

Evaluation of the Drought Initiative

**Final report
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United Nations
Convention to Combat
Desertification

This independent final evaluation was undertaken to assess the Drought Initiative's performance and results, including whether and how the Initiative contributed at national, regional and international levels. The evaluation identifies recommendations for strengthening and sustaining the results achieved, and for improving the design and delivery of any similar projects that the UNCCD may lead in the future.

This evaluation was commissioned by the UNCCD Evaluation Office and authored by Ronnie MacPherson/Greenstate in January – March 2022. The views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the UNCCD secretariat or the Global Mechanism.

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Acronyms

COP	Conference of the Parties (UNCCD)
DRAMP	Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism of the UNCCD
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWG	Intergovernmental Working Group on Effective Policy and Implementation Measures for Addressing Drought under the UNCCD
LDN	Land degradation neutrality
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
TOC	Theory of change
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Diversification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation

Executive Summary

The UNCCD's *Drought Initiative* was established to increase the resources and momentum behind the Convention's drought-focussed work, to improve coordination with institutional partners, and to strengthen regional and national drought management approaches. The Initiative delivered three interlinked components. Firstly, the Initiative provided countries with National Consultants and technical guidance to facilitate the development of National Drought Plans. Secondly, the Initiative worked to build transboundary cooperation by delivering regional workshops on drought preparedness, and by facilitating the development of Regional Drought Plans. Thirdly, the Initiative developed an online Toolbox that consolidated previously disparate material and data on drought preparedness, providing countries and institutions with easier access to quality-assured resources. Ultimately, the Drought Initiative aimed to contribute to a shift away from reactive approaches (*responding* to drought) towards proactive approaches (*preparing* for drought) which, in turn, could support increased resilience and reduced vulnerability to drought.

This independent final evaluation was undertaken to assess the Drought Initiative's performance and results, including whether and how the Initiative contributed at national, regional and international levels. The evaluation also aimed to identify recommendations for strengthening and sustaining any results achieved, and for improving the design and delivery of any similar projects that the UNCCD may lead in the future. The evaluation was based on a combination of tools including interviews, documentation review, and online surveys.

The evaluation found that the Drought Initiative was clearly relevant to the needs of participating countries and regions, and to international efforts around drought preparedness. The Drought Initiative was also deeply relevant to UNCCD's mandate, and helped to increase the profile and awareness of the Convention's focus and role in the domain of drought mitigation and management. This increased appreciation for UNCCD's mandate and role was partly achieved through the Initiative's strong focus on partnership working, which inherently helped to strengthen cooperation and improve alignment with other international institutions working on drought.

A simple, logical project plan aided the efficient delivery of the Drought Initiative. Efficiency also benefited from clear roles and divisions of responsibility within the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM, and between the UNCCD and the Drought Initiative's partner institutions. The UNCCD's recent experience of supporting the LDN target setting process was also useful here, as the Drought Initiative applied a similar concept and process for supporting the development of National Drought Plans. While the Initiative's overall delivery was efficient, there was some scope for strengthening internal coordination: clearer budget management could have been in place, the Initiative would have benefited from formal internal coordination meetings, and a Steering/Advisory Committee could have been valuable for providing timely, responsive strategic advice.

The Initiative was generally effective at delivering its three main components, with participating countries and partner institutions routinely praising the quality and responsiveness of support provided through the UNCCD. The 60 National Drought Plans supported through the Initiative have created momentum and represent a solid foundation on which to build drought preparedness. However, a universal concern was the significant work still required to operationalise those plans. Some stakeholders also felt that the rapidity with which plans were developed has introduced risks and potential gaps that could undermine national ownership and implementation of the plans. The Initiative's facilitation of regional work was also well-received, but as with the National Plans there were common concerns about maintaining momentum and securing resources to deliver regional strategies. The Toolbox was well received and was widely used. However, there is rising demand for

more practically-orientated material and – assuming the pandemic is now subsiding – demand for in-person support to explore and apply Toolbox material. Gender was well-addressed by the Initiative, underpinned by a high quality set of guidelines on gender mainstreaming in drought management. Crucially, these guidelines were taken up by participating countries with virtually all National Drought Plans incorporating gender mainstreaming considerations.

The Initiative was always conceived of as a very early step on the journey towards the ultimate impacts of increased resilience and reduced vulnerability to drought. However, even at this early stage there is a fair degree of consensus as to the likely *barriers* to impact and – by extension – factors that could improve the probability and sustainability of impact. Most notably, virtually all evaluation stakeholders identified the limited implementation of National Drought Plans (and resources allocated towards them, whether domestic or external) as being the clearest barrier to impact. For many (but not all) countries, another commonly identified barrier was the risk of limited internal, cross-Ministry coordination. However, the Drought Initiative was credited with improving *international* coordination and partnership working on drought preparedness, and for raising the profile of this work, all of which has in turn improved the foundations for achieving impact.

