS): The project had no shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.

Satisfactory (S): The project had minor shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.

Moderately Satisfactory (MS): The project had moderate shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): The project had significant shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.

Unsatisfactory (U) The project had major shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.

Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): The project had severe shortcomings in the achievement of its objectives, in terms of relevance, effectiveness or efficiency.

Please note: Relevance and effectiveness will be considered as critical criteria. The overall rating of the project for achievement of objectives and results **may not be higher** than the lowest rating on either of these two criteria. Thus, to have an overall satisfactory rating for outcomes a project must have at least satisfactory ratings on both relevance and effectiveness.

RATINGS ON SUSTAINABILITY

A. Sustainability will be understood as the probability of continued long-term outcomes and impacts after the GEF project funding ends. The Mid-term evaluation will identify and assess the key conditions or factors that are likely to contribute or undermine the persistence of benefits after the project ends. Some of these factors might be outcomes of the project, i.e. stronger institutional capacities, legal frameworks, socio-economic incentives /or public awareness. Other factors will include contextual circumstances or developments that are not outcomes of the project but that are relevant to the sustainability of outcomes..

Rating system for sustainability sub-criteria

On each of the dimensions of sustainability of the project outcomes will be rated as follows.

Likely (L): There are no risks affecting this dimension of sustainability.

Moderately Likely (ML). There are moderate risks that affect this dimension of sustainability.

Moderately Unlikely (MU): There are significant risks that affect this dimension of sustainability

Unlikely (U): There are severe risks that affect this dimension of sustainability.

All the risk dimensions of sustainability are critical. Therefore, overall rating for sustainability will not be higher than the rating of the dimension with lowest ratings. For example, if a project has an Unlikely rating in either of the dimensions then its overall rating cannot be higher than Unlikely, regardless of whether higher ratings in other dimensions of sustainability produce a higher average.

RATINGS OF PROJECT M&E

Monitoring is a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing project with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds. Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, its design, implementation and results. Project evaluation may involve the definition of appropriate standards, the examination of performance against those standards, and an assessment of actual and expected results.

The Project monitoring and evaluation system will be rated on ‘M&E Design’, ‘M&E Plan Implementation’ and ‘Budgeting and Funding for M&E activities’ as follows:

Highly Satisfactory (HS): There were no shortcomings in the project M&E system.

Satisfactory(S): There were minor shortcomings in the project M&E system.

Moderately Satisfactory (MS): There were moderate shortcomings in the project M&E system.

Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU): There were significant shortcomings in the project M&E system.

Unsatisfactory (U): There were major shortcomings in the project M&E system.

Highly Unsatisfactory (HU): The Project had no M&E system.

“M&E plan implementation” will be considered a critical parameter for the overall assessment of the M&E

system. The overall rating for the M&E systems will not be higher than the rating on “M&E plan implementation.”

All other ratings will be on the GEF six point scale.

| GEF Performance Description | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| HS | = Highly Satisfactory |
| S | = Satisfactory |
| MS | = Moderately Satisfactory |
| MU | = Moderately Unsatisfactory |
| U | = Unsatisfactory |
| HU | = Highly Unsatisfactory |

MTE TOR - Annex 2: Co-financing and Leveraged Resources

Co-financing (basic data to be supplied to the consultant for verification)

| Co financing (Type/Source) | IA own Financing (mill US\$) | | Government (mill US\$) | | Other* (mill US\$) | | Total (mill US\$) | | Total Disbursement (mill US\$) | |
|--|------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|----------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual | Planned | Actual |
| - Grants | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Loans/Concessional (compared to market rate) | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Credits | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Equity investments | | | | | | | | | | |
| - In-kind support | | | | | | | | | | |
| - Other (*) | | | | | | | | | | |
| - | | | | | | | | | | |
| - | | | | | | | | | | |
| - | | | | | | | | | | |
| - | | | | | | | | | | |
| Totals | | | | | | | | | | |

* Other is referred to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiaries.

Leveraged Resources

Leveraged resources are additional resources—beyond those committed to the project itself at the time of approval—that are mobilized later as a direct result of the project. Leveraged resources can be financial or in-kind and they may be from other donors, NGO’s, foundations, governments, communities or the private sector. Please briefly describe the resources the project has leveraged since inception and indicate how these resources are contributing to the project’s ultimate objective.

Table showing final actual project expenditure by activity to be supplied by the UNEP Fund management Officer. (insert here)

MTE TOR - Annex 3: Quality Assessment of the Evaluation Report

All UNEP GEF Mid Term Reports are subject to quality assessments by UNEP EOU. These apply GEF Office of Evaluation quality assessment and are used as a tool for providing structured feedback to the evaluator.

The quality of the draft evaluation report is assessed and rated against the following criteria:

| GEF Report Quality Criteria | UNEP EOU Assessment | Rating |
|---|----------------------------|---------------|
| A. Did the report present an assessment of relevant outcomes and achievement of project objectives in the context of the focal area program indicators if applicable? | | |
| B. Was the report consistent and the evidence complete and convincing and were the ratings substantiated when used? | | |
| C. Did the report present a sound assessment of sustainability of outcomes? | | |
| D. Were the lessons and recommendations supported by the evidence presented? | | |
| E. Did the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used? | | |
| F. Did the report include an assessment of the quality of the project M&E system and its use for project management? | | |
| UNEP EOU additional Report Quality Criteria | UNEP EOU Assessment | Rating |
| G. Quality of the lessons: Were lessons readily applicable in other contexts? Did they suggest prescriptive action? | | |
| H. Quality of the recommendations: Did recommendations specify the actions necessary to correct existing conditions or improve operations ('who?' 'what?' 'where?' 'when?'). Can they be implemented? Did the recommendations specify a goal and an associated performance indicator? | | |
| I. Was the report well written? (clear English language and grammar) | | |
| J. Did the report structure follow EOU guidelines, were all requested Annexes included? | | |
| K. Were all evaluation aspects specified in the TORs adequately addressed? | | |
| L. Was the report delivered in a timely manner | | |

GEF Quality of the MTE report = 0.3*(A + B) + 0.1*(C+D+E+F)

EOU assessment of MTE report = 0.3*(G + H) + 0.1*(I+J+K+L)

Combined quality Rating = (2* 'GEF EO' rating + EOU rating)/3

The Totals are rounded and converted to the scale of HS to HU

Rating system for quality of mid-term evaluation reports

A number rating 1-6 is used for each criterion: Highly Satisfactory = 6, Satisfactory = 5, Moderately Satisfactory = 4, Moderately Unsatisfactory = 3, Unsatisfactory = 2, Highly Unsatisfactory = 1, and unable to assess = 0.

MTE TOR - Annex 4: GEF Minimum requirements for M&E

Minimum Requirement 1: Project Design of M&E12

All projects must include a concrete and fully budgeted monitoring and evaluation plan by the time of Work Program entry (full-sized projects) or CEO approval (medium-sized projects). This plan must contain at a minimum:

- SMART (see below) indicators for project implementation, or, if no indicators are identified, an alternative plan for monitoring that will deliver reliable and valid information to management
- SMART indicators for results (outcomes and, if applicable, impacts), and, where appropriate, corporate-level indicators
- A project baseline, with:
 - a description of the problem to address
 - indicator data
 - or, if major baseline indicators are not identified, an alternative plan for addressing this within one year of implementation
- An M&E Plan with identification of reviews and evaluations which will be undertaken, such as mid-term reviews or evaluations of activities
- An organizational setup and budgets for monitoring and evaluation.

Minimum Requirement 2: Application of Project M&E

- Project monitoring and supervision will include implementation of the M&E plan, comprising:
- Use of SMART indicators for implementation (or provision of a reasonable explanation if not used)
- Use of SMART indicators for results (or provision of a reasonable explanation if not used)
- Fully established baseline for the project and data compiled to review progress
- Evaluations are undertaken as planned
- Operational organizational setup for M&E and budgets spent as planned.

SMART INDICATORS GEF projects and programs should monitor using relevant performance indicators. The monitoring system should be “SMART”:

1. **Specific:** The system captures the essence of the desired result by clearly and directly relating to achieving an objective, and only that objective.
2. **Measurable:** The monitoring system and its indicators are unambiguously specified so that all parties agree on what the system covers and there are practical ways to measure the indicators and results.
3. **Achievable and Attributable:** The system identifies what changes are anticipated as a result of the intervention and whether the result(s) are realistic. Attribution requires that changes in the targeted developmental issue can be linked to the intervention.
4. **Relevant and Realistic:** The system establishes levels of performance that are likely to be achieved in a practical manner, and that reflect the expectations of stakeholders.
5. **Time-bound, Timely, Trackable, and Targeted:** The system allows progress to be tracked in a cost-effective manner at desired frequency for a set period, with clear identification of the particular stakeholder group to be impacted by the project or program.

12 <http://gefweb.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEPoliciesProcedures/MEPTools/meptstandards.html>

MTE TOR – Annex 5: RISK FACTOR TABLE

*Evaluators will use this table to summarize risks identified in the **Project Document** and reflect also **any new risks** identified in the course of the evaluation in regard to project implementation. The Notes column should be used to provide additional details concerning manifestation of the risk **as relevant**.*

