

**UNCCD support to the development
of transformative projects and
programmes for land degradation
neutrality**

Final report of the evaluation

February 2021



United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

This independent formative evaluation assesses the results and performance of the UNCCD support to the development of transformative projects and programmes for land degradation. The assessment is conducted against the criteria of relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, potential impact, sustainability and a cross-cutting criterion looking at gender considerations; building on its findings and analysis according to these criteria, the evaluation presents conclusions and recommendations to guide further action.

This evaluation was commissioned by the UNCCD Evaluation Office in cooperation and authored by Ronnie MacPherson/Greenstate in December 2020 – February 2021. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the UNCCD secretariat or the Global Mechanism.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 2 |
| 1. Introduction | 4 |
| 1.1 Project Overview..... | 4 |
| 1.2 Main activities, inputs and outputs | 4 |
| 1.3 Theory of change | 5 |
| 2. Evaluation approach | 7 |
| 2.1 Objectives..... | 7 |
| 2.2 Evaluation framework..... | 7 |
| 2.3 Tools..... | 7 |
| 2.4 Challenges and limitations | 8 |
| 3. Findings | 9 |
| 3.1 Relevance and Coherence..... | 9 |
| 3.2 Efficiency and Effectiveness..... | 11 |
| 3.3 Impact and Sustainability..... | 14 |
| 3.4 Gender mainstreaming | 18 |
| 4. Conclusions and recommendations | 20 |
| Annex A: Evaluation framework | 23 |
| Annex B: Interviewees | 25 |
| Annex C: Survey results | 26 |
| Annex D: References | 30 |
| Annex E: Theory of change for LDN TSP Project | 31 |

Acronyms

| | |
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| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GCF | Green Climate Fund |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| GM | Global Mechanism of the UNCCD |
| IUCN | International Union for Conservation of Nature |
| LDN | Land Degradation Neutrality |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| TOC | Theory of change |
| TPP | Transformative projects and programmes |
| TSP | (LDN) Target Setting Project |
| UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Diversification |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |

Executive Summary

The UNCCD Global Mechanism's *support to the development of transformative projects and programmes for land degradation neutrality* (hereafter referred to as the TPP project) was established in 2018 to provide early-stage support to countries and regions seeking investment for transformative land degradation neutrality (LDN) projects. The TPP project's support is demand-driven and typically involves the GM helping countries and regions to refine initial concepts, identify implementation and funding partners, develop funding concept notes, and contribute to the development of full funding proposals. As funding proposals mature, the TPP project also provides ad-hoc, targeted technical inputs to further strengthen each initiative by – for example – funding gender analyses and consultation processes. The work is mostly financed from the GM's own resources, including earmarked contributions from the Changwon Initiative, the Ankara Initiative, and the Canadian government.

This independent evaluation was undertaken to assess the TPP project's performance so far, and to then develop recommendations for the project's remaining years: what has worked well to date, and how can the TPP project's support be improved in the future? The evaluation was based on a combination of tools including interviews, documentation review, and an online survey.

The evaluation found that the TPP project's country-driven approach has assured its relevance to country/regional needs and priorities, and its coherence with policies and other work being developed or delivered by those countries and regions. The TPP project's early-stage conceptualisation support addresses a clear gap that potential projects face, providing resources and expertise that would not otherwise be available. In turn, that has helped to initiate some projects that may have struggled to get off the ground in the absence of the GM's support. The TPP project has also been relevant to the work of implementation agencies and funders, although there is still scope for building the profile and understanding of LDN amongst those institutions.

The TPP project's demand-driven operating model is appropriate, particularly the increased emphasis on identifying and supporting more regional (multi-country) projects. The project is on track to deliver its anticipated short-term results, with this effort currently underpinned by sufficient financial resources and a well-regarded project team. Moreover, the project has dealt well with the coronavirus pandemic, continuing to provide support and maintain relationships with partners throughout the crisis. But inefficiencies have arisen due to relatively rigid internal planning and approval procedures. Expenditure approval processes can be particularly cumbersome, placing additional workloads on staff and sometimes resulting in delays that undermine the nimble, flexible approach required of the project's operating model. However, any internal difficulties or inefficiencies are *not* affecting external perceptions of the GM's performance: countries and partners are universally complimentary about the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of support.

Ultimately, the TPP project is providing support that represents a further logical step towards the long-term goal of achieving LDN. While it is too early to identify tangible impacts, the initiatives being supported by the GM have clear potential to deliver significant contributions to LDN (the 63 concepts supported through the TPP project are targeting over \$1.74 billion in funding). However, project partners felt that impact would be deepened and sustainability improved if the GM extended their support by continuing to engage with projects during their actual implementation. Opportunities were also identified for strengthening monitoring of the TPP project, through a combination of alternative indicators and approaches that better reflect the likely contributions the GM makes (or will make) to their partners' long-term efforts.

Notably, the TPP project has significantly helped to raise the profile, understanding and application of gender mainstreaming within supported projects' designs. This has been achieved through a combination of the GM's clear position that gender-responsiveness is an integral, essential facet of transformative project design, and through the provision of high-quality technical support on gender mainstreaming. An upcoming challenge will be to ensure that the pre-implementation advice and design principles are converted into actual practice.

Recommendations

The TPP project is in a sound position and is well-regarded by countries, implementation agencies and funders alike. However, there are opportunities for improving both the project's immediate work, and the GM's longer-term support for achieving LDN. Against that background, the following recommendations are presented in priority order:

1. Identify options for continued engagement with projects during implementation

The TPP project helps participants better understand how LDN can be incorporated within intervention designs, but there is still some apprehension amongst participants about actual implementation. Once their projects are funded and launched, many countries and regions anticipate some form of continued mentoring from the GM. Aside from being valuable to individual projects, continued engagement would help the GM to build and share knowledge around the reality and practical challenges of LDN: a knowledge gap that is the root of many country-level concerns about implementation. Ongoing involvement could also help to ensure that LDN design principles (including *gender-responsive* design principles) are actually realised and that theory truly converts into practice. The GM should therefore explore options for continued engagement with the interventions they have supported, potentially taking the form of a TPP project 'succession' strategy (as opposed to an 'exit' strategy).

2. Reform inefficient financial management processes

The standard UNCCD / GM financial approval processes do not align well with the TPP project's flexible, demand-driven operating model. If current inefficiencies are left unaddressed they could compromise the potential and outreach of the TPP project, especially if there is any further increase in demand for the GM's support. Consequently, the UNCCD / GM should review financial management and approval processes to ensure that individual project managers have the necessary flexibility to respond efficiently to time-sensitive support requests.

3. Develop a broader, longer-term monitoring strategy

The TPP project's current monitoring is mainly focused on activities and outputs, and does not measure the full extent of the TPP project's *potential* influence. More extensive monitoring could help the GM to understand whether the broad process of supporting LDN is on track and could strengthen the GM's decision-making process when selecting which project concepts to support in the future. The GM should therefore develop a more expansive monitoring strategy that focuses on measuring the longer-term *influence and contribution* of the TPP project. This could be based on measurement of the TPP project's theory of change and should make use of monitoring data that all successfully funded projects will be required (by donors) to gather.

4. Articulate clearer 'pitches' for LDN's role in addressing climate change

Clearer descriptions of LDN's contribution to tackling climate change would be valuable for demonstrating the relevance of LDN to the increasing numbers of institutions and funders that are exclusively focused on climate change. The GM should develop a set of briefings on LDN's links with climate change, based entirely on lay language. An explicit objective of these briefings should be to provide potential TPPs with material that can directly inform climate finance project proposals and requirements to define a proposal's contribution to addressing climate change.

1. Introduction

This report documents the independent, formative evaluation of the UNCCD Global Mechanism’s *support to the development of transformative projects and programmes (TPP) for land degradation neutrality (LDN)*, hereafter referred to as **the TPP project**. The report commences with an overview of the project, followed by a description of the evaluation’s approach. Findings are then discussed against the seven evaluation criteria and questions. Finally, the evaluation’s conclusions are presented, along with recommendations for the GM and their ongoing support to TPPs.

1.1 Project Overview

Although the conceptual development of LDN is relatively recent (the definition of LDN was only formally endorsed by the UNCCD Conference of Parties in 2015), the concept has rapidly gained traction, not least through its inclusion within the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs): SDG target 15.3 requests countries to “*combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation-neutral world*”. LDN now drives the strategy and much of the work undertaken by the UNCCD, the [Global Mechanism](#) (GM), and the Convention’s subsidiary bodies.

Following the international community’s adoption of the SDGs, one of the first major LDN milestones delivered by the UNCCD was the [Science Policy Interface’s](#) development of a [scientific framework for LDN](#), which established indicators and methodologies for measuring and monitoring LDN. Building on this framework, the UNCCD’s GM then led delivery of the [LDN Target Setting Programme](#) (TSP), which supported UNCCD Member States to establish national LDN working groups, identify LDN trends and drivers, define national LDN baselines and targets, and secure political commitment to achieve those targets. As of February 2021, the TSP had supported 104 countries to establish national LDN targets, with a further 23 countries committing to set LDN targets in the future.

The TSP was framed around a four-stage ‘[building blocks](#)’ model for delivering LDN, with the final stage – ‘Achieving LDN’ – comprising the **identification and financing of transformative projects and programmes**. However, the TSP was almost exclusively focused on supporting the target setting process within countries (the first three building blocks) and was only able to provide a very limited amount of support to countries and regions that had progressed to the forth building block of identifying transformative interventions.