Recommendations

Encouragingly, work is already underway to sustain and develop some of the Initiative's results, with a GEF-funded, FAO-implemented project being used to upscale the Toolbox and help some of the participating countries to strengthen and implement their Drought Plans. However, further measures could help to ensure that the Initiative's potential impact is maximised, and that the Initiative's work continues to be useful and influential. There are also opportunities for strengthening future UNCCD initiatives. Against that background, the following recommendations are presented in priority order.

1. Strengthening resources and support for institutional and political coordination

Drought is a multi-disciplinary problem, and within any given country a multitude of Government Ministries will have at least some involvement in drought preparedness. This will introduce coordination challenges when it comes to securing resources and implementing drought plans, even where technically solid plans are in place. In addition to scientific and technical expertise on drought, the UNCCD should explore how it could also support countries and regions by developing a cadre of professional support that specialises in institutional coordination. Most immediately, these institutional specialists could support countries and regions to mainstream, resource and implement their drought plans. However, such specialists would be a useful resource indefinitely, with skills sets that are relevant to other ongoing and future UNCCD initiatives.

2. Ensure that future projects have high-profile international and national inductions

The Drought Initiative-facilitated process was comparatively rapid and – in contrast to the UNCCD's previous LDN target setting project – the Initiative did not have sufficient time or resources to support extensive national consultation processes. In some instances the National Consultants appointed by the UNCCD ended up operating in relative isolation, with limited support or engagement from the relevant national authorities. For future national policy-focused projects the UNCCD should consider insisting on formal introductory meetings that involve senior politicians or civil servants from all relevant Government Ministries. This could be a pre-condition of support, would raise the profile of the work in the country, and should at least improve the chances for stronger ownership of the project and any related policy or consultation processes.

3. Formalise internal coordination for future UNCCD / GM projects

While there was strong coordination and communication between the Drought Initiative's senior leadership, staff working *within* individual components sometimes felt disconnected from the broader Initiative. For future projects the UNCCD / GM should hold formal, periodic coordination meetings and/or knowledge management sessions involving all staff working on the project.

4. Provide Managers of future projects with stronger tools for financial management

Workplans and allocations of responsibilities were clear. However, financial management did not rest with the Initiative's component leads, resulting in less transparency and certainty around the budget and expenditure. For future projects the UNCCD / GM should ensure that Project Managers either have full budgetary control, or at least have permanent access to financial data.

5. Consider forming Steering or Advisory Committees to provide strategic support for future projects

There was reasonable synergy between the Drought Initiative and the IWG. However, the IWG was never tasked with providing *direct* oversight or guidance for the Initiative, and the timelines and workplans of the Initiative and the IWG were not always in synch. Potentially valuable inputs from the IWG were not necessarily available at the most opportune time for the Drought Initiative's day-to-day operations. Smaller Steering or Advisory Committees could be valuable for providing future projects with timely, responsive strategic direction and advice.

1. Introduction

This report documents the independent, summative evaluation of the UNCCD's **Drought Initiative**. The report commences with an overview of the Initiative, 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 UNCCD and their ongoing support within the domain of drought preparedness.

1.1 Programme Overview

The mitigation of the effects of drought has always been an important driver and objective for the UNCCD, ever since the [Convention's establishment in 1994](#). However, the centrality of drought to the UNCCD's work has increased significantly in recent years, not least through the adoption of the Convention's [2018-2030 Strategic Framework](#). This framework establishes five strategic objectives for the UNCCD, one of which focuses exclusively on drought:

Strategic Objective 3: To mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems

Expected impact 3.1: Ecosystems' vulnerability to drought is reduced, including through sustainable land and water management practices

Expected impact 3.2: Communities resilience to drought is increased

Historically, the volume of UNCCD resources (finance, staffing) allocated towards drought-related work was comparatively limited. Partly in recognition of this historical limitation and the upcoming demands of the Strategic Framework, in 2018 the UNCCD launched [the Drought Initiative](#). The Initiative builds on an extensive amount of work undertaken by the UNCCD and partner institutions during the preceding years, with much of this previous work aiming to build national, regional and international knowledge and capacity for drought mitigation, adaptation and management. Previous work that directly influenced the Drought Initiative include (but are not limited to) the 2013 [High-level Meeting on National Drought Policy](#), the 2013-2015 UN-Water programme on [Capacity Development to support National Drought Policies](#), the [Drought Resilient and Prepared Africa strategy](#), and the UNCCD's own [Drought Resilience, Adaptation and Management Policy Framework \(DRAMP\)](#).