| INTERNAL RISK Project management | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|-----|--------|-------------|------|----------------|------------------|-------|
| Risk Factor | Indicator of Low Risk | Indicator of Medium Risk | Indicator of High Risk | Low | Medium | Substantial | High | Not Applicable | To be determined | NOTES |
| Management structure | Stable with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and understood | Individuals understand their own role but are unsure of responsibilities of others | Unclear responsibilities or overlapping functions which lead to management problems | | | | | | | |
| Governance structure | Steering Committee and/or other project bodies meet periodically and provide effective direction/inputs | Body(ies) meets periodically but guidance/input provided to project is inadequate | Members lack commitment (seldom meet) and therefore the Committee/body does not fulfil its function | | | | | | | |
| Internal communications | Fluid and cordial | Communication process deficient although relationships between team members are good | Lack of adequate communication between team members leading to deterioration of relationships and resentment / factions | | | | | | | |
| Work flow | Project progressing according to work plan | Some changes in project work plan but without major effect on overall implementation | Major delays or changes in work plan or method of implementation | | | | | | | |
| Co-financing | Co-financing is secured and payments are received on time | Is secured but payments are slow and bureaucratic | A substantial part of pledged co-financing may not materialize | | | | | | | |
| Budget | Activities are progressing within planned budget | Minor budget reallocation needed | Reallocation between budget lines exceeding 30% of original budget | | | | | | | |
| Financial management | Funds are correctly managed and transparently accounted for | Financial reporting slow or deficient | Serious financial reporting problems or indication of mismanagement of funds | | | | | | | |
| Reporting | Substantive reports are presented in a timely manner | Reports are complete and accurate but often delayed or | Serious concerns about quality and timeliness of | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | and are complete and accurate with a good analysis of project progress and implementation issues | lack critical analysis of progress and implementation issues | project reporting | | | | | | | | |
| Stakeholder involvement | Stakeholder analysis done and positive feedback from critical stakeholders and partners | Consultation and participation process seems strong but misses some groups or relevant partners | Symptoms of conflict with critical stakeholders or evidence of apathy and lack of interest from partners or other stakeholders | | | | | | | | |
| External communications | Evidence that stakeholders, practitioners and/or the general public understand project and are regularly updated on progress | Communication s efforts are taking place but not yet evidence that message is successfully transmitted | Project existence is not known beyond implementation partners or misunderstandings concerning objectives and activities evident | | | | | | | | |
| Short term/long term balance | Project is meeting short term needs and results within a long term perspective, particularly sustainability and replicability | Project is interested in the short term with little understanding of or interest in the long term | Longer term issues are deliberately ignored or neglected | | | | | | | | |
| Science and technological issues | Project based on sound science and well established technologies | Project testing approaches, methods or technologies but based on sound analysis of options and risks | Many scientific and /or technological uncertainties | | | | | | | | |
| Political influences | Project decisions and choices are not particularly politically driven | Signs that some project decisions are politically motivated | Project is subject to a variety of political influences that may jeopardize project objectives | | | | | | | | |
| Other, please specify. Add rows as necessary | | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix 2: Evaluation Matrix

The evaluation matrix below served as a general guide for the evaluation. It provided directions for the evaluation; particularly for the collect of relevant data. It was used as a basis for interviewing people and reviewing project documents. It also provided a basis for structuring the evaluation report as a whole.

| Evaluated component | Sub-Question | Indicators | Sources | Data Collection Method |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Evaluation criteria: Relevance - <i>How does the Project relate to the main objectives of the UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD and GEF and to the environment and development challenges faced by Governments for the sustainable land use in dryland zones?</i> | | | | |
| <i>Is the Project relevant to UNCBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD and GEF objectives?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the Project support the objectives of the three Rio Conventions: UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD ▪ How does the Project support the related strategic priorities of the GEF? ▪ Does the Project participate in the implementation of the three Rio Conventions in the 6 countries? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of coherence between project objectives and those of the 3 Rio Conventions ▪ Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities in the 6 countries, policies and strategies in the area of climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management ▪ UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD implementation status in the 6 countries ▪ Extent to which the project is actually implemented in line with incremental cost argument | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents ▪ National policies and strategies to implement the UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD or related to environment more generally ▪ NCSA documents ▪ Key government officials and other partners ▪ UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD web sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners |
| <i>Is the Project relevant to UNEP and FAO objectives?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the Project support the objectives of UNEP and FAO in this sector? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existence of a clear relationship between the project objectives and sustainable development objectives of UNEP and FAO. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents ▪ UNEP and FAO strategies and programmes ▪ National policies and strategies to implement the UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD or related to environment more generally ▪ Key government officials and other partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners |
| <i>Is the Project relevant to countries' development objectives?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the Project support the objectives of the development of the 6 countries? ▪ How country-driven is the Project? ▪ Does the Project adequately take into account the national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and programming, in its design and its implementation? ▪ To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the Project? ▪ Were the GEF criteria for Project identification adequate in view of actual needs? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree to which the project support national environmental objectives ▪ Degree of coherence between the project and national priorities, policies and strategies ▪ Appreciation from national stakeholders with respect to adequacy of project design and implementation to national realities and existing capacities? ▪ Level of involvement of Government officials and other partners into the project ▪ Coherence between needs expressed by national stakeholders and UNEP-GEF criteria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents ▪ NCSA reports ▪ National policies and strategies (PRSP and NEP) ▪ Key government officials and other partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with government officials and other partners |

| Evaluated component | Sub-Question | Indicators | Sources | Data Collection Method |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <i>Is the Project addressing the needs of target beneficiaries?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How does the Project support the needs of target beneficiaries? ▪ Is the implementation of the Project been inclusive of all relevant Stakeholders? ▪ Are local beneficiaries and stakeholders adequately involved in Project design and implementation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strength of the link between expected results from the Project and the needs of target beneficiaries ▪ Degree of involvement and inclusiveness of beneficiaries and stakeholders in Project design and implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beneficiaries and stakeholders ▪ Needs assessment studies ▪ NCSA documents ▪ Project documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders |
| <i>Is the Project internally coherent in its design?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is there a direct and strong link between expected results of the Project (log frame) and the Project design (in terms of Project components, choice of partners, structure, delivery mechanism, scope, budget, use of resources etc)? ▪ Is the length of the Project conducive to achieve Project outcomes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level of coherence between Project expected results and Project design internal logic ▪ Level of coherence between project design and project implementation approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Program and Project documents ▪ Key project stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Key Interviews |
| <i>How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With regards to the 6 selected countries, does the Project remain relevant in terms of areas of focus and targeting of key activities? ▪ How do GEF-funds help to fill gaps (or give additional stimulus) that are crucial but are not covered by other donors? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Degree to which program was coherent and complementary to other donor programming in the 6 countries and regionally ▪ List of programs and funds in which the future developments, ideas and partnerships of the project are eligible? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Other Donors' policies and programming documents ▪ Other Donor representatives ▪ Project documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analyses ▪ Interviews with other Donors |
| Future directions for similar Projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the Project in order to strengthen the alignment between the Project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus? ▪ How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis |
| Evaluation criteria: Effectiveness – To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved? | | | | |
| <i>How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is the Project being effective in achieving its expected outcomes? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ An improved needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated; ○ A map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with a special emphasis on areas at greatest risk; ○ Detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries; ○ A proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New methodologies, skills and knowledge ▪ Change in climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management strategies, programmes and practices ▪ Change in capacity for information management: Knowledge acquisition and sharing; Effective data gathering, methods and procedures for reporting. ▪ Change in capacity for awareness raising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stakeholder involvement and government awareness ○ Change in local stakeholder behavior ▪ Change in capacity in policy making and planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy reform for climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management ○ Legislation/regulation change to improve climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents ▪ Key stakeholders ▪ Research findings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documents analysis ▪ Meetings with main Project Partners including UNEP, FAO, Project Team, Representatives of Gov. and other Partners ▪ Interviews with project beneficiaries |

| Evaluated component | Sub-Question | Indicators | Sources | Data Collection Method |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| <i>How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?</i> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of national and local strategies and plans supporting climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management ▪ Change in capacity in implementation and enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design and implementation of risk assessments ○ Implementation of national and local strategies and action plans through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance ○ Monitoring, evaluation and promotion of pilots ▪ Change in capacity in mobilizing resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leverage of resources ○ human resources ○ appropriate practices ○ mobilization of advisory services | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How well are risks and assumptions being managed? ▪ What was the quality of risk mitigation strategies developed? Were these sufficient? ▪ Are there clear strategies for risk mitigation related with long term sustainability of the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Completeness of risk identification and assumptions during Project planning ▪ Quality of existing information systems in place to identify emerging risks and other issues? ▪ Quality of risk mitigations strategies developed and followed | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNEP, FAO and Project Staff and Project Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What lessons have been learnt for the project to achieve its outcomes? ▪ What changes could have been made (if any) to the design of the project in order to improve the achievement of the project's expected results? ▪ How could the Project be more effective in achieving its results? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis |
| Future directions for similar Projects | | | | |
| Evaluation criteria: <i>Efficiency - How efficiently is the Project implemented?</i> | | | | |
| <i>Is Project support channeled in an efficient way?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use? ▪ Did the Project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation? ▪ Were the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for Project management and producing accurate and timely financial information? ▪ Were progress reports produced accurately, timely and responded to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes? ▪ Was Project implementation as cost effective as originally | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability and quality of financial and progress reports ▪ Timeliness and adequacy of reporting provided ▪ Level of discrepancy between planned and utilized financial expenditures ▪ Planned vs. actual funds leveraged ▪ Cost in view of results achieved compared to costs of similar projects from other organizations ▪ Adequacy of project choices in view of existing context, infrastructure and cost ▪ Quality of RBM reporting (progress reporting, monitoring and evaluation) ▪ Occurrence of change in project design/ implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNEP, FAO, Representatives of Gov. and Project personnel ▪ Beneficiaries and Project partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Key Interviews |

| Evaluated component | Sub-Question | Indicators | Sources | Data Collection Method |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <i>How efficient are partnership arrangements for the Project?</i> | <p>proposed (planned vs. actual)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happened as planned? Were financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently? How was RBM used during program and Project implementation? Were there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanisms to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to Project design and implementation effectiveness were shared among Project stakeholders, UNEP, FAO and GEF Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing Project adjustment and improvement? Did the Project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation? | <p>approach (ie restructuring) when needed to improve project efficiency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence, quality and use of M&E, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share findings, lessons learned and recommendation on effectiveness of project design. Cost associated with delivery mechanism and management structure compare to alternatives Gender disaggregated data in project documents | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent partnerships/linkages between institutions/ organizations were encouraged and supported? Which partnerships/linkages were facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable? What was the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNEP/GEF, FAO and relevant Governments) Which methods were successful or not and why? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific activities conducted to support the development of cooperative arrangements between partners, Examples of supported partnerships Evidence that particular partnerships/linkages will be sustained Types/quality of partnership cooperation methods utilized | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Project Partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity? Did the Project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the Project? Was there an effective collaboration with scientific institutions with competence in climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of total expertise utilized taken from the 6 countries Number/quality of analyses done to assess local capacity potential and absorptive capacity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations NCSA reports UNEP, FAO, Project Team and Project partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What lessons can be learnt from the Project on efficiency? How could the Project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc...)? What changes could have been made (if any) to the Project in order to improve its efficiency? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data analysis |
| Evaluation criteria: <i>Impacts</i> - What are the potential and realized impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project? | | | | |
| <i>How is the Project effective in achieving</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will the project achieve its first objective that is to develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in capacity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To pool/mobilize resources For related policy making and strategic planning, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents Key Stakeholders Research findings; if available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents analysis Meetings with UNEP and FAO Project Team and |