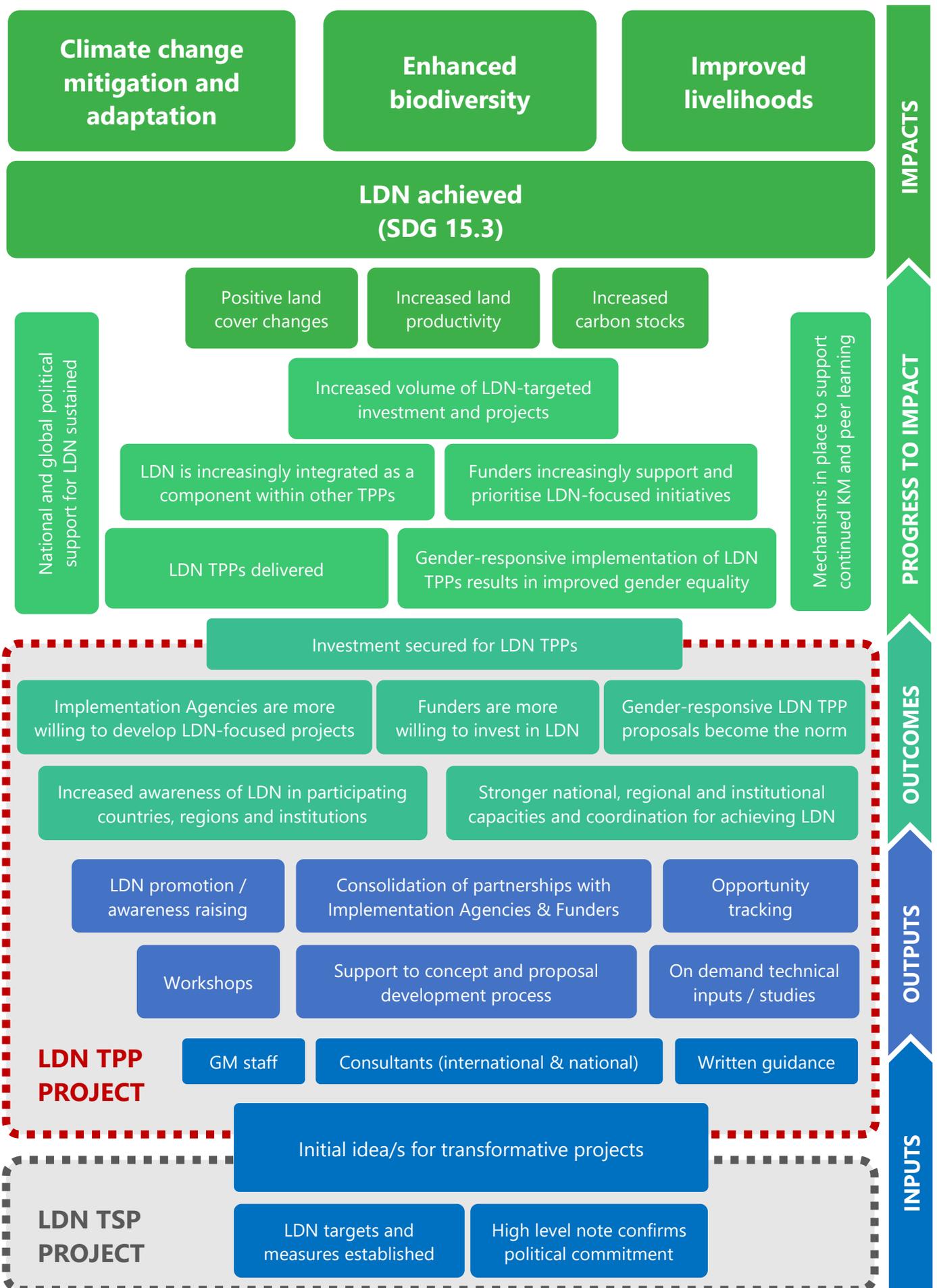
Consequently, **the TPP project** was established in 2018 to provide support to those countries that had graduated from the TSP and were in a position to develop concepts and seek investment for transformative initiatives. The TPP project primarily addresses those country-level support needs, but also aims to build understanding of LDN across the funders and implementation agencies that will be working alongside countries and regions to develop transformative interventions.

1.2 Main activities, inputs and outputs

The TPP project is managed by the GM and mostly financed from the GM’s own resources, including earmarked contributions from the Changwon Initiative, the Ankara Initiative, and the Canadian government. Support provided through the project is context-dependent, tailored to the specific needs of the participating country or region. Typically though, the project will finance, recruit and manage a national consultant who will support a country or region’s efforts to refine concepts, identify implementation and funding partners, develop funding concept notes, and contribute to the development of full funding proposals. Countries / regions and national consultants are further supported by a small team of GM-managed international consultants (and GM staff themselves), who ensure that project development processes benefit from the most up-to-date global expertise and lessons on LDN. As funding proposals mature, the project also provides ad-hoc, targeted technical inputs to further strengthen each initiative by – for example – funding gender analyses and consultation processes. As of January 2021 the TPP project had received requests for support from 56 national and 7 regional initiatives, covering 73 countries in total, was actively supporting the development of 32 concept notes and/or proposals, had already supported the submission of 11 concept notes to funders (all of which had been invited to submit full proposals), and had ultimately supported the development of 5 successful funding proposals, with 3 of those projects now being implemented.

1.3 Theory of change

Theories of change (TOCs) are a common management tool expressing the basic rationale behind an intervention. They describe the results an intervention is aiming to achieve, the longer term impacts it aims to contribute to, how the intervention works towards those results, and the main assumptions behind the intervention's approach. In turn, TOCs also support the identification of key elements that should – in due course – be evaluated. As such, TOCs are frequently used as the starting point for developing evaluation approaches, and for identifying evaluation questions. The following TOC was developed following a review of the TPP project documentation and through discussions with the TPP Project Team. It also builds on the TOC that was developed for the previous evaluation of the LDN TSP project (see annex E).



2. Evaluation approach

2.1 Objectives

The evaluation was guided by two objectives:

1. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** To provide an overall independent assessment of past performance of the TPP project.
2. **LEARNING:** To identify what has worked well, what could be improved, and why/how.

2.2 Evaluation framework

The evaluation objectives and theory of change provided the basis for the **evaluation framework**, which in turn underpinned the whole approach. The framework was structured against the standard [OECD-DAC criteria](#) agreed for the evaluation (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability). Given the early, pre-implementation stage at which the TPP project provides support to LDN interventions, the assessment of impact focused on **potential for impact**, as evaluation of actual impact would be premature. In addition to the OECD-DAC criteria, a cross-cutting criterion of **gender mainstreaming** was also applied to assess the TPP project's approach to gender equality.

The framework identified **key evaluation questions** supported by guiding **sub-questions**. The full framework is presented in annex A, but the seven key evaluation questions are presented below:

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND KEY QUESTIONS

1. **RELEVANCE:** How well is the project responding to the needs and priorities of the participating countries, regions and institutions, and to global commitments?
2. **COHERENCE:** To what extent is the project's support aligned with – and complementary to – other work being delivered within the participating countries and regions?
3. **EFFICIENCY:** How efficient is project delivery?
4. **EFFECTIVENESS:** Is the project delivering its planned results?
5. **IMPACT:** What potential impacts will be delivered by the initiatives that the project has supported?
6. **SUSTAINABILITY:** To what extent are the project's results likely to be sustained?
7. **GENDER MAINSTREAMING:** How has the project supported gender mainstreaming within LDN initiatives?

2.3 Tools

To address the framework questions, the evaluation drew on a series of data collection and analysis tools:

- **Interviews:** 25 individuals were interviewed, with all interviews undertaken remotely due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. Annex B provides names and affiliations of all interviewees.
- **Desk review:** A desk/literature review analysed all relevant documentation including material produced by the GM (e.g. guidance manuals, technical briefings, training material, project monitoring data), official requests, material produced by participating countries, regions and partners (particularly TPP concept notes and full proposals) and relevant external literature. A list of main references is presented in annex D.

- **Case studies:** In order to ensure a focused evaluation, the desk review and most interviews were restricted to a limited set of initiatives supported by the TPP project, namely 6 county-level initiatives and 2 regional initiatives:

| NATIONAL PROJECTS |
|---|
| Strengthening land-based adaptation capacity in communities adjacent to protected areas in Armenia |
| Degradación Neutral de Tierras en Colombia a través del cacao y la biodiversidad para la conservación del bosque seco tropical |
| Forests and climate resilient landscapes for sustainable livelihoods in Malawi |
| Securing Long-Term Sustainability of Multi-functional Landscapes in Critical River Basins of the Philippines |
| Oasis Landscape Sustainable Management project, Tunisia |
| Contributing to LDN target setting by demonstrating the LDN approach in the upper Sakarya Basin for scaling up at national level, Turkey |
| REGIONAL PROJECTS |
| Implementing Gender Responsive and Climate-Smart Land Management in the Caribbean |
| Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Zambezi Watercourse |

- **Survey:** An online survey was circulated to representatives from all 61 initiatives that – as of the evaluation’s inception in November 2020 – had approached the TPP project for support. These representatives included UNCCD National Focal Points, consultants employed by the Global Mechanism to provide TPP support, and Implementing Agencies working with countries and regions to develop or deliver TPPs. The survey was circulated to 83 individuals, with 25 responses received (30% response rate). Relevant survey findings are presented at appropriate points throughout the evaluation report, with full survey results compiled in annex C.

2.4 Challenges and limitations

The TPP project represents only an early step towards impact, and – even where the project supports successful funding proposals – the primary responsibility for ultimately delivering impact will not rest with the TPP project or the GM more broadly. When it comes to assessing the project’s impact then, the evaluation placed more effort on trying to identify how the project is supporting the **potential for future impact** in participating countries and regions.