Building on these previous developments, the Drought Initiative was established to increase the resources and momentum behind the UNCCD's drought-focussed work, to further deepen coordination and collaboration with institutional partners such as the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), and to shift regional and national drought management approaches from being reactive (*responding* to drought) towards being proactive (*preparing* for drought). The Initiative is structured around the three pillars of drought preparedness, with these pillars themselves derived from the foregoing DRAMP:

Drought Preparedness Pillars		Drought Initiative aims		Drought Initiative actions
Early Warning Systems	>	Establish comprehensive drought preparedness systems	>	Support countries to develop national drought plans
Vulnerability Assessment	>	Reduce vulnerability	>	Facilitate regional-level forums and capacity development
Risk Mitigation Measures	>	Identify practical intervention measures	>	Develop a toolbox compiling drought preparedness resources

- **National drought plans:** After soliciting interest from UNCCD Member States, the Initiative provided 66 countries with National Consultants to facilitate country-level analysis and planning, and to ultimately support the development of national drought plans. These national processes were further supported by UNCCD-produced technical guidance, including a model drought plan and guidelines on gender mainstreaming. Each country's draft plan also benefited from expert quality assurance provided through the Drought Initiative.
- **Regional support:** In collaboration with partners such as the WMO and FAO, the Initiative worked to build cross-border cooperation by facilitating regional workshops on drought preparedness. In addition to developing technical capacities, these workshops also aimed to build and/or strengthen regional linkages and communities of practice.
- **Toolbox:** Over the years, many institutions and countries have developed valuable guidance, tools and practical responses for drought preparedness. However, all these resources were hosted in disparate locations and were not always readily accessible. The Drought Initiative developed an online toolbox to consolidate a set of quality-assured resources, in turn providing a one-stop-shop for the most valuable drought preparedness tools.

Shortly after the launch of the Drought Initiative, the UNCCD also established an intergovernmental working group (IWG) on *Effective Policy and Implementation Measures for Addressing Drought under the UNCCD*. Comprised of 30 regionally-representative experts (including existing members of UNCCD's Science-Policy Interface), the IWG is tasked with developing findings and recommendations on its subject matter at the upcoming UNCCD Conference of Parties (COP) in May 2022. The IWG has been working alongside the Drought Initiative, with the IWG both learning from Drought Initiative experience, and advising on the Drought Initiative's direction.

1.2 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 Drought Initiative documentation and through discussions with the Drought Initiative Team.

