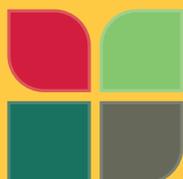# Scaling up Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting From Lessons to Actions:
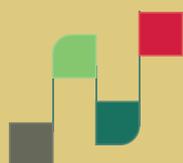## 14 Pilot Countries' Experiences

In 2014/15, 14 country Parties supported by the United Nations Convention to Combat desertification (UNCCD) embarked in a Land Degradation Neutrality pilot project to implement the LDN target setting approach. The lessons from the pilot project are presented here offering practical solutions for decision makers, country stakeholders and development partners interested in engaging in the LDN target setting process.

LESSON 1:

Fostering LDN country ownership and stakeholder involvement.
Setting LDN targets provided direction for ensuring high-level Government leadership. LDN targets made the objective of halting and reversing land degradation more tangible and easier to communicate to key national and international players.

LESSON 2:

Defining the LDN baseline, trends and drivers of land degradation.
All countries were able to establish LDN baselines based on a small set of indicators and using their national data and/or the global default data provided by the project. Upfront technical assistance and country-tailored advisory services proved relevant for overcoming data analysis challenges and barriers.

LESSON 3:

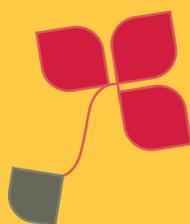**Setting LDN targets and associated measures.**
Understanding the importance and value of setting a target was pivotal to making this happen. Most pilot countries were able to set preliminary targets endorsed by the government, communicate and disseminate them openly and transparently at the national and international levels.

LESSON 4:

Integrating LDN into national development priorities and commitments.
The LDN target setting pilot project made the case for the cross-sectoral benefits of LDN as an accelerator of the Sustainable Development Goals. Whenever possible, countries integrated LDN into their UNCCD National Action Programmes, and in some cases were able to integrate LDN into other relevant policies such as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and land-related legislation.

LESSON 5:

Leveraging LDN.
The target setting exercise, including the identification of measures, provided a clear snapshot of the substantial opportunities that the LDN target setting process brings. Some of the pilot countries identified legal instruments that will enable LDN targets to be achieved. Some went further, and have established legal mandates enabling the implementation of LDN. Others focused on tapping into the growing financing opportunities by pre-identifying potential financial resources for achieving LDN.
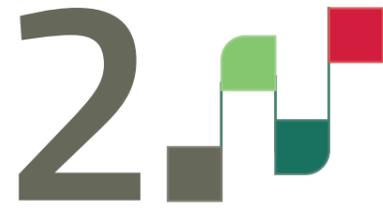
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LESSON 1: Fostering LDN country ownership and stakeholder involvement

Successful outcomes of LDN National Working Group in Namibia

In **Namibia**, the project team identified and discussed potential opportunities with the Ministry of Land, and suggested regional land use planning options accordingly. GIZ supported follow up action to the pilot work by engaging the Ministry of Land in land use planning for the Otjozandjupa region, which is being undertaken by a private company.

Making the case for LDN

In **Chile**, severe drought has been a major driver of voluntary participation in the Land Degradation Neutrality Pilot Project. The country is now galvanizing political support towards establishing ambitious LDN targets.
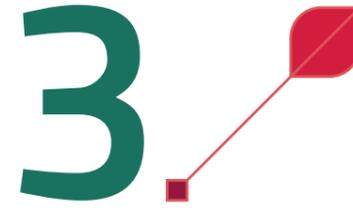
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LESSON 2: Defining the LDN baseline, trends and drivers of land degradation

Assessing the LDN baseline by combining global default data with national data

In **Costa Rica**, global data showed a 0.16% increase in forest cover between 2000 and 2010, while national data suggested a larger increase of 4.7%. Since the country team was confident with the quality of the national data, the preliminary target and the baseline estimations used the national data calculations. Using national data whenever possible was an effective way to engender country ownership.