As with many evaluations, much of the qualitative data collected was based on individual, subjective perceptions and opinions. To mitigate any subjective bias, findings were triangulated across sources and across data collection tools.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance and Coherence

EVALUATION QUESTION 1:

How well is the project responding to the needs and priorities of the participating countries, regions and institutions, and to global commitments?

EVALUATION QUESTION 2:

To what extent is the project's support aligned with – and complementary to – other work being delivered within the participating countries and regions?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The evaluation found that the TPP project is relevant to the needs and priorities of participating countries and – due to the country-driven nature of the work – is coherent with policies and other work being developed or delivered by those countries. The conceptualisation and design support offered by the GM addresses a clear gap that countries face, providing very early-stage resources and expertise that would not otherwise be available. In turn, that has helped to initiate some projects that may have struggled to get off the ground in the absence of the GM's support. Where projects have been of a multi-sectoral nature, the GM's inputs have helped to ensure that LDN is coherently integrated within those projects' designs. The TPP project has also been relevant to the work of implementation agencies and funders, although there is still considerable scope for building the profile and understanding of LDN amongst those institutions. The development of clearer evidence and descriptions of LDN's contribution to tackling climate change would be especially valuable for demonstrating the relevance of LDN to the increasing numbers of institutions and funding vehicles that are exclusively focused on climate change.

Country-driven approach ensures relevance and coherence

All evaluation interviewees indicated that the project's support is both relevant to national and regional needs, and is coherent with existing policies and programmes. This high degree of relevance and coherence was identified as being a function of the TPP project's country-driven approach. The GM's support is almost always provided to concepts that had already been identified by countries or regions themselves: so by definition the GM is providing support to projects that were already fully aligned with national / regional priorities and plans. Country-level relevance and coherence is further assured by virtue of LDN's integration with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG target 15.3. As all participating countries are pursuing the SDGs, the design and delivery of any LDN-focused activity will help those countries in their efforts towards achieving SDG 15.3.

While the TPP project is inherently relevant to the priorities of participating countries, some interviewees felt that its relevance to the UNCCD and GM's priorities could be deepened through tighter alignment with the UNCCD's own vision for achieving LDN. Any supported projects are, of course, primarily or partially focused on LDN. Moreover, the GM's support for national projects is contingent on a country having 'graduated' from the foregoing TSP project and/or having established national voluntary LDN targets. But the TPP project does not *require* participating countries (or countries involved in regional projects) to make an explicit link between the supported projects and their national voluntary LDN targets, nor to SDG 15.3. Some interviewees felt that this represented a missed opportunity to maintain momentum and focus on national LDN targets, and to demonstrate how those targets could be practically delivered.

The depth of country relevance and ownership is undoubtedly a significant strength, but this also introduces risks. Projects supported by the GM are sometimes delayed or even withdrawn due to the national political environment (e.g. change of government), or to changes in national funding priorities. This risk was viewed by most interviewees as an entirely acceptable price to pay for ensuring country ownership. But some

interviewees (UNCCD / GM staff in particular) urged that the impact of negative political externalities should not affect assessment and reporting of TPP project performance.

Support provided addresses a clear gap in the project development cycle

Along with providing strategically relevant and coherent support, the *technical* support and service delivered by the TPP project was also found to be relevant to country and regional needs. Interviewees judged the early-stage nature of the support to be especially valuable: several donors do provide countries with financial assistance to develop full proposals (e.g. Project Preparation Grants), but accessing those funds already requires a relatively well-defined concept to be in place. The TPP project therefore fills a clear gap in the project development chain, providing resources to develop initial ideas and concept notes, and to identify appropriate implementation partners.

In addition to addressing this project development gap for countries and regions, the early-stage support is also relevant and valuable for implementation partners and funders. A core role for the GM in the TPP project is to be a relationship broker, helping countries to identify and approach potential implementation agencies and funding partners for each national/regional concept. While participating countries greatly appreciate this aspect of the support, so too did implementation partners and funders. Some interviewed agencies indicated that the GM's facilitation has been pivotal and that they would not have otherwise made the connection or established the linkage with the project. Interviewees also noted that the GM's exclusive involvement as a *broker* is important here: because the GM are never to be involved in actual project implementation (and hence are not going to be 'competing' for project funding), countries and agencies are perhaps more trusting and open to the GM's support.

To date, this non-involvement in project implementation has been advantageous for the GM's relationship brokering role. But some interviewees felt that the long-term coherence of the GM's support now required the GM to be more engaged with supporting project implementation. Particularly for those countries that had received support through the TSP project, had 'graduated' to the TPP project and had then secured funding, there was an expectation that the GM would continue to be involved (even if only informally) during actual project delivery.

Understanding of LDN could be strengthened, particularly its relevance to climate change

All interviewees agreed that the profile of LDN is steadily increasing, including a general understanding of LDN's relevance to the work of implementation agencies and funders. Some agencies and funders were identified as having a particularly well-developed approach to LDN: for example the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was often identified as the agency with the most developed approach to mainstreaming LDN in their work, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was regularly cited as the funder offering the most coherent support for LDN.

While the TPP project has certainly helped to increase LDN's profile, some interviewees felt that the TPP project had also revealed that work was still required to demonstrate the relevance of LDN to some agencies and funders, particularly those institutions that are exclusively focused on climate change. Most notably, the Green Climate Fund's (GCF's) requirement that all projects articulate a 'climate rationale' was frequently identified as a key hurdle that needed to be cleared by LDN-focused projects. Interviewees did not necessarily see this as a particularly *difficult* hurdle but did feel that the TPP project was ideally positioned to support countries and regions in building clearer arguments and climate rationale 'pitches' for GCF proposals. These pitches would of course be valuable beyond GCF, potentially helping projects to approach the increasing number of funders and agencies that are prioritising climate change above all else.

Closely linked to this need for clearer descriptions of LDN's relevance to climate change, many interviewees suggested that more effort was still required to translate the scientific concepts and technical language that LDN (and much of the UNCCD / GM's material) is grounded in. Several project representatives felt that there is a particular need for LDN materials targeted at practitioners: the extension officers, land managers and farmers that will have day-to-day responsibility for overseeing the resources and work that will ultimately determine the extent of LDN. While such material would be most useful for project implementation (i.e.

beyond the scope of the TPP project’s involvement), it would also be useful for demonstrating the *relevance* of LDN to practitioners, in turn helping to build buy-in for LDN-focused elements of prospective projects.

3.2 Efficiency and Effectiveness

EVALUATION QUESTION 3:

How efficient is project delivery?

EVALUATION QUESTION 4:

Is the project delivering its planned results?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The evaluation found that the project’s demand-driven operating model is broadly appropriate, particularly the recently increased emphasis on identifying and supporting more regional (multi-country) projects. The project is on track to deliver its anticipated short-term results, with this effort currently underpinned by sufficient financial resources and a well-regarded team of GM staff and consultants. Moreover, the project has dealt well with the coronavirus pandemic, continuing to provide support and maintain relationships with countries and partners throughout the crisis. But inefficiencies have arisen due to the relatively rigid internal planning and approval procedures. Expenditure approval processes can be particularly cumbersome, placing additional workloads on staff and sometimes resulting in delays that undermine the nimble, flexible approach required of the TPP project’s country-led and demand-driven operating model. However, any internal difficulties or inefficiencies are *not* affecting external perceptions of the GM’s performance: countries and implementation partners (agencies, funders) are universally complimentary about the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of support provided through the TPP project.

Operating model has an appropriate focus on flexibility

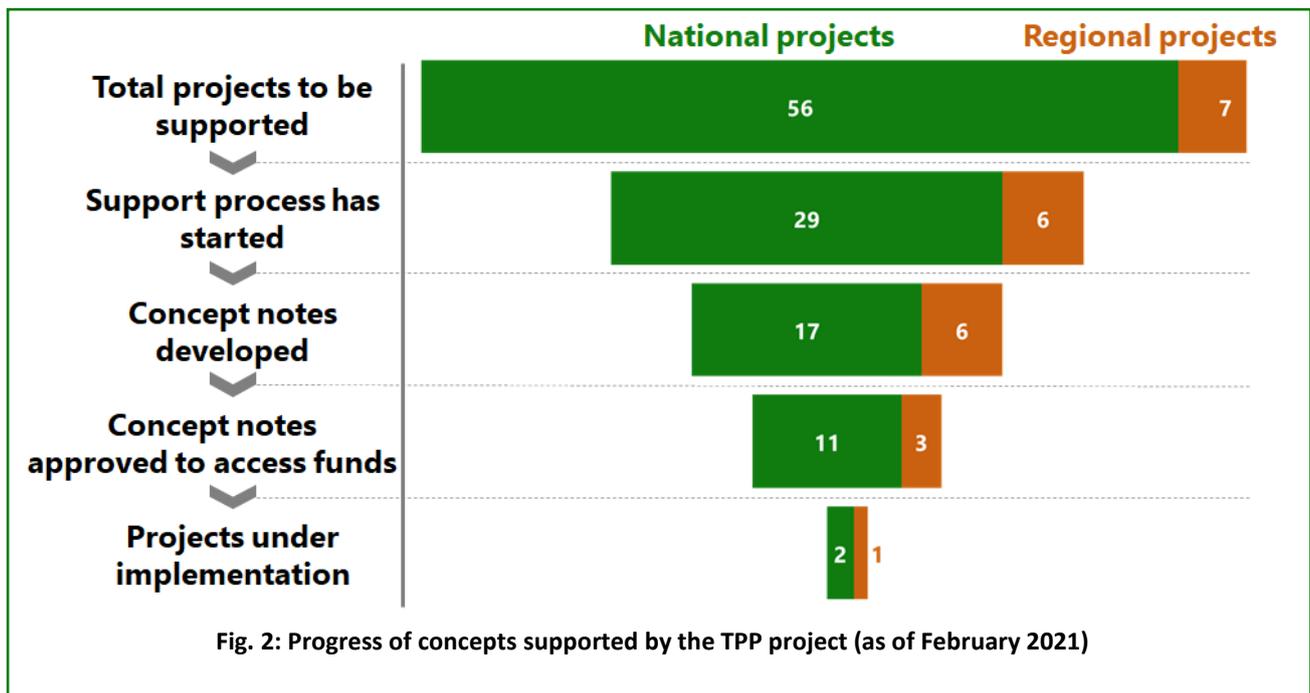
Evaluation interviewees were supportive of the TPP project’s flexible operating model, whereby GM inputs and support are provided according to each projects’ specific needs (i.e. larger projects with more complex LDN ‘gaps’ or demands tend to receive more support). This needs-based operating model is in contrast to the GM’s preceding TSP project, which allocated equal resources to each participating country, regardless of size or pre-existing resources. However, all interviewees accepted that the nature of the TPP project’s objectives are quite different, demanding a correspondingly different approach. While the TSP project pursued essentially the same outcome for all countries (the development and adoption of national LDN targets), the TPP project is supporting a series of entirely context-dependent interventions that will be different from country-to-country or region-to-region. Some GM staff were concerned that – in the future – countries may request that the GM distribute resources equally, as per the TSP project’s model. However, the evaluation did not identify any tendency towards this view amongst external stakeholders.