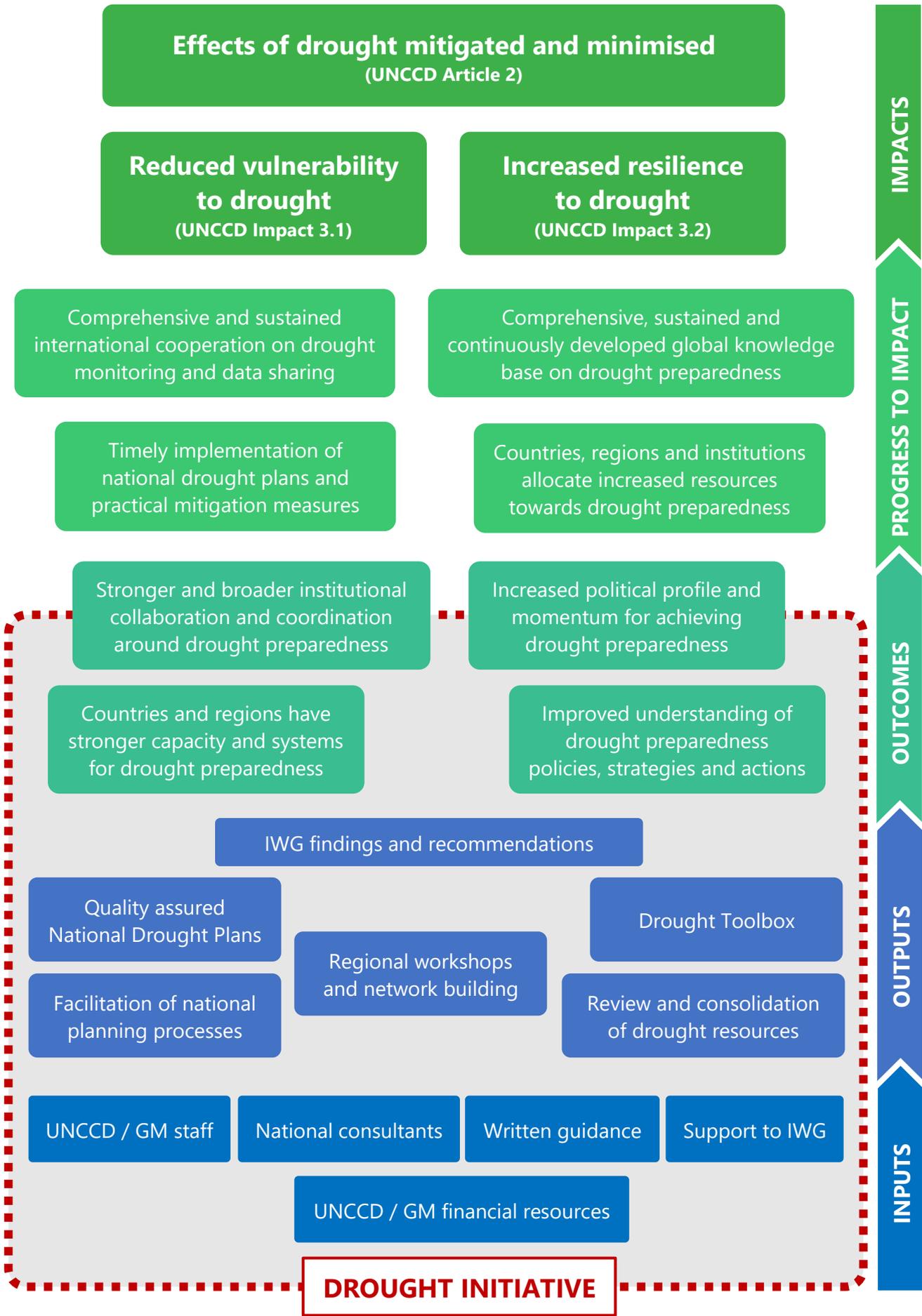


Fig. 1: Drought Initiative theory of change

2. Evaluation approach

2.1 Objectives

The evaluation was guided by two objectives:

1. **ACCOUNTABILITY:** To provide an overall independent assessment of the Drought Initiative, paying particular attention to the results achieved and their contribution to the priorities of the UNCCD and the aims set for the initiative.
2. **LEARNING:** To identify key lessons and recommendations in order to guide current and future actions.

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, foundational stage at which the Drought Initiative provided policy and technical support to countries and regions, 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 Drought Initiative'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 relevant was the Initiative to participating countries, regions and institutions?
2. **COHERENCE:** To what extent was the Initiative aligned with – and complementary to – other work on drought preparedness?
3. **EFFICIENCY:** How efficient was the Initiative's delivery?
4. **EFFECTIVENESS:** Did the Initiative deliver its planned results?
5. **POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT:** How likely is it that the Initiative's results will contribute to long-term impact?
6. **SUSTAINABILITY:** To what extent are the Initiative's results likely to be sustained?
7. **GENDER MAINSTREAMING:** To what extent was the Initiative gender-responsive?

2.3 Tools

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

- **Interviews:** 20 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 through the Drought Initiative (e.g. guidance notes, technical briefings), Toolbox

content (including web analytics), material produced by participating countries (particularly national drought plans) and relevant external literature that provides evidence of the extent of the Initiative's broader influence. A list of main references is presented in annex E.

- **Survey of National Consultants:** While only a limited number of country representatives could be targeted for interview, an online survey was circulated to 53 National Consultants that were contracted by the UNCCD to support the development of National Drought Policies within *all* participating countries. 30 responses were received (57% response rate). Relevant survey findings are presented at appropriate points throughout the evaluation report, with full survey results compiled in annex C.
- **Survey of IWG Members:** A second online survey targeted all 33 IWG members (including alternates), focusing particularly on gathering their perspectives on Drought Initiative performance and potential next steps for the UNCCD following the Initiative's conclusion. 13 responses were received (39% response rate). Relevant survey findings are presented at appropriate points throughout the evaluation report, with full survey results compiled in annex D.

2.4 Challenges and limitations

The Drought Initiative aimed to deliver contributions that represented only an early step towards impact: the ultimate impacts of increased resilience, reduced vulnerability and drought mitigation will of course be dependent on multiple actors and influences. When it came to assessing the Initiative's impact then, the evaluation placed more effort on trying to identify how the Initiative supported the **potential for future impact** within 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 relevant was the Initiative to participating countries, regions and institutions?

EVALUATION QUESTION 2:

To what extent was the Initiative aligned with – and complementary to – other work on drought preparedness?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Drought Initiative was clearly relevant to the needs of participating countries and regions, and to international efforts around drought preparedness. The Initiative's work will likely become even more relevant over time, given the increased occurrence of drought emergencies and the probable exacerbation of drought as a result of climate change. The Drought Initiative was also deeply relevant to UNCCD's mandate, and helped to increase the profile and awareness of the Convention's focus and role in the domain of drought mitigation and management. This increased appreciation for UNCCD's mandate and role was partly achieved through the Drought Initiative's strong focus on partnership working, which inherently helped to strengthen cooperation and improve alignment with other international institutions working on drought.