| Evaluated component | Sub-Question | Indicators | Sources | Data Collection Method |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| <i>its long-term objectives?</i> | <p>degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scales?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Will the project achieve its second objective that is to build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For implementation of related laws and strategies through adequate institutional frameworks and their maintenance, ▪ Change in use and implementation of sustainable alternatives ▪ Change to the quantity and strength of barriers such as change in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Knowledge about climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management and national incentives in these areas ○ Cross-institutional coordination and inter-sectoral dialogue ○ Knowledge of climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management practices by end users ○ Coordination of policy and legal instruments incorporating climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management strategies ○ Climate change, BD conservation and sustainable land management economic incentives for Stakeholders | | <p>Project Partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interviews with project beneficiaries and other stakeholders |
| <i>How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the impacts or likely impacts of the Project? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ On the local environment; ○ On poverty; and, ○ On other socio-economic issues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide specific examples of impacts at those three levels, as relevant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents ▪ UNFCCC, UNCDB and UNCCD documents ▪ Key Stakeholders ▪ Research findings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis ▪ Interviews with key stakeholders |
| Future directions for the Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How could the Project build on its successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis |
| Evaluation criteria: Sustainability - Are the initiatives and results of the Project allowing for continued benefits? | | | | |
| <i>Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in Project design?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were sustainability issues integrated into the design and implementation of the Project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence/Quality of sustainability strategy ▪ Evidence/Quality of steps taken to address sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNEP and FAO and project personnel and Project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews |
| <i>Financial Sustainability</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did the Project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Level and source of future financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities in the 6 countries after Project end? ▪ Evidence of commitments from international partners, | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project documents and evaluations ▪ UNEP and FAO and project personnel and Project Partners ▪ Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document analysis ▪ Interviews |

| Evaluated component | Sub-Question | Indicators | Sources | Data Collection Method |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <i>Organizations arrangements and continuation of activities</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the recurrent costs after Project completion sustainable? | <p>governments or other stakeholders to financially support relevant sectors of activities after Project end</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of recurrent costs after completion of Project and funding sources for those recurrent costs | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the results of efforts made during the Project implementation period well assimilated by organizations and their internal systems and procedures? Is there evidence that Project partners will continue their activities beyond Project support? What degree is there of local ownership of initiatives and results? Were appropriate ‘champions’ being identified and/or supported? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degree to which Project activities and results have been taken over by local counterparts or institutions/organizations Level of financial support to be provided to relevant sectors and activities by in-country actors after Project end Number/quality of champions identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNEP and FAO and project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews |
| <i>Enabling Environment</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were laws, policies and frameworks addressed through the Project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms? Were the necessary related capacities for lawmaking and enforcement built? What is the level of political commitment to build on the results of the project? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efforts to support the development of relevant laws and policies State of enforcement and law making capacity Evidences of commitment by the political class through speeches, enactment of laws and resource allocation to priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNEP and FAO and project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews |
| <i>Institutional and individual capacity building</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the capacity in place at the regional, national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of the results achieved to date? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elements in place in those different management functions, at the appropriate levels (regional, national and local) in terms of adequate structures, strategies, systems, skills, incentives and interrelationships with other key actors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNEP, FAO and Project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries Capacity assessments available, if any | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review |
| <i>Social and political sustainability</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the Project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability? Did the Project contribute to local Stakeholders’ acceptance of the new practices? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example of contributions to sustainable political and social change in support of the UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD conventions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations UNEP, FAO and project personnel and Project Partners Beneficiaries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interviews Documentation review |
| <i>Replication</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were Project activities and results replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up? What was the Project contribution to replication or scaling up of innovative practices or mechanisms that support the UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD objectives? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number/quality of replicated initiatives Number/quality of replicated innovative initiatives Volume of additional investment leveraged | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other donor programming documents Beneficiaries UNEP, FAO and project personnel and Project Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews |
| <i>Challenges to sustainability of the Project</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts? Have any of these been addressed through Project management? What could be the possible measures to further contribute to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in view of building blocks of sustainability as presented above Recent changes which may present new challenges to the Project Education strategy and partnership with school, education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project documents and evaluations Beneficiaries UNEP, FAO and project personnel and Project Partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document analysis Interviews |

| Evaluated component | Sub-Question | Indicators | Sources | Data Collection Method |
|--|---|-------------------|--|---|
| Future directions for the Project | the sustainability of efforts achieved with the Project? | institutions etc. | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Which areas/arrangements under the Project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results? ▪ What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of the Project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed? ▪ How can the experience and good project practices influence the strategies for climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management in the 6 countries? ▪ Are national decision making institutions (Parliament, Government etc.) in the 6 countries ready to improve their strategy for climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management? | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data collected throughout evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data analysis |

Appendix 3: List of Documents Reviewed

ADB, FAO, August 2008, Partnership Agreement Between ADB and FAO for CACILM

Biancalani Ricardo, April 17, 2008, LADA – Beijing Meeting – Local Level Assessment

Biancalani Ricardo, April 17, 2008, LADA – Beijing Meeting – National Level Assessment

Biancalani Ricardo, Bunning Sally, LADA Presentation

Biancalani Ricardo, December 2006, Back to Office Report – Algeria

Biancalani Ricardo, June 2007, Back to Office Report - Palermo

China National Committee for the Implementation of the UNCCD, August 1996, China National Action Programme to Combat Desertification (Abstract)

China National Committee for the Implementation of the UNCCD, June 2006, China National Report on the Implementation of the UNCCD

CITMA (Cuba), II National Report of the Republic of Cuba

CITMA (Cuba), Programa Nacional de Lucha Contra la Desertificacion y la Sequa en la Republica de Cuba

CITMA, CIGEA, October 2006, Evaluacion de la Degradacion de las Tierras Secas (LADA) – LADA Cuba

Des McGarry, A Methodology of a Visual Soil – Field Assessment Tool to Support, Enhance and Contribute to the LADA Program

Environmental Affairs and Tourism (S. Africa), November 2004, NAP

Environmental Affairs and Tourism (S. Africa), Second National Report on the Implementation of the UCCD

FAO, ARC/LNR, September 16-18, 2008, National Land Degradation Assessment Meeting – Pretoria, South Africa

FAO, Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS)

FAO, GEF, UNEP, Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands Presentation

FAO, GEF, UNEP, LADA Brochure

FAO, Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) – Assessing the Status, Causes and Impact of Land Degradation

FAO, GEF, UNEP, March 2007, LADA – Technical Report 1 – A Worldwide Survey for the LADA Virtual Centre

FAO, GEF, UNEP, WOCAT, UNU, ODG/DEV, Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands Local Assessment Manual

FAO, November 2008, Adoption of the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) for FAO Renewal (2009-2011) (Draft Resolution)

FAO-PBEE, October 2008, New FAO RBM and Strategic Framework

FAO, Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable, March 2005, Evaluacion de la Degradacion de Tierras en Zonas Aridas – Proyecto LADA – Argentina Informe Final

GEF, March 2006, GEF SGP Strategic Guidance Paper

GEF, June 2007, Focal Area Strategies and Strategic Programming for GEF-4 – GEF/C.31/10

George Hubert, December 3-10, 2008, Back to Office Report – Senegal

George Hubert, Jan./Feb. 2007, Back to Office Report – Senegal and Sierra Leone

ISRIC, August 2007, Global Assessment of Land Degradation, GIS-procedures for Mapping SOTER Landform Topical Report #2

LADA, December 2006, Project Steering Committee Meeting and Technical Workshop – 28 November-1

December 2006 – Draft Minutes (and Country Presentations)

LADA, Fifth Progress Report - 1 July 2008 – 31 December 2008

LADA, First Progress Report – 1 May 2006 – 31 December 2006

LADA, Fourth Progress Report – 1 January 2008, - 30 June 2008

LADA, January 2002, Technical Advisory Group and Steering Committee – Meeting Report

LADA, November 2002, LADA Project – Report of the E-mail Conference Oct-Nov 2002

LADA, November 2002, Technical Meeting LADA

LADA, November 2008, Project Progress – Istanbul Meeting (and Country Presentations)

LADA, Second Progress Report – 1 January 2007 – 30 June 2007

LADA, Third Progress Report – 1 July 2007 – 31 December 2007

Ministère de l’Agriculture et des Ressources Hydrauliques, FAO, 2006, Projet LADA – Pour une Evaluation de la Dégradation des Terres en Tunisie – Cadre Institutionnel et Législatif, Information des Données Disponibles, Etat des Connaissances

Ministère de l’Environnement et de l’Aménagement du Territoire (Tunisia), Programme d’Action National de Lutte contre la Désertification

Ministère de l’Environnement et de la Protection de la Nature (Sénégal), Octobre 1998, Programme d’Action national de Lutte Contre la Désertification

Ministère de l’Environnement et de la Protection de la Nature (Sénégal), Septembre 2004, Troisième Rapport National sur la Mise en Oeuvre de la UNCCD

Ministère de l’Environnement et du Développement Durable (Tunisie), Janvier 2005, Troisième Rapport national sur la Mise en Oeuvre de la UNCCD

Ministère de l’Environnement et du Développement Durable (Tunisie), Stratégie et Plan d’Action pour la Mise en Oeuvre des Conventions Internationales de Rio

Ministère de l’Environnement et du Développement Durable (Tunisie), Rapport National sur l’Etat de l’Environnement 2005

Ministère de l’Environnement et du Développement Durable (Tunisie), Rapport National sur l’Etat de l’Environnement 2006

Ministerio de Desarrollo Social Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable (Argentina), Programa de Accion Nacional de Lucha Contra la Desertificacion

Ministerio de Desarrollo Social Secretaria de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sustentable (Argentina), Segundo Informe Nacional Para la Implementacion de la UNCCD

Nachtergaele Freddy, Bunning Sally, Biancalani Ricardo, November 2008, Back to Office Report – Istanbul Meeting

Nachtergaele Freddy, January 2007, Back to Office Report – China

Petri Monica, February 2009, Land Use Systems (LUS) Mapping – Multi-country Training Workshop

Thiombiano L. (Dr.), November 2008, TerrAfrica Initiative: Opportunities for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change

UNCCD, July 2007, Follow up to the Joint Inspection Unit report and Strategy Development to Foster the Implementation of the Convention – Addendum: Draft Ten-Year Strategic Plan and Framework to Enhance the Implementation of the Convention (2008-2018)

UNCCD, October 2007, Report of the Conference of the Parties on its Eighth Session (Madrid 3-14 September 2007) – Part Two: Action Taken by the COP at its Eighth Session