Close collaboration between data providers and the country

Ethiopia's local team utilized the data and advice of the project team (the UNCCD and the Joint Research Center) to deepen the analysis of the productivity trends for different land use types, through statistical and geospatial analysis. This exemplifies how country-tailored collaboration between data providers and country experts can yield more accurate LDN assessment results.
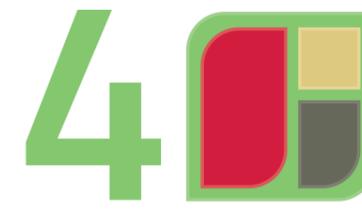
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LESSON 3: Setting LDN targets and associated measures

Different approaches to setting LDN targets

Turkey did not set a national target because it believed the data provided lacked the necessary resolution. It will work from the bottom up through a gradual process of implementing remedial measures in pilot areas moving progressively towards a broader picture.

Bhutan's LDN champions faced challenging questions, such as the level at which to set LDN targets, the resources that are potentially available and whether or not decision-makers could be convinced to make LDN a priority. However, not only were they able to find the answers to these questions but they also concluded that the target set in expectation of limited resources was in fact limiting options. The target was therefore revised upwards to a more ambitious level.

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LESSON 4: Integrating LDN into national development priorities and commitments

LDN target setting, facilitating synergies between the Rio Conventions

Linking LDN to SOC levels enabled **Ethiopia** to make LDN a keystone of its climate change action plans.

One of **Belarus's** LDN targets - increasing the area of restored peat lands - is also an integral part of Belarus's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), mitigation targets (increasing carbon stocks).

In **Grenada**, the project has reinforced the intention to move to a single National Coordinating Body for all three Conventions.

In **Armenia**, the LDN target represents a 2.8% increase in its national carbon stocks.

In **Italy**, the composition of the LDN National Working Group was critical to engendering cooperation across the Rio Conventions.

Synchronizing LDN and national initiatives and programmes

In **Senegal**, target setting and measuring against indicators under the LDN project is supporting the implementation of general strategies such as the UNCCD NAP and the TerrAfrica Country Strategic Investment Framework.

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LESSON 5: Leveraging LDN

Enabling the environment for achieving the LDN target

In April 2015, the Government of **Belarus** approved the Strategy for the Implementation of the UNCCD and the 2016-2020 NAP for the Prevention of Land (and Soil) Degradation. The decision makes the inclusion of LDN mandatory for all state and field plans at the 5-year planning level, including for commercial enterprises.

From pilot to transformative policies

In **Indonesia**, the efforts of the LDN working group to showcase the benefits of achieving LDN and the economic impacts of inaction contributed significantly to the Government's decision to ban further land concessions for oil palm cultivation.

"The most innovative outcome of the project is the establishment of specific targets to address land degradation, which, if implemented properly, will allow the country to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030 [...]."

Mr. Raymond Baptiste, National Project Coordinator
UNCCD National Focal Point
Ministry of Agriculture, Land, Forestry, Fisheries and Environment
Government of Grenada

"The process of data analysis was lengthy and difficult, but ultimately interesting and useful. It generated the surprising result of greater decline in humid regions than in drier regions [...] a result which provides an important correction to a simple narrative that says that the consequences of climate change are most prominent in arid/semi-arid lands."

Project evaluation: Final Report, 2015, Comment by Italy

"I wish to underscore the need to implement the LDN target as a means to achieve other Sustainable Development Goals, including those on food security and climate change."

Barbara Thomson
Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs
Government of South Africa
Speaking on behalf of G-77/China at UNCCD COP 12

"Namibia has completed its national LDN target setting process and is therefore ready to explore all available resources to help achieve the goals set."

Mr. Pohamba Shifeta
Minister of Environment and Tourism Government of Namibia

Recommendations

1: Define country specific LDN targets to be endorsed at the highest political level

2: Improve monitoring capacities on LDN indicators

3: Support the LDN process through awareness raising, communication and advocacy

4: Develop transformative projects in identified "hot spots" to achieve LDN

5: Set up a LDN Monitoring and Evaluation System, whenever possible, based on existing related systems and building on previous efforts and capacities such as those developed for REDD+

"The energy that came from these 14 pioneer nations speaking as a collective voice created the impulse that brought COP 12 to make historical decisions, restoring the central value of land capital to achieve sustainable development."

Alain Retière
Chief Technical Advisor

CHILE

ITALY

BELARUS

COSTA RICA

NAMIBIA

ALGERIA

BHUTAN

ETHIOPIA

SENEGAL

INDONESIA

ARMENIA

CHAD

GRENADA

TURKEY