Support was clearly relevant to needs of participating countries and regions

The Drought Initiative's concept and support was of clear relevance to the needs and priorities of the countries, regional bodies and international institutions that participated in the work. Even before the Initiative commenced, the increasing prevalence and visibility of drought (both in terms of frequency and distribution) had been drawing more political and practical attention to drought preparedness. The Initiative was therefore well-timed, providing a platform for converting this increased attention into tangible steps. Indeed, some evaluation interviewees noted that some countries were acutely aware that more systematic drought preparedness was now a necessity for them, but had yet to embark on concerted national planning. These interviewees identified the Drought Initiative – and in particular the national drought planning process – as being the final push required to trigger national efforts. Even in countries where there was less pre-existing attention being paid to drought preparedness, the Drought Initiative was still seen as a timely, relevant and necessary intervention, at the very least helping to raise awareness and create momentum within political circles.

The relevance of the Initiative was also partly demonstrated by the demand for support from countries. Shortly after the Initiative's launch in 2017 the UNCCD Secretariat and Global Mechanism invited countries to apply for support (in the form of a National Consultant) to develop a National Drought Plan. This first invitation resulted in 44 countries expressing interest and receiving support. A second invitation in 2019 resulted in a further 27 countries applying for and receiving support. This level of interest greatly outstripped the Secretariat's own expectations: initial estimates suggested around 30 countries *in total* would be interested.

Initiative increased profile and awareness of UNCCD’s mandate

The Initiative was deeply relevant to – and fully aligned with – UNCCD’s mandate. The original UNCCD convention text states that “*the objective of this Convention is to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought...*” with multiple further references elaborating on how the UNCCD should support drought mitigation. More recently, the UNCCD’s 2018-2030 Strategic Framework establishes a drought-specific strategic objective: “*to mitigate, adapt to, and manage the effects of drought in order to enhance resilience of vulnerable populations and ecosystems*”. The Drought Initiative was developed against this mandate, and to kickstart the UNCCD’s work against their drought-specific strategic objective.

The Initiative was *also* delivered to address a historically limited allocation of UNCCD resources towards drought-related activity: despite the obvious centrality of drought to the UNCCD’s mandate, the staffing and resources dedicated to drought was not as high or as focused as for other Convention priorities. This historical imbalance was reflected on by evaluation interviewees. External, institutional partners invariably commented that – prior to the Drought Initiative – the UNCCD were certainly visible in relevant international forums and partnerships, but their practical involvement was not always substantial or critical. This had sometimes led to a lack of clarity around what the UNCCD’s specific role was or should have been. However, the same interviewees noted that the Drought Initiative had made a material, positive difference to the visibility, extent and quality of the UNCCD’s contributions to international forums and to drought preparedness more broadly. In turn, this had improved awareness of the UNCCD’s mandate and the potential value it could add to existing efforts. Members of the IWG were equally positive on the extent to which the Initiative had increased awareness of the UNCCD’s role:

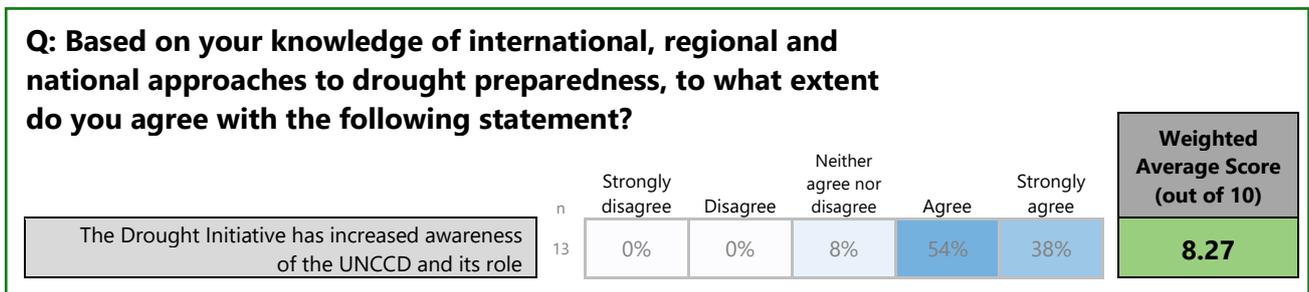


Fig. 2: IWG evaluation survey responses

Strong partnership focus helped to improve alignment between UNCCD and other institutions

The increased awareness and appreciation for UNCCD’s mandate and role was largely due to the firm emphasis that the Drought Initiative placed on partnership working. The Initiative was purposefully designed to be *reliant* on partnership working and on contributions from national governments and international institutions. Most obviously, this partnership model clearly helped to deliver the Initiative’s activities. But a secondary benefit of this model was a marked increase in exposure for the UNCCD and its drought-focused work. Having to work with so many governments and institutions automatically resulted in a broader awareness of the UNCCD’s mandate on drought.