UNCCD, Questionnaire on Impact Indicators in Use in your Country

UNCCD-GM, April 14, 2004, Letter of Agreement No. GM3-015B-UNCCD – Land Degradation

Assessment in Drylands Project – GM/GLO/123/IFA

UNDP/GEF, March 2005, NCSA for Global Environmental Management – Thematic Area of UNCCD

UNDP/GEF, MSP Brief: Ensuring Impacts from SLM – Development of a Global Indicator System

UNDP/GEF, Reports of National Capacity Self-Assessment for China’s Implementing International Environmental Conventions

UNEP, LADA PDF-B – Terminal Report

UNEP, UNEP GEF PIR FY 07 (1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007)

UNEP, UNEP GEF PIR FY 08 (1 July 2007 to 30 June 2008)

Wedderburn Samuel, Makunike Rudo, The TerrAfrica/GEF Strategic Investment Programme for SLM in Sub-Sahara Africa (SIP)

WOCAT, LADA, Desire, Questionnaire for Mapping Land Degradation and Sustainable Land Management (QM)

____, Draft Report on the Meeting of LADA and DeSurvey Projects – Global and Regional NDVI Based Analysis as a Tool to Assess Land Degradation and Desertification

____, January 2009, All Presentations from the LADA Workshop – Mendoza, Argentina (26-31 January 2009)

____, LADA Project Document

____, May 2006, Evaluation of FAO Strategic Objective D2 “Conservation, Rehabilitation and Development of Environments at Greatest Risk” - Final Report

____, Towards Achieving Sustainable Growth and Development Through Vision 2014 – UNDAF for South Africa 2007-2010

Main Web Sites Consulted:

GEF: <http://www.gefweb.org>

GEF Evaluation Office: <http://gefweb.org/MonitoringandEvaluation/MEAbout/meabout.html>

LADA: <http://www.fao.org/nr/lada/>

OSS: <http://www.oss-online.org/>

UNCBD: <http://www.cbd.int/>

UNCCD: <http://www.unccd.int/main.php>

UNFCCC: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

Tunisia: <http://www.fao.org/landandwater/fieldpro/gcptun028ita/index.html>

TerrAfrica: <http://www.terrafraica.com/default.asp?pid=6121789>

Appendix 4: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

I. RELEVANCE - *How does the Project relate to the main objectives of the UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD and GEF and to the environment and development challenges faced by Governments for the sustainable land use in dryland zones?*

- I.1. Is the Project relevant to UNFCCC, UNCBD, UNCCD and GEF objectives?
- I.2. Is the Project relevant to UNEP and FAO objectives?
- I.3. Is the Project relevant to the countries' development objectives?
- I.4. Does the Project address the needs of target beneficiaries?
- I.5. Is the Project internally coherent in its design?
- I.6. How is the Project relevant in light of other donors?

Future directions for similar projects

- I.7. What lessons have been learnt and what changes could have been made to the Project in order to strengthen the alignment between the Project and the Partners' priorities and areas of focus?
- I.8. How could the Project better target and address the priorities and development challenges of targeted beneficiaries?

II. EFFECTIVENESS – *To what extent are the expected outcomes of the Project being achieved?*

- II.1. How is the Project effective in achieving its expected outcomes?
 - An improved needs-based and process-driven approach to drylands degradation assessment tested and disseminated;
 - A map with information retrieved from the global/regional land degradation assessment in drylands, which will constitute a baseline of the status of land degradation in drylands, with a special emphasis on areas at greatest risk;
 - Detailed local assessments and analysis of land degradation and its impact in the pilot countries;
 - A proposed global action plan, incorporating main findings from the project, conclusions and recommendations for further action.
- II.2. How is risk and risk mitigation being managed?

Future directions for similar projects

- II.3. What lessons have been learnt for the Project to achieve its outcomes?
- II.4. What changes could have been made (if any) to the design of the Project in order to improve the achievement of the Project' expected results?
- II.5. How could the Project be more effective in achieving its results?

III. EFFICIENCY - *How efficiently is the Project implemented?*

- III.1. Was adaptive management used or needed to ensure efficient resource use?
- III.2. Did the Project logical framework and work plans and any changes made to them use as management tools during implementation?

- III.3. Were the accounting and financial systems in place adequate for Project management and producing accurate and timely financial information?
- III.4. Were progress reports produced accurately, timely and respond to reporting requirements including adaptive management changes?
- III.5. Was Project implementation as cost effective as originally proposed (planned vs. actual)
- III.6. Was the leveraging of funds (co-financing) happening as planned?
- III.7. Were financial resources utilized efficiently? Could financial resources have been used more efficiently?
- III.8. How was RBM used during program and Project implementation?
- III.9. Were there an institutionalized or informal feedback or dissemination mechanism to ensure that findings, lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to Project design and implementation effectiveness were shared among Project stakeholders, UNEP, FAO and GEF Staff and other relevant organizations for ongoing Project adjustment and improvement?
- III.10. Did the Project mainstream gender considerations into its implementation?
- III.11. To what extent were partnerships/ linkages between institutions/ organizations encouraged and supported?
- III.12. Which partnerships/linkages were facilitated? Which one can be considered sustainable?
- III.13. What was the level of efficiency of cooperation and collaboration arrangements? (between local actors, UNEP/GEF, FAO and relevant Governments)
- III.14. Was an appropriate balance struck between utilization of international expertise as well as local capacity?
- III.15. Did the Project take into account local capacity in design and implementation of the Project?

Future directions for the Project

- III.16. What lessons can be learnt from the Project on efficiency?
- III.17. How could the Project have more efficiently addressed its key priorities (in terms of management structures and procedures, partnerships arrangements etc...)?

IV. IMPACTS - *What are the potential and realized impacts of activities carried out in the context of the Project?*

- IV.1. Will the project achieve its first objective that is to develop and implement strategies, methods and tools to assess, quantify and analyse the nature, extent, severity and impacts of land degradation on ecosystems, watersheds and river basins, and carbon storage in drylands at a range of spatial and temporal scales?
- IV.2. Will the project achieve its second objective that is to build national, regional and global assessment capacities to enable the design, planning and implementation of interventions to mitigate land degradation and establish sustainable land use and management practices?
- IV.3. How is the Project effective in achieving the objectives of the UNFCCC, UNCBD and UNCCD such as impacts or likely impacts on the local environment; on poverty; and, on other socio-economic issues?

Future directions for the Project

- IV.4. How could the Project build on its apparent successes and learn from its weaknesses in order to enhance the potential for impact of ongoing and future initiatives?

V. SUSTAINABILITY - *Are the initiatives and results of the Project allowing for continued benefits?*

- V.1. Are sustainability issues adequately integrated in Project design?
- V.2. Did the Project adequately address financial and economic sustainability issues?
- V.3. Is there evidence that Project partners will continue their activities beyond Project support?
- V.4. Are laws, policies and frameworks being addressed through the Project, in order to address sustainability of key initiatives and reforms?
- V.5. Is the capacity in place at the national and local levels adequate to ensure sustainability of the results achieved to date?
- V.6. Did the Project contribute to key building blocks for social and political sustainability?
- V.7. Are Project activities and results being replicated elsewhere and/or scaled up?
- V.8. What are the main challenges that may hinder sustainability of efforts?

Future directions for the Project

- V.9. Which areas/arrangements under the Project show the strongest potential for lasting long-term results?
- V.10. What are the key challenges and obstacles to the sustainability of results of the Project initiatives that must be directly and quickly addressed?

VI. ANY OTHER COMMENTS ON THE PROJECT?

Thank you very much for your input.

Appendix 5: Evaluation Missions Agenda

Argentina - January 26 to 31, 2009

Participated to LADA workshop and had additional meetings (one-to-one) on the side

| Date and Time | Item | Location |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| Sunday January 25th | | |
| 18:30 | JJ Bellamy: Arrival in Mendoza at 18:30 on LA 0932 | Mendoza airport |
| Monday January 26th | | |
| 14:00 | Meeting with Ing. Octavio Pérez Pardo – LADA Argentine Coordinator – Focal Point UNCCD | CRICyT (Workshop location) |
| Tuesday January 27th | | |
| 15:00 | Meeting with Community Leaders (4) | CRICyT (Workshop location) |
| 18:00 | Meeting with Mr. John McDonagh, University East Anglia | Internacional Hotel |
| Wednesday January 28th | | |
| 9:00 – 20:00 | Field visit | |
| Thursday January 29th | | |
| 9:00 – 18:00 | Field trip: Applications of the local assessment tools | |
| 19:00 | Meeting with Mr. Hanspeter Liniger, WOCAT | Internacional Hotel |
| Friday January 30th | | |
| 8.00-9.00 | Meeting with Chinese Delegation: Dr. Yang Weixi and Mr. Guosheng Wang | CRICyT (Workshop location) |
| 18:00 | Meeting with South Africa Delegation: Mr. Lehman Lindeque and Ms. Liels Stronkhorst | International Hotel |
| Saturday January 31th | | |
| 8.00-9.00 | Meeting with Cuban Delegation: Mr. Rudy Montero Mata | CRICyT (Workshop location) |
| 14:45 | Jean-Jo departure to Buenos Aires on LA4245 | Mendoza airport |

Phone Interviews

| Date and Time | Item | Location |
|--|---|----------|
| Tuesday February 3rd | | |
| 10:00 | Interview with Mr. Libor Jansky, UNU | Phone |
| Wednesday February 4th | | |
| 9:00 | Interview with Team from Senegal: Mr. Dethie Soumare Ndiaye and Mr. Gora Beye | Phone |
| 10:00 | Interview with Mr. Gobert van Lynden, ISRIC | Phone |
| Friday February 6th | | |
| 9:00 | Interview with Ms. Elysabeth David, UNCCD-CST | Phone |
| Tuesday February 17th | | |
| 9:00 | Interview with Ms. Andrea Kutter, GEF | Phone |
| Wednesday March 4th | | |
| 8:00 | Interview with Ms. Tessa Goverse, UNEP | Phone |

| Date and Time | Item | Location |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------|
| Wednesday March 7th | | |
| 8:00 | Answers to Questions Ms. Gemma Sheperd, UNEP | Email |