Aside from being a logical operating model for the TPP project, the needs-based approach also underlines the weight placed by the GM on ensuring country (or regional) ownership. The project’s interventions are almost always in support of pre-existing, country-driven concepts, and/or specific technical gaps identified by the countries/regions themselves. Again, this contrasts with the foregoing TSP project, which was criticised by a minority of stakeholders for being too centralised and prescriptive, with a corresponding reduction in country ownership of the target-setting process.

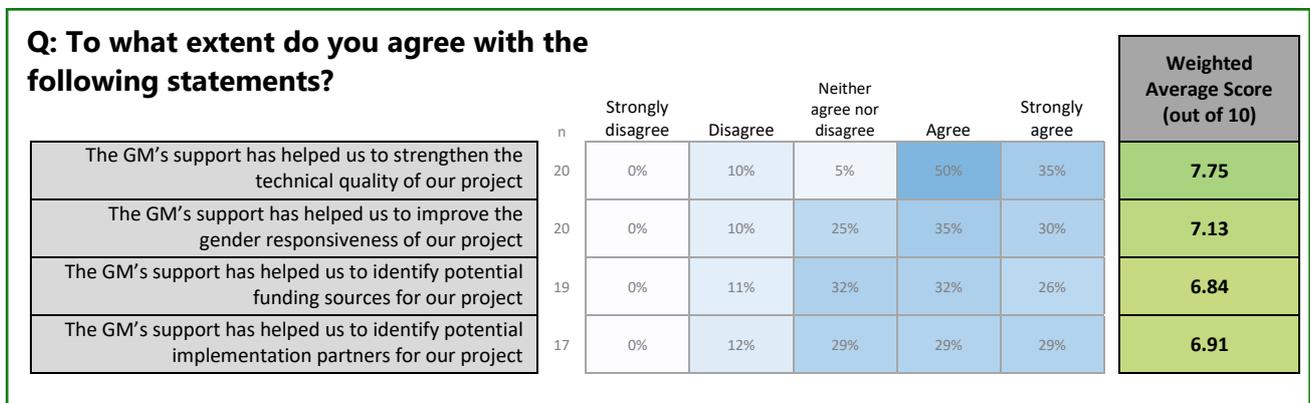
Project delivery has been effective

The operating model has also proven to be effective. As of February 2021, the project’s own monitoring systems and the UNCCD Secretariat’s internal monitoring demonstrate that the project is progressing well against its indicators and is on track to achieving its internally agreed milestones and targets. Figure 2 outlines

how national and regional project concepts supported by the GM are progressing through the project design, financing and implementation cycle:



Evaluation survey results confirm that the primary inputs provided by the GM are well-regarded by project participants:



Evaluation interviewees commonly identified several aspects of the GM's support and approach that are particularly effective:

- The GM staff and consultants' deep technical knowledge of LDN and funding mechanisms were routinely praised, with interviewees often comparing the quality of technical inputs very favourably to other UN agencies.
- The GM's technical expertise is most tangibly delivered through the detailed reviews of concept notes and other proposal documentation. While this has been one of the most time-consuming tasks for GM staff, it is also one of the most appreciated inputs received by countries and implementation agencies. The depth of these reviews and – crucially – the relatively early stage that they are undertaken helps to ensure the influence of the GM's inputs, in turn helping to improve the integration of LDN (and gender-responsive LDN) within project designs.

- Some project representatives also felt that the visible involvement and positive reputation of the UNCCD / GM was beneficial to their proposals: the UNCCD / GM ‘badge’ gives a strong signal to potential funders that the proposal is technically credible and supported by a neutral, global authority on LDN.
- Several interviewees placed considerable weight on the GM’s production of core guidance material in multi-lingual formats. Translated material was seen as critical for ensuring uptake and buy-in of LDN within non-English speaking countries. Some stakeholders suggested that more resources be allocated towards translation, as the individuals and teams that will ultimately deliver project activities were – in many instances – unlikely to speak Arabic, English, French or Spanish.

In addition to the above observations, the evaluation survey results indicate that written guidance developed by the TPP project (and the TSP project before it) have been effective sources of support for projects, with the *Operational Guidance for Country Support* manual being especially useful:

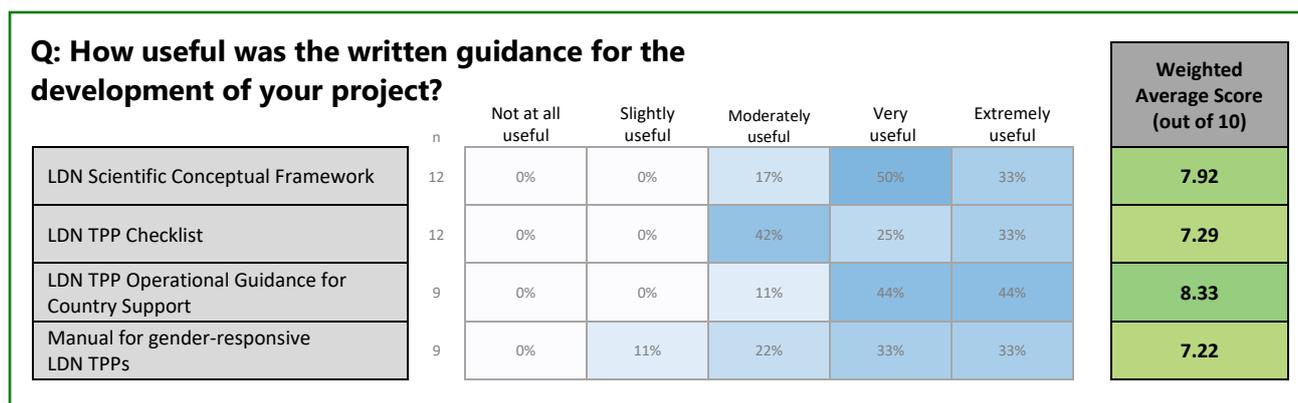


Fig. 4: Evaluation survey responses on usefulness of GM-produced written guidance

Of course, since early 2020 a major challenge to the effective delivery of the TPP project has been the coronavirus pandemic. This has necessitated the delivery of support on an exclusively remote basis, with even national consultants restricted in the extent to which they can engage directly with national/regional project teams. However, evaluation interviewees universally praised the GM’s ability to sustain momentum and continue support in a substantive way. One respondent’s summary was representative of the general perspective: *“Despite COVID [the GM] didn’t lose interest and worked hard on maintaining connections and keeping up their interest – this was very motivating for us”*.

Internal approval processes undermine TPP project’s demand-driven approach

While the TPP project is progressing towards agreed targets, the evaluation identified process inefficiencies that are reducing current and potential effectiveness. In particular, financial management was found to be cumbersome. UNCCD / GM processes require TPP project staff to obtain multiple layers of approval for any expenditure item that is not within agreed workplans. However, these workplans are fixed six months in advance, so additional expenditure approvals are required for any new requests or opportunities arising outside of the advance workplan. Moreover, TPP project staff have no delegated authority (ceilings or limits) for non-workplan expenditure, so approvals are required for *any* expenditure outside the workplan, regardless of value.

These approval requirements are at odds with the TPP project’s flexible, demand-driven operating model, which seeks to respond to country and regional needs as and when they arise. In order to maintain the demand-driven operating model, TPP project staff are therefore required to expend a disproportionate amount of time on internal administrative and financial procedures: time that could otherwise be spent delivering the technical support that the TPP project offers to countries and regions.

Inefficiencies also arise as a result of the UNCCD / GM approach to project-level budget monitoring. All project-level financial data is formally maintained and monitored through the Umoja system, but GM staff (including project managers) have extremely limited access to the system and are essentially unable to use Umoja for day-to-day budget monitoring. Consequently, TPP project staff are obliged to establish and

maintain their own 'off-system' tools for day-to-day financial monitoring. The data within these off-system tools then need to be reconciled with the 'true' reports from Umoja that are provided only on a quarterly basis.