Interviewees also felt that the partnership model improved the coherence and alignment of the UNCCD’s contributions to international work on drought preparedness. By working together on tangible tasks such as the Toolbox, the UNCCD and partner institutions were better able to understand their partners’ and their own added value in the bigger picture of support for drought mitigation and preparedness.

3.2 Efficiency

EVALUATION QUESTION 3:

How efficient was the Initiative's delivery?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

A simple, logical project plan aided the efficient delivery of the Drought Initiative. Efficiency also benefited from clear roles and divisions of responsibility within the UNCCD Secretariat and the Global Mechanism, and between the UNCCD and the Drought Initiative's partner institutions. The UNCCD's recent experience of supporting the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target setting process was also useful here, as the Drought Initiative applied a similar concept and process for supporting the development of National Drought Plans. Several of the Drought Initiative's staff were also involved in the previous LDN process, so were able to bring this relevant prior experience to bear on the Drought Initiative. While the Initiative's overall delivery was efficient, there was some scope for strengthening internal coordination: clearer budget management could have been in place, the Initiative would have benefited from formal coordination meetings involving *all* UNCCD and GM staff involved across all three components of the Initiative, and a Steering or Advisory Committee (potentially drawn from the IWG) could have been valuable for providing timely, responsive strategic advice.

Simple, logical project plan aided efficiency

The Initiative benefited from a well-defined project design, based on the three interlinked components of support for national drought planning, support for regional forums, and Toolbox development. The rationale for – and objectives of – each of these components was clear. All planned activities under each component were equally clear and logical. This level of clarity allowed for the allocation of well-defined roles and responsibilities across the UNCCD Secretariat, the Global Mechanism and other delivery partners. Consequently, the Initiative's stakeholders invariably had a strong appreciation of their position in the Initiative and their expected contribution to the work. Overall then, the clear, logical and relatively simple project design supported the efficient coordination and delivery of project activities.

Project delivery benefited from internal synergies

Project efficiency also benefitted from the UNCCD Secretariat's and Global Mechanism's recent experience of delivering the LDN Target Setting Project and the LDN TPP (transformative projects and programmes) support. In the first instance these previous initiatives closely informed the design of the Drought Initiative, particularly the national drought planning component. Compared to the previous LDN projects the Drought Initiative had less resources to apply and – as a result – could not support as extensive a set of in-country activities as with the LDN work. Nevertheless, many of the same staff that worked on the LDN projects also worked on the Drought Initiative, and were able to bring their previous experience to bear on (for example) contextual considerations within individual countries, how best to support National Consultants, and how best to build national ownership of the process. In some instances, staff familiarity with both a country's LDN plan/policy and a country's National Drought Plan/policy allowed them to identify possible linkages between the two, and potential implementation approaches (or even transformative programmes) that could bring the two national plans/processes together.

Scope for some strengthening of internal coordination

While overall project delivery was efficient, some interviewees identified some aspects of the Initiative's coordination that could have been stronger.

As above, the Initiative's clear design and allocation of responsibilities supported the efficient delivery of activities. However, responsibility for financial management did not rest with the Initiative's component leads. Consequently, for staff working on the Initiative there was considerably less transparency and certainty around the budget and day-to-day expenditure on the Initiative. The uncertainty and lack of devolved budgetary control was cited as a factor in the expenditure 'crunch' towards the close of the Initiative, when higher than anticipated resources were still available.

The Initiative's component-level coordination was efficient, and there was also strong inter-component coordination between the senior component leads. However, staff working *within* individual components (for example, staff working exclusively on supporting National Drought Plans but *not* working on the Toolbox) sometimes felt that there could have been more inter-component information sharing. There was a degree of informal communication between components by virtue of the fact that all staff were working within the same institution. However, some felt that this cross-component coordination and communication would have benefitted from a more formal foundation, for example through quarterly meetings involving all UNCCD Secretariat and GM staff working on all aspects of the Initiative.

Finally, during evaluation interviews one suggestion arose about potentially improving the efficiency (availability) of strategic guidance being provided to the Drought Initiative. While the IWG was a separate entity to the Drought Initiative, there was clearly a significant crossover between the two platforms. Moreover, there was a reasonable degree of synergy between the Drought Initiative and the IWG. Drought Initiative staff invariably felt that the work of the IWG was an important input for the Drought Initiative; equally, the evaluation survey indicates that most IWG members gained from the work of the Drought Initiative:

Q: Did the work of the Drought Initiative influence your work on the IWG?