Rome and Tunis – February 8th to 14th, 2009

| Date and Time | Item | Location |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Sunday February 8th | | |
| 18:30 | JJ Bellamy: Arrival in Rome at 13:20 on AF 1604 | Fiumicino Airport |
| Monday February 9th | | |
| 9:00 | Meeting with FAO-LADA Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Freddy Nachtergaele • Mr. Riccardo Biancalani • Ms. Sally Bunning • Mr. Stephan Schlingloff • Dr. Hubert George | FAO |
| 11:00 | Meeting with Ricardo Biancalani (M. Ieradi) | |
| 11:00 | Meeting with FAO-GEF Coordination Unit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Barabar Cooney • Mr. Jan van Amerongen | FAO |
| 14:00 | Meeting to discuss LADA finances with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Freddy Nachtergaele • Mr. Stephan Schlingloff | FAO |
| 15:00 | Meeting with FAO-LADA Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Freddy Nachtergaele • Mr. Riccardo Biancalani • Ms. Sally Bunning • Mr. Stephan Schlingloff • Dr. Hubert George | FAO |
| Tuesday February 10th | | |
| 9:00 | Meeting with Ms. Tullia Aiazzi, PBE | FAO |
| 10:00 | Meeting with Mr. Dominique Lantieri (NRCE) | FAO |
| 11:00 | Meeting with Mr. Paul Munro-Faure (NRLA) | FAO |
| 13:00 | Meeting with Mr. Riccardo Biancalani | FAO |
| 14:00 | Meeting with Mr. Wolfgang Prante | FAO |
| 15:00 | Meeting with Mr. Freddy Nachtergaele | FAO |
| 16:00 | Meeting with Mr. John Latham & Mr. Renato Cumani (NRCE) | FAO |
| Wednesday February 11th | | |
| 11:40 | JJ Bellamy: Arrival in Tunis on AZ0864 | Tunis Airport |
| 14:00 | Meeting with Representatives from Direction des sols: Mr. Hattab ben Chaabane, +2 Representatives | Direction des Sols |
| Thursday February 12th | | |
| 6:30 – 21:00 | Field visit to Kasserine with Mr. Hedi Hamrouni, Mr. Hattab ben Chaabane and 8 Representatives from Kasserine's CRDA | Kasserine area |
| Friday February 13th | | |

| Date and Time | Item | Location |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| 9:00 | Meeting with Mr. Hedi Hamrouni, Director | Direction des Sols |
| 10:00 | Meeting with Mr. Ali Abaab, Expert GTZ | Ministry of Environment |
| 11:30 | Meeting with Dr. Dali Najeh, GEF Focal Point | Ministry of Environment |
| 15:30 | Meeting with Mr. Nabil ben Khatra, OSS | OSS |
| Saturday February 14th | | |
| 12:15 | Jean-Jo departure from Tunis on AF1985 | Tunis Airport |
| Wednesday February 18th | | |
| 11:00 | Technical Meeting with Ms Monica Petri (M. Ieradi) | FAO |
| Friday February 20th | | |
| 9:00 | Technical Meeting with M. Riccardo Biacalani (M. Ieradi) | FAO |

Appendix 6: List of People Interviewed

| Name | Position / Organisation |
|----------------------------|--|
| Abaab Ali | Export GTZ, Tunisia |
| Aiazzi Tullia | FAO, Evaluation Office (PBE) |
| Barabar Cooney | FAO, GEF Unit |
| ben Khatra Nabil | OSS, Tunisia |
| Beye Gora | Senegal Delegation |
| Biancalani Riccardo | FAO, LADA Technical Advisor |
| Bunning Sally | FAO |
| Cumani Renato | FAO, NRCE |
| David Elysabeth | UNCCD-CST |
| George Hubert (Dr.) | FAO |
| Goverse Tessa | UNEP |
| Guosheng Wang | Chinese Delegation |
| Hattab ben Chaabane, | Direction des Sols, Tunisia |
| Hedi Hamrouni, | Direction des Sols, Director, Tunisia |
| Jansky Libor | UNU |
| Kutter Andrea | GEF |
| Lantieri Dominique | FAO, NRCE |
| Latham John | FAO, NRCE |
| Lindeque Lehman | South Africa Delegation |
| Liniger Hanspeter | WOCAT, Berne |
| Luis Garcia Cesar | CREAN, Argentina |
| McDonagh John | University East Anglia |
| Montero Mata Rudy | Cuba Delegation |
| Munro-Faure Paul | FAO, NRLA |
| Nachtergaele Freddy | FAO |
| Najeh Dali (Dr.) | MOE, GEF Political Focal Point, Tunisia |
| Octavio Pérez Pardo (Ing.) | LADA Coordinator/Focal Point UNCCD, Argentina |
| Petri Monica | FAO |
| Pietragalla Vanina | Dirección de Conservación del Suelo y Lucha contra la Desertificación, Argentina |
| Prante Wolfgang | FAO |
| Schlingloff Stephan | FAO |
| Shepherd Gemma | UNEP-DEWA |
| Soumare Ndiaye Dethie | Senegal Delegation |
| Spilsbury Micheal | UNEP, EO |
| Stronkhorst Liels | South Africa Delegation |
| van Amerongen Jan | Consultant, Rome |
| van Lynden Gobert | ISRIC |
| Yang Weixi (Dr.) | LADA Focal Point in China |
| 4 Community Leaders | Mendoza region, Argentina |
| 2 Representatives | Direction des Sols, Tunisia |
| 8 Representatives | CRDA of Kasserine, Tunisia |

Appendix 7: Overview of LADA Supported Information Systems

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|-------|--|
| AML | Arc macro languages |
| ESRI | Environmental Systems Research Institute |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| IS | Information System |
| LUS | Land Use System |
| VB | Visual Basic |
| VOIP | Voice Over IP |
| WGS84 | World Geodetic System 1984 |

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1. Introduction

The present document has been developed according to the following “philosophy”: *Land degradation assessment requires robust and verified techniques, based upon sound conceptual and integrated models that combine technical, social and economic issues. These models must respond to the needs of users and reflect the processes that drive land degradation and its impact on society. Therefore, the first of the four LADA project components is “Development of the LADA approach: land degradation assessment guidelines, network and information system”. This includes the adoption of a standardized methodological and conceptual framework for the assessment of land degradation and its impact as well as needs assessments conducted by national task forces. Existing information sources are utilized wherever possible, along with key indicators of the proximate causes of degradation. A number of proxy and new assessment sources and datasets are available, to apply at a variety of scales. Three key requirements are: the methods must have diagnostic capability; they must monitor impact on human development and poverty alleviation; and they must provide the basis for an explicit link to policy and decision-making processes.*

The scope of this document is to assess both the LADA Information System (IS) and the GIS procedures included in land degradation assessment guidelines.

One of the project objective is to produce a “User’s Guide” including GIS procedures to support the technician performing the land degradation assessment. All information and maps produced through the LADA methodology are available on the LADA IS. The IS allows everyone to access the project maps (currently only LUS maps) and related database.

The mission objective has been focused on the analysis of all technical components of the IS project implementation. Special attention has been paid to:

- GIS methodology developed to produce land use maps,
- Criteria selected and implemented to combine the different parameters for producing land degradation maps,
- Quality/efficiency of the IT system developed for data entry
- Efficiency of the web system developed to distribute information through Internet.

The assessment reviewed also the linkages with other projects such as the Terrafrica project.

The mission methodology is based mainly on a document review and interviews with project staff and with FAO staff involved in LADA’s activities. During the data collection phase the Evaluator has accessed the following relevant web sites:

<http://www.fao.org/nr/lada>

<http://nrd.uniss.it/>

<http://www.fao.org/geonetwork>

<http://nrd.uniss.it/>

<http://www.desire-project.eu/>

<http://www.terrafrica.org/>

2. Description of Information Systems Supported by LADA

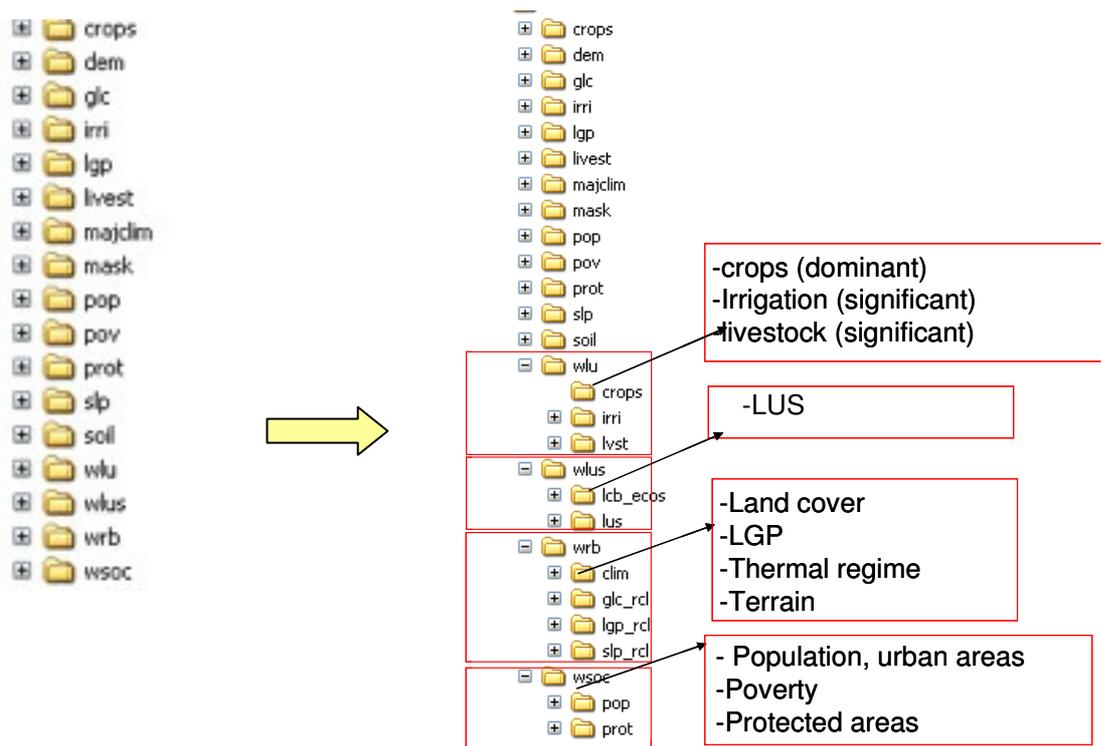
2.1 General

It is possible to divide the LADA Information Systems in two principal typologies:

- First one is made of procedures for data producing and data merging in order to produce land degradation maps;
- Second one is made of web information system and the questionnaire database available through web access.

The first typology is mostly based on a hierarchy directory structure. For each continent analyzed a directory tree has been developed. Normally the continent name is the first folder, then the second folder represents each different class of information used for Land degradation assessment:

Figure 1 - Hierarchy directory structure



The same directory structure is used at country level in order to perform Land Degradation national assessment. All these information are described by metadata and readme file. Each country database has also own GIS routine software in order to perform data merging and data classification.