These process inefficiencies are a source of considerable internal frustration and have a direct, negative impact on the workload of TPP project staff. However, the evaluation also found that the internal inefficiencies do not translate to external perceptions. External evaluation interviewees consistently assessed the GM's support as being highly efficient and responsive. This extended to GM-managed national and international consultants, who all reported the consultant management process to be highly efficient.

Future resource management challenges

The TPP project is well-resourced at present, although this is partly due to a lower rate of expenditure during the pandemic, and partly due to the UNCCD / GM's internal processes slowing down 'opportunistic' expenditure to address needs arising outside the agreed workplan. In summary though, there are adequate resources in place to deliver the current workplan.

However, as the TPP project's portfolio matures – and as concept notes move to full proposal development – the demand and pressure on GM resources will increase. This will especially be the case where supported countries and regions are seeking GM support during the development of more intensive funding processes (particularly, for example, the GCF). During this evaluation process two major international commitments were made with direct relevance to LDN: in November 2020 the G20 announced its '[Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats](#)', and in January 2021 at the One Planet Summit organized by France, the UN and the World Bank, participating countries and financial institutions [committed to investing over USD \\$14 billion](#) to the African Great Green Wall Initiative. As these commitments to advance land restoration start to materialise, it is highly probable that this will translate to increased demand for the support provided by the GM through the TPP project

Evaluation interviewees universally agreed that the levels of support provided by the GM for early-stage concept development are adequate. But those same interviewees were mostly sceptical as to whether the relatively small technical inputs currently being provided by the GM would be effective or have any substantive influence on, for example, a full GCF proposal. To paraphrase one interviewee: "A \$10k consultancy will transform a concept note with no budget, but a \$10k consultancy will barely be noticed in a GCF proposal that takes \$500k to develop". Some interviewees noted that similar quandaries will arise when the GM balances whether to prioritise support for national or regional projects. Regional projects will be beneficial to a larger number of countries and will tend to have greater transformative potential, but those projects will be correspondingly more complex and more resource-intensive to develop.

3.3 Impact and Sustainability

EVALUATION QUESTION 5:

What potential impacts will be delivered by the initiatives that the project has supported?

EVALUATION QUESTION 6:

To what extent are the project's results likely to be sustained?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The evaluation found that – following on from the preceding TSP project – the TPP project is providing support that represents a further logical step towards the ultimate impact of LDN. While it is too early to identify tangible impacts, the initiatives being supported by the GM demonstrate clear potential to deliver significant contributions to LDN in their respective countries and regions. However, TPP stakeholders identified some additional inputs that could help to deepen impact and improve sustainability. Most notably, several partners hoped that the GM could build on the momentum of the TSP and TPP projects

by developing some form of post-design support for (or at least continue engagement with) projects during their actual implementation. Another suggestion was for the TPP project to prioritise its support towards those concepts that are using national, direct access entities as their implementation agencies (as opposed to international agencies). Opportunities were also identified for strengthening monitoring of the TPP project, through a combination of alternative indicators and approaches that better reflect the likely contributions the GM makes (or will make) to their partners’ long-term efforts.

TPP project represents another step towards achieving LDN

There was consensus amongst evaluation interviewees that the TPP project’s focus on supporting the development of a global portfolio of transformative projects is a logical next step for the GM, but also for achieving the ultimate impact of LDN. While it is too early to identify tangible impacts (and not all supported concepts will eventually secure funding), the scale of the TPP project’s portfolio provides one indication of impact potential: the 63 concepts that are being (or have been) supported through the TPP project are targeting over \$1.74 billion in funding.

Beyond the TPP project’s most immediate results focus (helping countries and regions to secure funded projects), some interviewees also identified further ways in which the GM’s inputs were strengthening foundations for longer-term impacts.

Following on from the TSP project, the TPP project is generally viewed as a necessary action for building momentum behind the still relatively young concept of LDN. The TSP project certainly helped to raise awareness of LDN across participating countries, but the TPP project’s promotion of *practical* responses has helped to raise the profile of LDN across a broader constituency. Typically, supported projects are now exposing a wider domestic audience to LDN, necessarily drawing in practitioners and communities during project design processes. But these projects are also increasing exposure to LDN amongst international implementation agencies and funders. Just by virtue of helping to increase the sheer *quantity* of LDN-focused concepts and projects, the GM is contributing to an increased recognition of the concept across potential delivery partners and donors. Where partners actually ‘sign on’ and become engaged in a project’s development and/or delivery, there is an increased likelihood that those partners will go on to apply LDN elsewhere in their work. For example, one evaluation interviewee (from an implementation agency) had previously been unaware of LDN but – after helping to design a project concept with the GM’s support – were now routinely scanning their own agency’s portfolio of current and upcoming work to identify opportunities for addressing LDN.

Evaluation survey results suggest that the GM’s support has indeed helped to both raise the profile of LDN, and improve coordination around LDN:

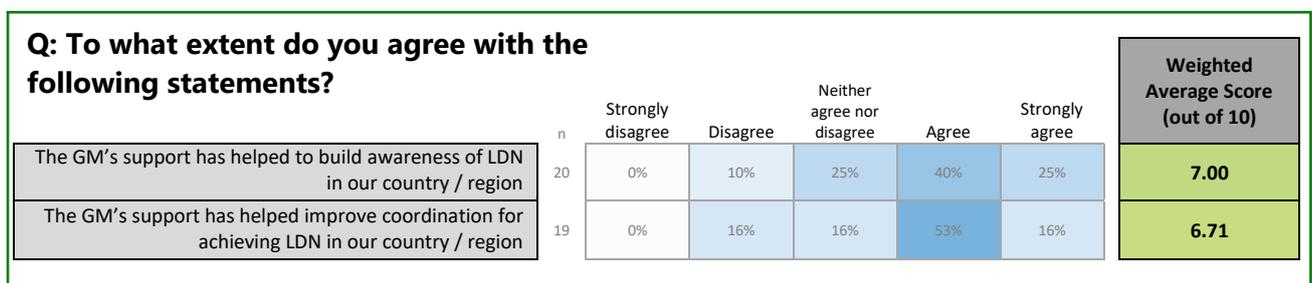


Fig. 5: Evaluation survey responses on broader influence of TPP project

Opportunities for deepening impact and sustainability

The TPP project’s theory of change (fig. 1 above) describes the underlying logic of the project, including how the GM’s support is most likely to contribute to the end goal of achieving LDN. Based on the evaluation’s findings, fig. 6 below assesses the project’s current progress against that theory of change. This provides some context for the subsequent comments and suggestions from evaluation interviewees around how the GM could further assure, deepen and sustain the TPP project’s impact.

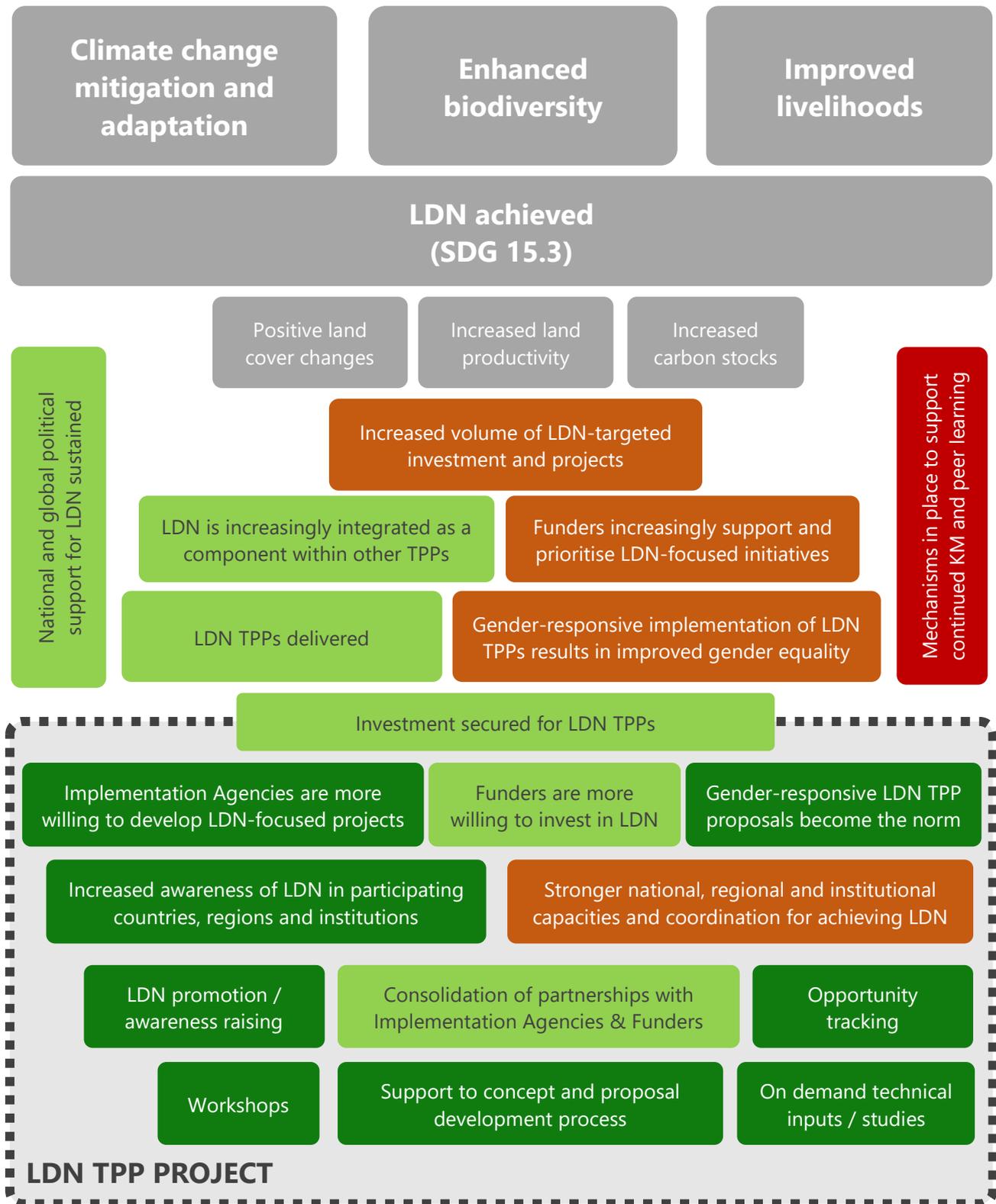


Fig. 6: Assessment of progress against theory of change

Given the long-term nature of LDN and the fact that the GM are primarily supporting projects that are still only at the conceptualisation stage, it is unsurprising that some elements are assessed as amber (limited progress) or red (work not started). But the theory of change does suggest some areas that may require increased attention from the TPP project in the future.