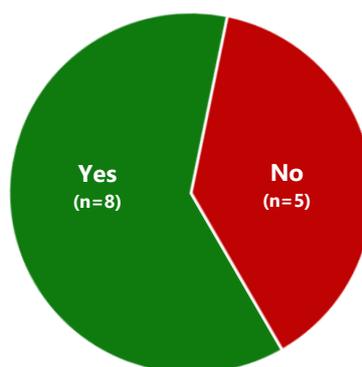


Fig. 3: IWG evaluation survey responses

However, the IWG was never tasked with providing oversight or *direct* guidance for the Drought Initiative. Moreover, the timelines and workplans of the Drought Initiative and the IWG were not always in synch: so potentially valuable inputs from one platform may not necessarily have been available at the most opportune time for the other platform. One interviewee suggested that a Drought Initiative Steering Committee (in itself potentially a sub-group of the IWG) could have

bridged this potential problem, and could have provided the Drought Initiative with timely, focused strategic guidance and support.

3.3 Effectiveness

EVALUATION QUESTION 4:
Did the Initiative deliver its planned results?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Initiative was generally effective at delivering its three main anticipated outputs: supporting countries to develop national drought plans, developing a toolbox compiling drought preparedness resources, and facilitating regional-level forums. Against all three outputs, participating countries and partner institutions routinely praised the quality and responsiveness of support provided through the UNCCD. The Initiative supported the development of 60 National Drought Plans, 34 of which have been formally approved and/or adopted at a national level. While these plans have created momentum and represent a solid foundation on which to build drought preparedness, a universal concern was the significant work and resources still required within each country to operationalise the plans. Some stakeholders also felt that the rapidity with which plans were developed has introduced risks and potential gaps that could undermine national ownership and implementation of the plans. The drought Toolbox was well received and was widely used by countries as they developed their National Drought Plans. However, as countries move to implement their plans there is rising demand for more practically-orientated material and – assuming the coronavirus pandemic is now subsiding – demand for in-person, non-virtual support to explore and apply Toolbox material. The Drought Initiative’s facilitation of regional work was also well-received. Aside from building regional impetus, individual participating countries also noted that involvement in the regional forums was valuable for their own national planning processes. But as with the national plans, there are common concerns about maintaining momentum and securing resources to deliver regional actions and strategies.

Initiative provided effective, high quality, responsive support

Across all three project components, evaluation interviewees routinely praised the quality and responsiveness of support provided by the UNCCD Secretariat and GM. Communications and coordination were consistently transparent, decisions were timely, and technical advice was appropriate and useful. All of these factors underpinned the effective delivery of milestones and outputs. Evaluation survey results provide further validation as to the value placed on some key resources provided through the Initiative, and in particular the usefulness of these resources for developing National Drought Plans:

Q: How useful was the written guidance for the development of the National Drought Plan?						Weighted Average Score (out of 10)	
	n	Not at all useful	Slightly useful	Moderately useful	Very useful		Extremely useful
Model National Drought Plan	28	0%	0%	14%	57%	29%	7.86
Drought Impact and Vulnerability Assessment: Available Approaches & Policy Recommendations	8	0%	13%	0%	38%	50%	8.13
Gender Mainstreaming in Drought Management	16	0%	25%	13%	38%	25%	6.56

Fig. 4: National Consultant evaluation survey responses

Q: How useful were the following Toolbox components for development of the National Drought Plan?

	n	Not at all useful	Slightly useful	Moderately useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Weighted Average Score (out of 10)
Monitoring and Early Warning	17	0%	0%	24%	53%	24%	7.50
Vulnerability and Risk Assessment	20	0%	0%	15%	60%	25%	7.75
Risk Mitigation Measures	16	0%	0%	13%	69%	19%	7.66

Fig. 5: National Consultant evaluation survey responses

Rapid approach to drought plan development has introduced risks and potential gaps

The Initiative’s support for National Drought Plans ultimately delivered 60 plans, 34 of which have been formally approved and/or adopted at a national level. The UNCCD’s own internal assessments acknowledge that the *quality* of these plans can be variable: some are thorough, others less so. On balance though, interviewees felt that that majority of plans were quality, actionable documents. However, the Initiative’s foremost intention was not necessarily to develop ‘deep’, comprehensive policy documents, rather a primary objective was that – by establishing a high-level plan in as many countries as possible – the Initiative would help to create some national momentum and at least build a foundation for stronger domestic collaboration and coordination on drought preparedness. For some countries, their plans represented the first substantive step ever taken towards the systematic national coordination of drought preparedness. For others, the process helped to bring together some well-developed yet previously disparate pieces of work, policies and/or institutions.