GIS routine software could be in Arc Macro languages (AML) language or in Visual basic (VB) language according to GIS software used by local partners. In particular if they use ESRI ArcInfo they will use AML language while if they have ArcGis or ArcView they will use respectively VB language or AVENUE language (Programming Macro languages of ESRI Arcview software). In general the first component is used by project staff and local partners staff in order to perform data analysis and data entry at global/national/local levels.

The second typology is a real IS and it is based on web architecture, and it will be analyzed in detail in the next paragraphs.

2.2 Scope / Data Architectures

LADA project data architectures is satisfactory from the point of view of standard and long-term sustainability. The project has used an open approach in order to assure the future sustainability of project activities. In particular the project has tried to use all FAO standards in term of data format (ex. ESRI GRID raster data) and software for data managing and publishing (ex. ESRI ArcView, GeoNetwork, etc.). Several maps have been developed with some project support – such as ISRIC and IIASA maps - and they will be released worldwide trough the project IS.

The main LADA Information System is a web project portal. It has been developed in order to distribute information about the project to everyone. The keywords used in order to develop the LADA Information System were: easy data access, standard map navigation tools and data inclusion in general GIS FAO database.

The LADA assessment is carried out at three spatial scales (local, national and global), and considers land degradation status, drivers and impacts. Ultimately, LADA will provide a better understanding of the degradation phenomena, and it will give indications for appropriate responses at all levels of scale.

Different maps and database information are produced at each level. All Global maps are (or will be) available through the FAO GeoNetwork. National or local maps are property of the countries and their distribution depends on each country.

GeoNetwork provides internet access to interactive maps, satellite imagery and related spatial databases maintained by FAO and its partners. Its purpose is to improve access to and integrated use of spatial data and information.

Through the GeoNetwork website FAO facilitates multidisciplinary approaches to sustainable development and supports decision-making in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and food security.

Maps, including those derived from satellite imagery, are effective communicational tools and play an important role in the work of various types of users:

- Decision Makers: e.g. Sustainable development planners and humanitarian and emergency managers in need of quick, reliable and up to date user-friendly cartographic products as a basis for action and better plan and monitor their activities.
- GIS Experts in need of exchanging consistent and updated geographical data.
- Spatial Analysts in need of multidisciplinary data to perform preliminary geographical analysis and reliable forecasts to better set up appropriate interventions in vulnerable areas.

Through GeoNetwork it will be possible to consult and print every project maps included maps produced by ISRIC and IIASA by the end of the project. Currently, it is possible to access in different ways (GeoNetwork or Google Earth) the following maps:

- World
- Australia and New Zealand
- East Asia and Pacific
- East Europe and Central Asia
- Latin America and Caribbean
- North Africa and Near East
- North America
- South East Asia
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- Western Europe

For each map it is possible to consult:

- Metadata
- View map with Google Earth (all internet browser)
- View map with GeoNetwork (only Mozilla Firefox)
- Download maps database in raster BIL format or ESRI GRID format

All other LADA maps will be published during the remaining period of the project.

Other basic information produced by LADA project is the database to capture information from questionnaires. An online questionnaires database is used for data entry at national level; it is based on WOCAT methodology. In particular for each national administrative units it is possible to choose any LUS, area trend, intensity trend and to add comment/recommendation.

Figure 2 - WOCAT database interface



2.3 Data Format

Global LUS data have different resolutions ranging from 30 arc seconds to 5 arc minutes resolution (1km by 1km cell size and 8km by 8 km cell size at the equator respectively).

Based on the national data previously selected, the higher the resolution the best LUS results. A resolution of 30 arc seconds may be sufficient for national maps but a finer resolution may be reached in many cases; it is recommendable.

The most difficult aspect to explain about the resolution of maps is that when resolution changes, it changes what you can see. For example if you are looking at a large river described in a raster map of 5 arc seconds pixel size you can easily see the river network. If you are looking at the same area in a raster map of 5 arc minutes resolution you may not recognize the river and you may not even find the water classification LUS in that area.

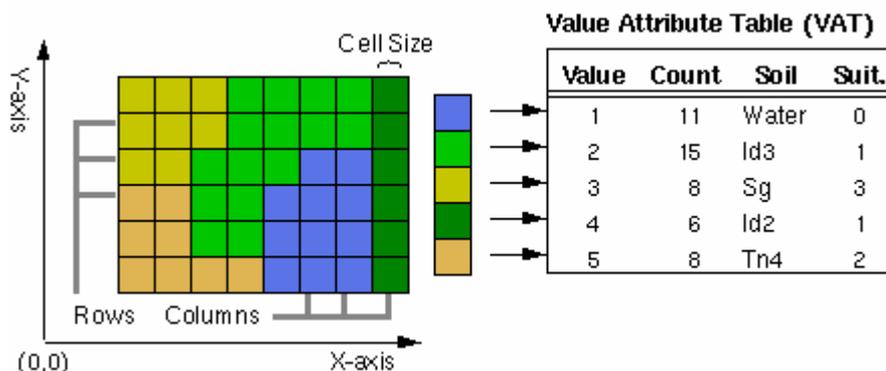
The interviews underline that this problem has existed during the implementation of LADA activities; particularly when the first LUS global map has been released. Project staff efforts are trying to resolve this problem with the project partners. The Evaluator found the project approach on this issue effective.

All project maps are in ESRI GRID data format, data geographic projection is WGS84 and metadata is available for each map and database.

Meta-databases, working with both GIS data (spatial metadata) and alphanumeric data, are important because they document existing data holdings and facilitate data sharing. Metadata are an essential resource shared with many users at all levels of GIS expertise. Both - demand and supply of spatial data - is growing fast, but costs remain high. Given this reality and the fact that acquisition of data for a project is critical to its success, the best cost-effectiveness approach is to avoid duplication of efforts and use already existing spatial data, as well as share one's own. This requires anyone to catalogue and adequately describe his/her spatial data sets and make this information publicly available for the benefit of everyone, both inside and outside organizations. Acceptance of this principle benefits everyone in at least two ways: gaining understanding on what to look and ask for in one's own searches and appreciation of the work that others have carried out to publish their geo-data sets. In spite of being time-consuming, and requiring commitment, the benefits gained from capturing spatial metadata clearly out-weigh the work involved.

A GRID is a raster data storage format native to ESRI Inc. There are two types of grids: integer and floating point. Use integer grids to represent discrete data and floating-point grids to represent continuous data.

Figure 3 - ESRI Grid data format



Source: ESRI

Discrete data, which is sometimes called thematic, categorical, or discontinuous data, most often represents objects in both the feature (vector) and raster data storage systems. A discrete object has known and definable boundaries. It is easy to define precisely where the object begins and where it ends. A lake is a discrete object within the surrounding landscape.

A continuous surface represents phenomena in which each location on the surface is a measure of the concentration level or its relationship from a fixed point in space or from an emitting source. Continuous data is also referred to as field, non-discrete, or surface data.

LUS grids are integer grids to represent discrete data. In LUS (ex. LGP, pop. density, livestock) a reclassification is applied.

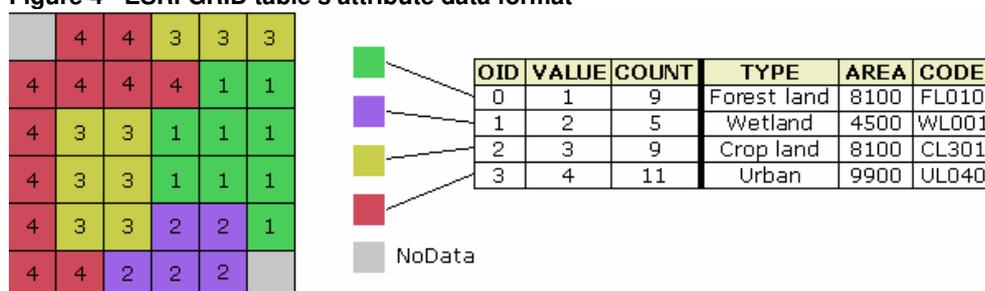
Attributes for an integer grid are stored in a value attribute table (VAT). A VAT has one record for each unique value in the grid. The record stores the unique value (VALUE is an integer that represents a particular class or grouping of cells) and the number of cells (COUNT) in the grid represented by that value. For example, if 50 cells have a value of 1 representing a forest, then the VAT would show a VALUE = 1 and COUNT = 50 for each of the 50 cells.

Raster datasets that contain attribute tables typically have cell values that represent or define a class, group, category, or membership. For example, a satellite image may have undergone a classification analysis to create a raster dataset that defines land uses. Some of the classes in the land-use classification may be forestland, wetland, cropland, or urban. The numbers below could represent which cell value in the raster dataset would define the land use:

- 1 Forest land
- 2 Wetland
- 3 Crop land
- 4 Urban

By building a raster attribute table, you can maintain this table's attribute information with this classified raster dataset as well as define additional fields to be stored in it.

Figure 4 - ESRI GRID table's attribute data format



Source: ESRI

The mission found that the decision to use raster data instead of vector data has been very important for the future development of project activities. In fact this data format is easy to manage and to perform spatial analysis. Vector data are very useful if it is needed to manage high resolution cartographic data, in particular when you have to work with network data and perform network analysis. Instead if you have to manage low resolution data and you have to put in evidence change detection phenomena it is better to use raster data format.

2.4 Data Access / Communication

Project communication is based on email and discussions during local meeting. Also data communication is based mainly on email and hardcopy exchanged during local meeting. LADA project web site permit to everyone (after registration) to communicate with project staff trough a public forum. The project has also implemented a Project Forum, but despite a good design and accessibility it is still not used.

2.5 Database Management Software

Database management is a critical aspect of the LADA Project. Project GRID maps contains billion of data bits and all these data have to be managed properly. Moreover, data from questionnaires have also to be

stored in a database and all information has to be accessible through web access. The project approach has been to use FAO know-how in order to reuse previous experiences in this field. Based on FAO experience the decision was made to choose MySQL as the database management software. MySQL is a relational database management system (RDBMS), which has more than 11 million installations. The program runs as a server providing multi-user access to a number of databases.

MySQL is owned and sponsored by a single for-profit firm, the Swedish company MySQL AB, now a subsidiary of Sun Microsystems, which holds the copyright to most of the codebase. The project's source code is available under terms of the GNU General Public License, as well as under a variety of proprietary agreements.

User interface is accessible by internet with a username and a password. The access is at a reasonable speed in order to insert, query and display data without any problems.