The majority of interviewees identified institutional and technical capacity for LDN as being a key impact driver that the UNCCD / GM could have continued influence over. The TPP project is already well-focused on

capacity development, most concretely through inputs such as workshops and written guidance. Interviewees also felt that the TPP project's process *inherently* contributed to stronger capacities, delivered through the GM's mentoring and 'hand holding' of countries and agencies through the process of embedding LDN within project design. Moreover, the GM's insistence on country-driven project development – in particular a clear message that project development should be led by a country's UNCCD National Focal Point – should be helping to improve the institutional sustainability of the GM's capacity inputs. Although a minority view, some interviewees even suggested that the TPP project's resources should be prioritised (even restricted) towards support for national implementation / direct access entities. This was viewed as a strategy for building in-country institutional capacity, reducing dependence on external assistance, and thereby increasing sustainability. Interviewees also noted that this would be in line with the apparent trend amongst some funders (particularly the GCF) towards increasing support for national, direct access entities.

Some interviewees identified potentially important capacity needs and gaps towards the implementation end of the project cycle. There is now a solid and well-documented theoretical foundation for LDN, and the TPP project has greatly helped to build and share knowledge that is being applied to strengthen the design of LDN-focused interventions. However, several interviewees were concerned at the lack of material, guidance and hands-on capacity development opportunities targeted at the professions and individuals that will actually be delivering and monitoring LDN projects: for example agricultural extension officers, farmers, land and infrastructure managers. The absence of material here was identified by some as a sustainability risk that LDN projects could be facing.

Relating to this, a common suggestion from interviewees for deepening impact and sustainability was that the TPP project (and/or the GM more broadly) should become more engaged with LDN project implementation. There was a general understanding that the GM could not be an implementation agency. However, many interviewees – particularly project representatives – *expected* the continuation of the GM's involvement during project implementation. The GM had helped countries introduce the LDN concept to their national institutions, had supported the establishment of national LDN targets, and – through the TPP project – had facilitated the development of practical responses for achieving LDN. Many interviewees felt that the GM's continued involvement during project implementation represented a logical, natural continuation of this support process. Moreover, given the infancy of LDN as a concept there is only limited experience of actually delivering LDN projects to date: interviewees felt that the GM were in the best position to centrally monitor, gather and share the early practical experiences that were arising from projects under implementation. Not only was the GM's continued involvement seen as important for building knowledge (and hence sustainability) around LDN, but also for ensuring that the current momentum behind LDN was maintained.

TPP impact monitoring could be strengthened

There are some concerns (especially amongst GM staff) that the TPP project's contribution to impact will be difficult to measure and – as a consequence – the project's role in supporting LDN may not be fully understood or recognised in the long term. Certainly, the TPP project's inputs are mostly delivered at a very early stage of a project's cycle, with any eventual impacts invariably being achieved many years in the future. Between a project's conceptualisation (the stage at which the GM are typically involved) and the delivery of impact there will be a multitude of steps and paths taken, involving the contributions of many institutions, communities and individuals. Attempting to *attribute* long-term impacts to the GM's early support would therefore be unrealistic, even disingenuous. But there may be scope for improved understanding of the GM's *contribution* to the long-term process of achieving LDN, particularly when aggregated across the multiple concepts that the TPP project is supporting.

Internally, the TPP project leads on the monitoring of one UNCCD target, with progress regularly reported to Member States. This target is one of three underpinning the UNCCD's first outcome and first outcome indicator, with progress here again regularly reported to Member States:

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Outcome 1.1 | Reduction of the area affected by desertification/land degradation and drought | | |
| Outcome Indicator 1.1 | Affected country Parties implement activities towards achieving the targets they have set for addressing DLDD | Target 1.1.1 GM | 105 countries complete the setting of their LDN targets (<i>TSP Project</i>) |
| | | Target 1.1.2 GM | 30 countries that were supported through the UNCCD submit high-quality LDN project concept notes for further development (<i>TPP Project</i>) |
| | | Target 1.1.3 COMMS | New and constantly updated LDN information is availed through the UNCCD |

This target and indicator are a useful measure of one aspect of activity being undertaken by the TPP project. Internally, the TPP project also measures several milestones that track the progress of the various projects being supported (summarised in fig. 2 above). However, all these measures – both the externally reported measures and the internal milestones – are output-based (activities and immediate achievements) rather than the longer-term outcomes and impacts that the work is supporting. These measures do not report the full extent of the TPP project’s work and potential influence, and risk ‘underselling’ or even misrepresenting the contribution of the GM’s support.

The theory of change (figs 1 and 6 above) points towards possible areas that could be monitored and measured in the future. Almost all elements within the theory of change will be beyond the immediate control of the GM or indeed any single institution, but periodic ‘testing’ and measuring of the theory of change could help the GM to understand whether the broad process of supporting LDN is on track, the extent of their influence, and their longer-term *contributions* to impact. In turn this should be useful for external reporting, but also for internal performance management and planning purposes. Any additional monitoring will of course have resource implications, but a more expansive effort could be mostly built on other initiatives such as the FAO-led [Drylands Restoration Initiative Platform](#), and on monitoring undertaken by the projects that the GM has supported. Invariably, successfully funded projects will be *required* to monitor against some core indicators of direct interest to the GM. For example the GCF, GEF and Adaptation Fund all require projects to monitor ‘*number of beneficiaries*’ and – where the project focus is (e.g.) land degradation – funders usually require projects to track ‘*area of land restored*’ or similar.

To an extent, the concerns around a possible lack of recognition of the TPP project’s contribution could also be mitigated by the value of the GM’s reputation. For some project representatives, the GM’s engagement and support of their project was viewed as a categorical positive, to the point that – when submitting funding proposals – they intended to draw attention to the GM’s involvement in the project conceptualisation process. These representatives felt that highlighting the GM’s involvement would lend their proposals further credibility in the eyes of target funders.

3.4 Gender mainstreaming

EVALUATION QUESTION 7:
How has the project supported gender mainstreaming within LDN initiatives?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS
The evaluation found that the TPP project has significantly helped to raise the profile, understanding and application of gender mainstreaming within supported projects’ designs. This has been achieved through a combination of the GM’s clear position that gender-responsiveness is an integral, essential facet of transformative project design, and through the provision of high-quality technical support on gender mainstreaming. However, given the early, pre-implementation stage of most supported projects, an

upcoming challenge will be to ensure that the advice and design principles are converted into actual practice.

Significant contributions to gender mainstreaming within project designs

The TPP project has established gender-responsive design as a foundational principle for LDN-focused projects. Indeed, the GM routinely describes the initiatives they support as not just “*LDN projects*”, but “*gender responsive LDN projects*”: for the GM, gender-responsiveness has become an integral, non-negotiable facet of project design, especially where those projects aspire to being transformational. In support of this, the TPP project has overseen the delivery of workshops on gender-responsive LDN, has provided gender-focused technical inputs to concept notes and – perhaps most significantly – has produced a detailed manual on the design, delivery and monitoring of gender-responsive LDN projects. The evaluation found the manual to be a high-quality piece of work, with a level of clarity and practical focus that sets it apart when compared to much of the analogous documentation produced by other agencies.

Almost all project representatives interviewed during the evaluation indicated that the GM’s support both emphasised the importance of gender-responsiveness and provided practical guidance on how to translate the principles into tangible design and implementation decisions. Crucially, project representatives confirmed that all these inputs have had a substantive influence on their concepts. Interviewees indicated that the GM’s advice was of course vital here, but the *early stage* at which that guidance is provided was also critical. Some interviewees confirmed that undertaking gender analyses as part of the conceptualisation process (i.e. even before a concept has been fully formed) had a tangible influence on the design and direction of their projects.

Ensuring theory is converted into practice

The majority of interviewees’ support for the GM’s approach to gender-responsive design was tempered by some uncertainty as to how effectively projects would eventually implement their gender plans. The prevailing perspective was that the theory and design principles being promoted were absolutely solid, but that experience from other projects indicate that these early ‘good intentions’ often fail to materialise in practice. Some interviewees suggested that – in many instances – it would be premature for the GM to fully disengage from supported projects, and that continued engagement will be necessary to ensure that gender-responsive principles are actually applied during project implementation.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The TPP project is delivering relevant, coherent, efficient and effective support for countries and regions that are seeking to establish transformative LDN initiatives. A critical gap in the project development process is being addressed, with the GM's early-stage support providing a service that – in many instances – would not otherwise be available. As well as helping to kickstart the development of full-scale projects, the work is also improving the mainstreaming of LDN within projects. The GM's close involvement during project conceptualisation means that advice on LDN is more influential than it would be at a later stage in the design process. This extends to the TPP project's early-stage advice on gender-responsive LDN: the quality and influence of the GM's advice here has been significant.