2.6 Maintenance

At the global level the LADA project provides all data needed for using maps from international institutions (ex Soil Map of the World by FAO/UNESCO) or produces maps and databases using project funds (ex. NDVI map produced by ISRIC).

At national level - in order to perform land degradation assessment - each country can either use LADA project maps and database or use their own map/database. With the first scenario the LADA project provides the correct map scale and geographic projection, and with the second scenario the local GIS experts have to adapt local maps to the LADA project methodology. In the first case the maps update is guaranteed by international institutions, which have the mission to update information, in the second case maps update depends on national institutions. In any event that the map quality is not suitable for the purpose of conducting a land degradation assessment, the national GIS expert can always switch from the national map to the global map and vice versa.

3. Analysis of LADA Information Systems

The project aims at producing a land degradation assessment methodology specifically dedicated to support the decision makers to focus on their interventions in the critical area. To this aim the LADA analysis has been adapted to be more "friendly" for decision-makers, thus it has been made possible to focus the geographical analysis at the administrative units level. At national level the assessment starts with the selection of the correct administrative units level. The assessment procedure thus indeed starts once the administrative units level has been decided, then "translation key" from the scientific to decision-making language can be put in place in order to describe all the information at the chosen administrative units level

3.1 Validity of Needs Analyses

A worldwide survey was conducted between December 2006 and mid February 2007 by the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari (MAI-B), Italy on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) to determine the kind of features and information stakeholders may be interested to get from a land degradation information centre offered by the Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands project's Virtual Centre (LADA-VC):

- A questionnaire with 35 questions was prepared and distributed via a web-based design developed by a professional company
- 138 stakeholders worldwide were electronically contacted
- 104 of them (or 75%) replied

LADA-VC now has become the formal LADA project web site. The highlights of this worldwide survey are:

- 70.2 per cent of the institutions contacted are dealing with desertification, followed by land use planning (69.2%), soil resources (66.3%) and water management (59.6%).

- The respondents suggested the following areas for inclusion in future actions: forestry, geology and natural hazards, crop and animal production, environmental data collection, GIS, environmental awareness, biodiversity, environmental policy analyses, and sustainable agriculture.
- 70.2 % of the respondents considered “Integrated ecosystem/natural resources management” the key for success in combating land degradation. Information on “indicators” and their practical use ranked second with 69.2 per cent of the vote followed by the “discussion forum on land degradation” (63.5 %), “monitoring the trend of degradation and desertification” (53.8 %), “actions needed to reverse the problem” and “agri-environmental policies and their impact on land degradation” (both 51 %), “decision support systems” (46.2%), “local technical knowledge” (43.3 %), “compatibility, comparability and knowledge exchange” (44.2 %), “downscaling/up-scaling information” (34.6%), “food security and food safety” (28.8 %), “livelihood analyses” (27.9), and “public awareness and gender issue” (21.1 %).
- In addition it was suggested: specific case studies (successes or failures) in combating land degradation, the need for methodologies and guidelines to address the problem, well-defined short and long-term goals when dealing with land degradation, translating scientific findings into policy formulation, preparation of land degradation sensitivity maps, establishing better the role of biodiversity in combating land degradation, experiences from National Actions Plans in support of the UNCCD, and finally strengthening capacity and institutional building.
- 74.8 % want to be informed on LADA project summary and progress, 73.8% on “project news”, 57.3 % on “project key documents”, 45.6 % on “links to related sites” and 41.7 % on “project partners”.
- In regard to combating land degradation and desertification 65% highlight the importance of “research and technology development” followed by 60 % that consider equally important “policy and legislation” and “national strategies, programmes and actions”. 53 % consider a “medium” priority the “institutional mechanisms in land degradation commitments”. “Training” is also considered important by more than half of the people interviewed as well as experience accumulated by the case studies. Forty-four people out 104 interviewed gave lower priority to other areas that may have not been included in the survey.
- 77 % share the opinion that well-defined indicators are key for success to establish trends of land degradation and desertification followed by “causes”, “impacts” and “responses”
- 45.9 % think that information could be located quickly through accurate categorization while 40 per cent said “quickly”. The remaining 14.1 per cent are not satisfied at all with this function because of inadequate or inaccurate categorization. 89.4% said they were satisfied as it is but the rest wanted “more flexibility”, suggested links to Google search engine, or establishing an alphabet style index of all the existing documents present in the LADA VC.

It is also interesting to check which suggestions have been addresses by the project staff:

- Better clarify the role of the LADA-VC as a global forum on land degradation issues;
Response: Implemented the new LADA web forum.
- LADA-VC should provide updated information on the status of the LADA project and on status and trends of various components affecting land degradation by allowing comparison and combination of different types of information. It should include also a section on “formal commitments” for updating information from the LADA pilot countries;
Response: The Web site provides this functionality but the local information sharing depends by the decision of the pilot country.
- Provide interactive facilities and easy-to-find lists of stakeholders and related institutions and accelerate enhanced networking and communication. Provide the opportunities for upload/download maps, graphics, photos by individual people;
Response: From a technical point of view it is possible.
- The opening page (LADA home) could be enlarged to fit all the screen
Response: Now it is possible
- Improve design searching and search results rankings and published or non-published LADA documents should be defined
Response: Now it is possible

- Expand activities of LADA in the Balkans;
Response: Possible but it depends on each country to decide to use LADA methodology
- Provide better opportunities for data and knowledge sharing;
Response: This issue is well supported by the project.
- Provide information on three languages: English, French and Spanish;
Response: Now it is possible
- Maintain, enhance, strengthen links with large number of stakeholders
Response: I think that the project could be more efficient on this issue.
- Expand LADA activities on education and training;
Response: It is already started with training course in Central Asia. Training and education will be the future way to expand LADA methodology.
- Establish working groups for different geographical regions who would be able to develop regional indicators on land degradation and develop acceptable methodologies for mitigation. Provide the opportunities for preparing and publishing specific booklets that would summarize results, findings and recommendations;
Response: It is happened at local country level.
- Create a subcategory for on-line registration of people and institutions;
Response: Now only online registration is available.
- Create a subcategory for information on calls for proposals for projects dealing with land degradation and desertification.
Response: It is not available on calls for proposal for projects.
- Create a database of success stories and failures in natural resources management;
Response: It has not been implemented.
- Create a “people’s section” with the profiles of LADA secretariat staff and others involved in partner and national organizations
Response: It is available in the “Contact Us” web site section.
- Only generally accepted and relevant documents to the project should be displayed. Avoid including drafts or Minutes of meetings;
Response: Local partners reports are available only for registered users.
- Change the appearance of the navigation bar;
Response: It is partially possible.
- A proper assignment of user rights should be maintained (i.e. editor, administrator, guest etc.);
Response: Now every user could select and both editor user right and the other user right are decided by the system administrator.
- Provide suggestions when uploading new links or documents;
Response: Now it is supported by the IS.
- Implement an opportunity to assign a new entry also to a section of Properties and Management of Drylands and maintain and update both the LADA VC and the Drylands portal;
Response: LADA VC doesn’t exist anymore.

The project staff has been taking into consideration most of the users’ suggestions and integrated them into the LADA web site to improve it.

3.2 System Development Processes

The Web site has been developed by a FAO consultant. At the very beginning of the project it started as a web database on land degradation and desertification matters (LADA-Virtual Centre). After the first output of the project a web portal has been produced where users could find all information related to the project.

All the information is updated by project staff and by local partners. In fact any registered users could upload documents directly in web site folders.

The interview with project staff indicated that there is a development plan for the LADA web site. However, it is not clear what will be implemented in the next two years before the end of the LADA project. Nevertheless, all project maps will be published through the GeoNetwork.

3.3 End-Users Inputs

Local partners have made a great contribution to the development of the LADA IS. The main point of discussion has been the methodology for defining the LUS maps and their application at national and local level in each country. Local partners have taken the LADA methodology in high consideration and have adapted this methodology to their needs. In general the six pilot countries have adopted the LADA methodology. Argentina, China, Senegal and Tunisia, have adopted the methodology completely, while South Africa has used a specific caption for LUS maps and Cuba is still working to define its own methodology. Also field investigation has been highly taken in consideration by local partners and the criteria for choosing the administrative units (area to carry out field analysis) has been often driven by stakeholders and local politicians.

3.4 Data Compatibility

Data compatibility is assured by FAO agreement with the principal institutions and the University involved in Land Degradation Assessment and Desertification. In August 2007, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and the Nucleo di Ricerca sulla Desertificazione (NRD) of the University of Sassari (Italy) signed a Letter of Agreement for supporting the creation of an on-line database of indicators for assessing land degradation and desertification in the framework of the LADA project. The objective was to transfer the DESERTLINKS' methodology to the LADA project and the execution of a pilot work in Tunisia.

The collaboration between FAO and the NRD aims to support the production of an on-line database application to store and organize LADA indicators. The activities foreseen will include the implementation of the prototype adapted to the requirements of Tunisia, one LADA pilot country.

3.5 Web Access

The mission found the LADA web site satisfactory from an accessibility and usability point of view. The web site is divided in the following sections and sub-sections:

- * LADA Home
 - * News
 - * The Project >>>
 - o Overview
 - o Description
 - o Global Assessment
 - o National Assessment
 - o Local Assessment
 - o Indicators
 - o Capacity Building
 - o Policy Support
 - * Countries >>>
 - o Argentina
 - o China
 - o Cuba
 - o Senegal
 - o South Africa
 - o Tunisia
- * LADA output >>>
 - o Documents
 - o LADA Map (LUS)
 - * Events and Meetings
 - * Knowledge Base >>>
 - o Drylands Link opens new window
 - o Maps
 - o Land Degradation Library
 - * Images >>>
 - o LADA Photo Gallery
 - o WOCAT Link opens new window
 - o Soil erosion processes Link opens new window
 - * Links/Partners >>>
 - o LADA partners
 - o Other links
 - * Site Map
 - * Contact Us
 - * Discussion Forum

The Section MENU is developed with java script. If a users points on one section the selected window automatically scrolls down presenting all the information (sub-sections) that can be chosen. All section topics are easy to understand and information are rapidly reached. The Evaluator noticed that the web site has not been developed for disabled (blind) people, a text to speech software and an only text version could have been developed.

The present cartography section only includes LUS maps, but the project staff is planning to upload all main maps in GeoNetwork.

GeoNetwork opensource implements both the Portal component and the Catalog database of a Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) defined in the OGC Reference Architecture. It provides tools for managing and publishing metadata on spatial data and related services. GeoNetwork opensource allows a distributed search providing access to a huge volume of metadata that come from different Clearinghouses and also provides a web-based interactive map viewer that allows people to composite maps selecting layers from distributed servers on the internet.

Some of the GeoNetwork opensource characteristics include:

- Portal Services that provide the access to the geospatial information as well as the management and administration of the portal and users. A set of rules allows Authentication and Access Control that regulate, through controlled privileges, the access to reserved information and services. In addition, the Portal Platform offers an Advanced Metadata Editor Module that is able to create and edit ISO compliant metadata records for geographic data using the Standard ISO 19115. The map viewer, part of the portal services, is provided by InterMap, another joint FAO-WFP opensource project (<http://sourceforge.org/projects/intermap>). Intermap allows the user to select map layers from several servers, overlay them and create a customized composite map. It can use the WMS protocol to talk to OGC servers and can interact with ESRI-based servers using the ArcIMS protocol. Intermap provides support for access to temporal web map services (like time-series of satellite data) and WMServices that provide different types of symbology (SLD). Finally, InterMap offers metadata support allowing linking back to a data description once the layer has been displayed on the web.
- Catalog Services that allow the collection, registration and maintenance of descriptive information about the data stored in the database. The Catalog Services implements a Metadata Clearinghouse, which includes a facility to retrieve all information on the spatial data made available by other Clearinghouses. More precisely, the OGC Web Catalog services Z3950 protocol allow distributed search capabilities, i.e. GeoNetwork opensource can access other databases and vice versa, taking into account security settings on metadata and data.
- Data Services components that are being implemented by GeoNetwork opensource to complete the OpenGIS Framework of the Reference Architecture. This particular class of services provides access to spatial content in repositories and databases and allows data processing through defined common encodings and interfaces. Furthermore the Data Services can be distributed across the Internet thus they don't need to be resident on the operational portal.

GeoNetwork opensource does not directly provide the Map Portrayal, the fourth component of the OGC Reference Architecture, which makes possible the visualization on the Internet of geospatial information. However, several open source projects exist which implements the Map Portrayal component that can be integrated with the GeoNetwork opensource package; for instance Deegree, MapServer and GeoServer. GeoNetwork opensource version 1 has been available with an embedded Deegree server, providing all components of the OGC Reference Architecture as an integrated package. This effort has been improved recently by joining the OpenSDI group, which has the purpose of aiding the integration of different OGC Reference Architecture components. The GeoNetwork opensource team is working closely with that group to support seamless integration of GeoNetwork opensource with these and other projects implementing OGC standards.

4. Recommendations

Based on the assessment few recommendations were made pertaining to web site and GeoNetwork

improvements and on communication of LADA information. There are presented in Section 7 of this report.

Appendix 8: Risk Factor Table

| RISK Project management | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|--|---|-----|--------|-------------|------|----------------|------------------|---|
| Risk Factor | Indicator of Low Risk | Indicator of Medium Risk | Indicator of High Risk | Low | Medium | Substantial | High | Not Applicable | To be determined | NOTES |
| Internal Risks | | | | | | | | | | |
| Management structure | Stable with roles and responsibilities clearly defined and understood | Individuals understand their own role but are unsure of responsibilities of others | Unclear responsibilities or overlapping functions which lead to management problems | | X | | | | | R&R clearly defined but due to the language and cultural diversity, these R&R are not fully understood. |
| Governance structure | Steering Committee and/or other project bodies meet periodically and provide effective direction/inputs | Body(ies) meets periodically but guidance/input provided to project is inadequate | Members lack commitment (seldom meet) and therefore the Committee/body does not fulfill its function | | X | | | | | Only 2 PSC meetings took place so far. Not enough for a project of this nature and PSC should have a greater role in guiding the implementation of LADA. Information circulates but only the project management team have the full picture. |
| Internal communications | Fluid and cordial | Communication process deficient although relationships between team members are good | Lack of adequate communication between team members leading to deterioration of relationships and resentment / factions | | X | | | | | Communication already exist but more is needed; particularly with country representatives to develop and maintain some ownership of the project by these stakeholders. |
| Work flow | Project progressing according to work plan | Some changes in project work plan but without major effect on overall implementation | Major delays or changes in work plan or method of implementation | | X | | | | | Implemented as per work plan and pretty much as anticipated in project document. |
| Co-financing | Co-financing is secured and payments are received on time | Is secured but payments are slow and bureaucratic | A substantial part of pledged co-financing may not materialize | | X | | | | | Limited risk now in this area. The contribution – particularly in kind - of all partners is obvious. The problem is the reporting of these contributions including the contribution from FAO. |
| Budget | Activities are progressing within planned budget | Minor budget reallocation needed | Reallocation between budget lines exceeding 30% of original budget | | X | | | | | Minor budget reallocation are made but overall, implementation is on budget. |
| Financial management | Funds are correctly managed and transparently accounted for | Financial reporting slow or deficient | Serious financial reporting problems or indication of mismanagement of funds | X | | | | | | Funds are managed using FAO financial and administrative systems. Financial reports are timely and transparent. |
| Reporting | Substantive reports are presented in a timely manner and are | Reports are complete and accurate but often delayed or lack critical | Serious concerns about quality and timeliness of project reporting | X | | | | | | Reports are completed on time and as per GEF guidelines. |

| RISK Project management | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|-----|--------|-------------|------|----------------|------------------|--|
| Risk Factor | Indicator of Low Risk | Indicator of Medium Risk | Indicator of High Risk | Low | Medium | Substantial | High | Not Applicable | To be determined | NOTES |
| | complete and accurate with a good analysis of project progress and implementation issues | analysis of progress and implementation issues | | | | | | | | |
| Stakeholder involvement | Stakeholder analysis done and positive feedback from critical stakeholders and partners | Consultation and participation process seems strong but misses some groups or relevant partners | Symptoms of conflict with critical stakeholders or evidence of apathy and lack of interest from partners or other stakeholders | | X | | | | | More Stakeholders could be involved in the project; particularly from the six countries such as policy makers and decision-makers. Also, the participation process could be strengthened and not being mostly consultation but more participatory decision-making. |
| External communications | Evidence that stakeholders, practitioners and/or the general public understand project and are regularly updated on progress | Communication s efforts are taking place but not yet evidence that message is successfully transmitted | Project existence is not known beyond implementation partners or misunderstandings concerning objectives and activities evident | | X | | | | | Efforts were made to improve communications but more is needed. Considering that the 6 countries are LADA partners, involve them more in communicating project information, sharing more as opposed to a message that is mostly coming from FAO-HQ to all. |
| Short term/long term balance | Project is meeting short term needs and results within a long term perspective, particularly sustainability and replicability | Project is interested in the short term with little understanding of or interest in the long term | Longer term issues are deliberately ignored or neglected | X | | | | | | LADA is implemented using the prodoc as a "blue-print" that is to produce methods and tools in the short term for a longer term perspective that is these methods and tools to be used globally to assess land degradation. |
| Science and technological issues | Project based on sound science and well established technologies | Project testing approaches, methods or technologies but based on sound analysis of options and risks | Many scientific and /or technological uncertainties | X | | | | | | LADA involves organizations with world known expertise in the field of land degradation and the process includes extensive testing and peer reviews. |
| Political influences | Project decisions and choices are not particularly politically driven | Signs that some project decisions are politically motivated | Project is subject to a variety of political influences that may jeopardize project objectives | | X | | | | | Politics do not influence LADA too much but its outcomes may be influenced in some countries considering that new information is being made public and copyright issues are being raised. |
| External Risks | | | | | | | | | | |
| Political stability | Political context is stable and safe | Political context is unstable but predictable and not a threat to project | Very disruptive and volatile | X | | | | | | In addition to being stable and sage in the pilot countries, the political stability is not a major risk factor for the implementation of this project, that is to develop methods and tools to be used globally. |

| RISK Project management | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|-----|--------|-------------|------|----------------|------------------|--|
| Risk Factor | Indicator of Low Risk | Indicator of Medium Risk | Indicator of High Risk | Low | Medium | Substantial | High | Not Applicable | To be determined | NOTES |
| | | implementation | | | | | | | | |
| Environmental conditions | Project area is not affected by severe weather events or major environmental stress factors | Project area is subject to more or less predictable disasters or changes | Project area has very harsh environmental conditions | X | | | | | | The risk linked with environmental conditions is low as it cannot really affect the implementation of the project. The objective of LADA is indeed to assess the degradation of the land due to severe weather events and other environmental stress factors and possibly to human activities. |
| Social, cultural and economic factors | There are no evident social, cultural and/or economic issues that may affect project performance and results | Social or economic issues or changes pose challenges to project implementation but mitigation strategies have been developed | Project is highly sensitive to economic fluctuations, to social issues or cultural barriers | X | | | | | | Same logic, the impact of social, cultural and economic factors can have only little influence on the achievement of its long-term objective that is to produce methods and tools to be used globally. |
| Capacity issues | Sound technical and managerial capacity of institutions and other project partners | Weaknesses exist but have been identified and actions is taken to build the necessary capacity | Capacity is very low at all levels and partners require constant support and technical assistance | | X | | | | | Capacity development is part of the long-term objective of LADA and it is being addressed in the pilot countries. |
| Economic Environment | Dollar decline | | | | | X | | | | The total budget of LADA has been affected by the change of the exchange rate between the US\$ and local currency. However, considering the financial status of LADA – only 39% of the budget spent at the MTE time vs. 67% of the time elapsed – it may not affect too much the overall implementation of LADA. |

Appendix 9: Co-financing Table

CO-FINANCING

| Co financing (Type/ Source) | IA & EA own Financing (mill US\$) | | Government (mill US\$) | | Other Sources* (mill US\$) | | Total Financing (mill US\$) | | Total Disbursement (mill US\$) | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------|---------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| | Proposed | Actual | Proposed | Actual | Proposed | Actual | Proposed | Actual | Proposed | Actual |
| Grant | | | 92 | | 40 | | 132 | | | |
| Credits | | | | | | | | | | |
| Loans | | | | | | | | | | |
| Equity | | | | | | | | | | |
| In-kind | 3,675 | | 2,341 | | 1,859 | | 7,875 | | | |
| Non-grant Instruments | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other Types | | | | | | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 3,675 | | 2,433 | | 1,899 | | 8,007 | | | |

- Other refers to contributions mobilized for the project from other multilateral agencies, bilateral development cooperation agencies, NGOs, the private sector etc.
- “Proposed” co-financing refers to co-financing proposed at CEO endorsement.
- Describe “Non-grant Instruments” (such as guarantees, contingent grants, etc).
- Explain “Other Sources of Co-financing”.