Even though the TPP project is still relatively young there have been some notable early achievements, with five of the supported projects already securing the necessary finance to proceed to implementation. The project has also helped to establish new partnerships between countries, regions and implementation agencies, and has raised the profile of LDN within institutions, some of which had no prior knowledge of the concept. Importantly, much of the work has helped countries and concepts to identify cross-sectoral linkages between LDN and (for example) climate change, biodiversity, infrastructure, etc. The TPP project is therefore helping to build further momentum towards achieving LDN, and represents a clear, logical progression on the UNCCD and GM's previous work. The tools that it provides for initiating LDN implementation may face growing demand in the near future, as the recent international commitments on land restoration take hold.

In summary, the TPP project is in a sound position and is well-regarded by countries, implementation agencies and funders alike. However, there are opportunities for improving both the project's immediate work, and the GM's longer-term support for assisting UNCCD country Parties to achieve LDN. Against that background, the following recommendations are presented in priority order.

Identify options for continued engagement with projects during implementation

Countries and regions see the TPP project as a natural extension to the work initiated during the TSP project. But – for many participants – their projects also represent their first substantive foray into the practical application of the LDN concept. The TPP project helps those participants to better understand how LDN can be incorporated within intervention designs, but there is still a degree of apprehension amongst participants about actual implementation. Once their projects are funded and launched, many of those same countries and regions anticipate – even *expect* – at least some form of continued technical support or mentoring from the GM. Of course, the UNCCD and GM are not implementation agencies. But they have been pivotal in developing the LDN concept, generating political support, building country-by-country momentum through the target setting process and now – through the TPP project – are proving to be a key driver in securing finance to deliver on-the-ground interventions. It is understandable that many stakeholders (countries, regions, agencies and funders alike) are encouraging the GM to maintain engagement.

Aside from being valuable to individual projects, the GM's continued engagement would arguably have more value for the GM itself, and – even more significantly – for the LDN 'movement'. Longer-term involvement would help the GM to build and share knowledge around the reality and practical challenges of LDN: a knowledge gap that is the root of many country-level concerns about implementation. Continued engagement could also help to ensure that LDN design principles (including *gender-responsive* design principles) are actually realised and that theory truly converts into practice. All this experience would also help the GM to strengthen their own understanding as to what approaches work and don't work, which – in turn – would strengthen their own decisions as to which future project concepts should be supported and how.

Recommendation 1

The GM should explore options (in line with its mandate) for continued engagement with the interventions they have supported, potentially taking the form of a TPP project ‘succession’ strategy (as opposed to an ‘exit’ strategy). The approach could be based on the following objectives:

- Strengthen the implementation and sustainability of LDN
- Increase the likelihood that LDN design principles – especially gender-responsive design principles – are applied as intended
- Build a global knowledge base around how LDN can be delivered in practice
- Gather learning from projects under implementation to improve the GM’s own monitoring and decision-making processes

Any continued involvement will have significant resource implications for the GM, so there is a strong case for restricting engagement to a limited sample of projects. The above objectives could double-up as selection criteria for the GM when deciding which projects to support.

Reform inefficient financial management processes

The standard UNCCD / GM financial approval processes do not align well with the TPP project’s flexible, demand-driven operating model. Most problematic is the lack of delegated authority for expenditures (even small expenditures) that arise outside of the agreed six-month workplans. This compromises the TPP project’s need for flexibility, and in particular its capacity to respond to time-sensitive opportunities. Additionally, project managers do not have permanent access to the central financial monitoring system (Umoja), so they are obliged to develop parallel, off-system tools to allow them to undertake basic day-to-day financial monitoring. These inefficiencies result in a considerable additional workload for TPP project staff, diverting staff resources away from the substantive delivery of the TPP project. If these inefficiencies are left unaddressed they could compromise the potential and outreach of the TPP project, especially if there is any further increase in demand for the GM’s support.

Recommendation 2

The UNCCD / GM should review financial management, approval processes and standard operating procedures to ensure that individual project managers have the necessary flexibility to respond efficiently to time-sensitive support requests. For the TPP project (and indeed for any other demand-driven projects that need to respond to time-sensitive opportunities) two specific adjustments would be highly beneficial:

- Delegated authorities that allow for a degree of unplanned, ‘off-workplan’ expenditure
- Permanent, day-to-day access to central financial monitoring data (Umoja)

Develop a broader, longer-term monitoring strategy

The TPP project’s current monitoring activity is valuable, gathering data that is essential for the day-to-day management of the work. However, the indicators and processes are almost exclusively focused on activities and outputs, and do not measure the full extent of the TPP project’s *potential* influence. The impacts eventually delivered by supported projects – including LDN – will of course be beyond the GM’s control, but a more extensive monitoring strategy could help the GM to understand whether the broad process of supporting LDN is on track, the extent of the GM’s influence, and the GM’s longer-term *contributions* to impact. In turn this should be useful for internal performance management and planning purposes, for external reporting, and – potentially – could contribute to global knowledge around how LDN can be achieved. Longer-term monitoring could also strengthen the GM’s decision-making process when selecting which project concepts to support in the future.

Recommendation 3

The GM should develop a more extensive monitoring strategy that focuses on measuring the longer-term *influence and contribution* of the TPP project. This could be based on periodic measurement of the project's theory of change and should make use of publicly available monitoring data that all successfully funded projects will be required (by donors) to gather. The strategy could be based on the following objectives:

- Improve understanding of the nature and extent of the GM's long-term influence on LDN
- Improve understanding on which approaches to achieving LDN are most effective and sustainable
- Improve understanding on the pace and extent of LDN
- (Potentially) strengthen the case for increased resources for the UNCCD and GM

Articulate clearer 'pitches' for LDN's role in addressing climate change

The volume of international finance allocated towards climate change continues to increase, with many donors now exclusively focused on the issue, or requiring projects to at least address climate change in some form. LDN has direct relevance to climate change, with the UNCCD and GM having already undertaken much work to identify the linkages. However, several evaluation respondents felt that LDN descriptions and briefing materials were overly dependent on scientific and technical language. This could be compromising the speed and depth of understanding amongst newer audiences, particularly agencies and donors that are singularly focused on climate change.

Recommendation 4

The GM should develop a set of clear descriptions / briefings on LDN's links with climate change, based entirely on lay language. An explicit objective of this work should be to provide potential TPPs with material that can directly inform climate finance project proposals and any associated requirements to define a project's relevance and contribution to addressing climate change.

Annex A: Evaluation framework

The evaluation objectives and theory of change provided the basis for the **evaluation framework**, which in turn guided the whole evaluation approach. The framework was structured against the standard [OECD-DAC criteria](#) agreed for the evaluation (relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability). Given the early, pre-implementation stage at which the TPP project provides support to LDN interventions, the assessment of impact focused most on **potential for impact**. In addition to the OECD-DAC criteria, a cross-cutting criterion of **gender mainstreaming** was applied to assess the TPP project's approach to gender equality. The framework identified **key evaluation questions** supported by guiding **sub-questions**.

| Key evaluation questions | Guiding sub-questions |
|---|--|
| RELEVANCE | |
| 1. How well is the project responding to the needs and priorities of the participating countries, regions and institutions, and to global commitments? | 1.1 Is the project relevant to the priorities of participating countries and regions? |
| | 1.2 Is the project relevant to the priorities of participating Implementation Agencies, potential Funders and other partners? |
| | 1.3 Is the project relevant to the mandates of the UNCCD and GM, and to global and regional commitments, in particular the SDGs? |
| COHERENCE | |
| 2. To what extent is the project's support aligned with – and complementary to – other work being delivered within the participating countries and regions? | 2.1 Is LDN and the project's support coherent with policies and activities (current and planned) in the participating countries and regions? |
| | 2.2 Is LDN and the project's support coherent with the policies and activities (current and planned) of Implementation Agencies and potential Funders? |
| | 2.3 How is the project minimising duplication? |
| EFFICIENCY | |
| 3. How efficient is project delivery? | 3.1 Is the project plan clear, appropriate and realistic? |
| | 3.2 How cost-efficient is the project? |
| | 3.3 How effective are the project's monitoring processes? |
| | 3.4 How has the coronavirus pandemic affected cost and time efficiency? |
| EFFECTIVENESS | |
| 4. Is the project delivering its planned results? | 4.1 What forms of support have been most effective for participating countries and regions? |
| | 4.2 What forms of support have been most effective for Implementation Agencies, potential Funders and other partners? |
| | 4.3 To what extent and how is the project contributing to the enhancement of national, regional and institutional capacities for achieving LDN? |
| | 4.4 What is the value and type of resources that have been mobilized with direct support from the TPP project? |
| | 4.5 How has the coronavirus pandemic affected the project's delivery of support services? |
| IMPACT | |
| 5. What potential impacts will be delivered by the initiatives that the project has supported? | 5.1 What impacts are being targeted by the supported interventions? |
| | 5.2 What is the likelihood that the supported interventions will be genuinely transformative? |
| SUSTAINABILITY | |

| | |
|--|--|
| 6. To what extent are the project's results likely to be sustained? | 6.1 What potential funding has been identified (or secured) to deliver the interventions supported by the project? |
| | 6.2 To what extent and how has the project strengthened the enabling environment for achieving LDN (nationally, regionally, internationally)? |
| | 6.3 What gaps and needs are not being addressed by the project? |
| GENDER MAINSTREAMING | |
| 7. How has the project supported gender mainstreaming within LDN initiatives? | 7.1 To what extent is the guidance (manual) on gender-responsive LDN TPPs being applied? |
| | 7.2 To what extent are supported concept notes and proposals gender-responsive? |

Annex B: Interviewees

| Name | Organisation |
|----------------------|---|
| Aloui, Hamda | Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment (Tunisia) |
| Apel, Ulrich | GEF |
| Babayan, Vahagn | EPIU, Ministry of Nature Protection (Armenia) |
| Baker, Louise | UNCCD Global Mechanism |
| Bennouna, Taoufiq | World Bank |
| Contreras, Samuel | Department of Agriculture (Philippines) |
| Dingel, Carl | Independent Consultant (for the Global Mechanism) |
| Gondo, Peter | UN Forum on Forests |
| Guler, Erkan | Independent Consultant (for the Global Mechanism) |
| Haliloglu, Mediha | Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Turkey) |
| Hovhannisyan, Lusine | EPIU, Ministry of Nature Protection (Armenia) |
| Jattansingh, Sasha | Independent Consultant (for the Global Mechanism) |
| Jauffret, Sandrine | UNCCD Global Mechanism |
| Kaseke, Evans | Zambezi Watercourse Commission |
| Lara Almuedo, Pedro | UNCCD Global Mechanism |
| Mavambe, Tsungai | Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility |
| Mutambirwa, Cathrine | UNCCD Global Mechanism |
| Naqvi, Munazza | UNCCD Global Mechanism |
| Ndoli, Alain | IUCN |
| Park, Hansol | UNCCD Global Mechanism |
| Shahazizyan, Rubik | EPIU, Ministry of Nature Protection (Armenia) |
| Siles, Jackie | IUCN |
| Spassky, Boris | LDN Fund |
| Tekin, Sibel | FAO |
| Woodfine, Anne | Independent Consultant (for the Global Mechanism) |

Annex C: Survey results

An online survey was circulated to representatives from all 61 initiatives that – as of the evaluation’s inception in November 2020 – had approached the TPP project for support. These representatives included UNCCD National Focal Points, consultants employed by the Global Mechanism to provide TPP support, and Implementing Agencies working with countries and regions to develop or deliver TPPs. The survey was conducted during the period to 2nd to 18th December 2020, and was made available in English, French and Spanish. It was circulated to 83 individuals, with 25 responses received, representing a 30% response rate.

The following annex compiles all responses to the survey’s **quantitative** questions only. The survey also included several open, qualitative questions, but those responses those questions are not compiled here, in order to maintain respondent confidentiality.

Q1: Within which country do you mainly work?

| | n | % |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Algeria | 1 | 4% |
| Belarus | 2 | 8% |
| Benin | 3 | 12% |
| Bolivia | 1 | 4% |
| Dominican Republic | 1 | 4% |
| Georgia | 1 | 4% |
| Ghana | 1 | 4% |
| Grenada | 1 | 4% |
| Guinea | 2 | 8% |
| Madagascar | 1 | 4% |
| Montenegro | 1 | 4% |
| Nigeria | 1 | 4% |
| Peru | 1 | 4% |
| Sierra Leone | 2 | 8% |
| Syria | 1 | 4% |
| Togo | 3 | 12% |
| Vietnam | 1 | 4% |
| Zimbabwe | 1 | 4% |
| TOTAL | 25 | 100% |

Regional breakdown

(This was not a survey question: the results are derived from answers to Q1 above)

| | n | % |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Africa | 15 | 60% |
| Asia | 2 | 8% |
| Central and Eastern Europe | 4 | 16% |
| Latin America and the Caribbean | 4 | 16% |
| Northern Mediterranean | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL | 25 | 100% |

Q2: What is / was your role in the project being developed?

| | n | % |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| National Focal Point for UNCCD | 11 | 44% |
| Consultant for the Global Mechanism | 9 | 36% |
| Implementing Agency (potential or actual) | 4 | 16% |
| Other (please specify) | 1 | 4% |
| TOTAL | 25 | 100% |

Q3: What type of project are / were you developing?

| | n | % |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| National project | 25 | 100% |
| Multi-country project | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL | 25 | 100% |

Q4: What stage is your project at?

| | n | % |
|------------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Project idea note | 6 | 24% |
| Concept note / PIF | 15 | 60% |
| Full proposal | 2 | 8% |
| Funding approved | 2 | 8% |
| Project under implementation | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL | 25 | 100% |

Q5: What is the estimated / planned total budget (including co-financing) of your project, in US dollars?

(NB: Some respondents allocated extremely low values, presumably in error. Any project values of less than \$100 have been excluded)

| | n | % |
|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| # projects <\$10m | 8 | 44% |
| # projects \$10-25m | 8 | 44% |
| # projects >\$25m | 2 | 11% |
| TOTAL | 18 | 100% |

| | USD \$ |
|---------|---------------|
| Average | \$15,878,646 |
| Max | \$100,000,000 |
| Min | \$50,000 |

NOTE: Questions 6b, 7b and 9 required respondents to rate various aspects of the TPP project using 5-point scales. Each question’s results table presents the distribution of scores against the 5-point scale applied, along with a **weighted average score**, whereby ‘marks out of ten’ are calculated: the higher the weighted average score, the more positive the respondent’s assessment. The weighted average scale is colour coded as follows:



Q6: What written guidance provided by the Global Mechanism have you used?

| | n | % |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| LDN Scientific Conceptual Framework | 13 | 68% |
| LDN TPP Checklist | 14 | 74% |
| LDN TPP Operational Guidance for Country Support | 10 | 53% |
| Manual for gender-responsive LDN TPPs | 10 | 53% |
| TOTAL* | 19 | 100% |

*NB: This is the total number of respondents to the question: respondents could provide more than one answer

Q6b: How useful was the written guidance for the development of your project?

| | n | Not at all useful | Slightly useful | Moderately useful | Very useful | Extremely useful | Weighted Average Score (out of 10) |
|--|----|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| LDN Scientific Conceptual Framework | 12 | 0% | 0% | 17% | 50% | 33% | 7.92 |
| LDN TPP Checklist | 12 | 0% | 0% | 42% | 25% | 33% | 7.29 |
| LDN TPP Operational Guidance for Country Support | 9 | 0% | 0% | 11% | 44% | 44% | 8.33 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Manual for gender-responsive LDN TPPs | 9 | 0% | 11% | 22% | 33% | 33% | 7.22 |
|---------------------------------------|---|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|

Q7: Have you received training (whether in-person or remote) in any of the following subjects from the Global Mechanism?

(Question only asked to NFPs)

| | n | % |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------------|
| Overview of LDN | 2 | 67% |
| Designing LDN TPPs | 2 | 67% |
| How to access funding for LDN TPPs | 0 | 0% |
| Gender mainstreaming into LDN TPPs | 0 | 0% |
| TOTAL* | 3 | 100% |

*NB: This is the total number of respondents to the question: respondents could provide more than one answer

Q7b: How useful was the training for the development of your project?

(Question only asked to NFPs)

| | n | Not at all useful | Slightly useful | Moderately useful | Very useful | Extremely useful | Weighted Average Score (out of 10) |
|------------------------------------|---|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Overview of LDN | 2 | 0% | 0% | 50% | 50% | 0% | 6.25 |
| Designing LDN TPPs | 2 | 0% | 0% | 50% | 50% | 0% | 6.25 |
| How to access funding for LDN TPPs | 0 | NO RESPONSES | | | | | |
| Gender mainstreaming into LDN TPPs | 0 | NO RESPONSES | | | | | |

Q8: Apart from the Global Mechanism, have you received any other technical support during the development of your project?

| | n | % |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 12 | 52% |
| No | 11 | 48% |
| TOTAL | 23 | 100% |

Q8b: If yes, what other technical support have you received?

[12 open text responses received]

Q9: To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

| | n | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree | Weighted Average Score (out of 10) |
|--|----|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| The GM's support has helped us to strengthen the technical quality of our project | 20 | 0% | 10% | 5% | 50% | 35% | 7.75 |
| The GM's support has helped us to improve the gender responsiveness of our project | 20 | 0% | 10% | 25% | 35% | 30% | 7.13 |
| The GM's support has helped us to identify potential funding sources for our project | 19 | 0% | 11% | 32% | 32% | 26% | 6.84 |
| The GM's support has helped us to identify potential implementation partners for our project | 17 | 0% | 12% | 29% | 29% | 29% | 6.91 |
| The GM's support has helped to build awareness of LDN in our country / region | 20 | 0% | 10% | 25% | 40% | 25% | 7.00 |
| The GM's support has helped improve coordination for achieving LDN in our country / region | 19 | 0% | 16% | 16% | 53% | 16% | 6.71 |

Q10: Have you secured confirmed funding or investment for your project?

| | n | % |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Yes | 6 | 30% |
| No | 14 | 70% |
| TOTAL | 20 | 100% |

Q10b: If yes, what confirmed funding or investment have you secured?

[6 open text responses received]

Q11: What makes your project transformative?

[19 open text responses received]

Q12: What has been the most valuable aspect of the Global Mechanism's support for your project? What is it doing well?

[18 open text responses received]

Q13: How could the Global Mechanism's support be improved?

[16 open text responses received]

Q14: Any final comments?

[8 open text responses received]

Annex D: References

- Achieving LDN at the country level: Building blocks for LDN target setting*, (2016), UNCCD / GM
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- [LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes](#), Website, [Accessed 29 January 2021]
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- Report by the GM on progress made in the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention*, ICCD/CRIC(18)/7, (2019), UNCCD
- Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN*, (2017), UNCCD
- Sewell, Annelies, van der Esch, Stefan, and Löwenhardt, Hannah, *Goals and Commitments for the Restoration Decade*, (2020), Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

Annex E: Theory of change for LDN TSP Project