But at the same time, several interviewees and survey respondents also felt that the Initiative did not always build sufficient national momentum or ownership of the drought preparedness process. A common concern was the comparative rapidity of the National Drought Plan process and – most consequentially – the lack of resources available to facilitate national workshops or other platforms for engagement, consultation and ownership building. In some instances countries *did* undertake consultation exercises, but these were self-financed by relatively well-resourced countries and/or comparatively strong focal Ministries. More often, National Drought Plans were based on bilateral discussions between the National Consultant and relevant Ministries, with no opportunity to undertake joint consultations involving multiple governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Interviewees tended to think that even such bilateral discussions would have at least raised the profile of drought preparedness within participating countries, but in these instances interviewees were equally concerned about the relative depth of ownership of the eventual plans.

To an extent, the UNCCD’s previous LDN target setting project had established expectations within participating countries as to how the National Drought Plans would be developed. In contrast to the Drought Initiative, the LDN target setting project had sufficient resources to finance consultation exercises within each country. This helped to ensure that the process in *every* country benefited from at least some cross-institutional engagement and collaboration, which in turn helped to strengthen national ownership of the eventual LDN targets. In contrast to the LDN target setting project, the Drought Initiative’s resource and time limitations meant that the UNCCD were not in a position to support such lengthy, deep and well-funded consultation exercises: extensive consultation was only ever going to be possible where countries were able to self-finance the work. Nevertheless, for some countries the basic *experience* of the foregoing LDN exercise did add value to the Drought Initiative

process. The LDN process highlighted the importance of engagement and bringing institutions together, so even in instances when countries were not able to self-finance substantial consultation exercises, there was still a clear recognition that internal collaboration, coordination and ownership would be a central requirement if and when their National Drought Plans moved to implementation.

Another point of concern raised by some interviewees was the relative isolation in which some National Consultants operated. Sometimes, National Consultants were developing the National Drought Plan with very limited support or engagement from the relevant national authorities. In these instances the National Consultant would still ensure that a National Drought Plan was produced, but clearly the extent of national ownership of that document was questionable. Moreover, those countries that 'outsourced' the National Drought Plan in this way would likely not have gained the potential institutional and national coordination benefits that may have accrued had there been more direct engagement with the *process* of developing the Plan. While these instances were a small minority, some interviewees felt that these misunderstandings of the process could have been mitigated with a global inception workshop/webinar for the Drought Initiative, and/or systematic, formal inception meetings within every country, involving the National Consultant and all relevant Ministries.

Regardless of context, depth of planning and extent of engagement, a universal concern across all participating countries was the need to secure resources (whether domestic or external) to support implementation of the National Drought Plan. Associated with this, several interviewees expressed concern that – especially where consultation had been limited and/or ownership was less clear – countries may find it more challenging to marshal internal, domestic resources for the plan, and could struggle to maintain the early profile and momentum afforded by the Drought Initiative.

Foundations laid for ongoing regional planning and coordination

While less intensive than the country-level work, the Drought Initiative also facilitated regional planning processes in the South African Development Community (SADC) region and in Central Asia. Evaluation interviews indicate that the regional experience was very similar to the national experience. Resources and technical support provided by the UNCCD was well-received, adding clear value to the regional planning processes. And as with the country-level work, the regional work has raised the profile of – and momentum behind – drought preparedness planning. Equally though, some interviewees were concerned about the depth of ownership of the process and regional plans, and of the upcoming resource mobilisation challenge.

For SADC, UNCCD appointed the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to facilitate the process. Overall, interviewees concluded that the SADC planning went well, with Drought Initiative resources enabling a considerably more participative and consultative process than was possible for the country-level work. At the same time, there were some concerns that the process was at times overly-dependent on IUCN's support, and that SADC could have taken more ownership and leadership of the work. Nevertheless, the stakeholders closest to the work are positive about the resulting plan, about the leadership and ownership that SADC are now demonstrating, and about the plan's *potential*. Some interviewees suggested that regional plans and regional-level coordination presented a more attractive proposition for resource mobilisation: the suggestion being that multilateral donors will be more interested in supporting transboundary drought preparedness initiatives than discrete, country-level projects.

Toolbox has been well-received, but clear demand remains for additional and non-virtual technical support

All interviewees commended the concept, content and execution of the Drought Initiative's Toolbox. The platform consolidated diverse and previously disparate material from multiple sources, and developed a package of resources that were well-targeted at the Initiative's primary audience, namely countries that were at the early stages of national drought preparedness planning. While the Toolbox successfully addressed the needs of these countries, the platform was also useful to – and used by – countries that already had well-developed national drought plans or mechanisms. Web traffic data confirms that developing and/or drought-prone countries tended to be more interested in the Toolbox, but that the Toolbox nevertheless still received a relatively high level of interest from developed countries.

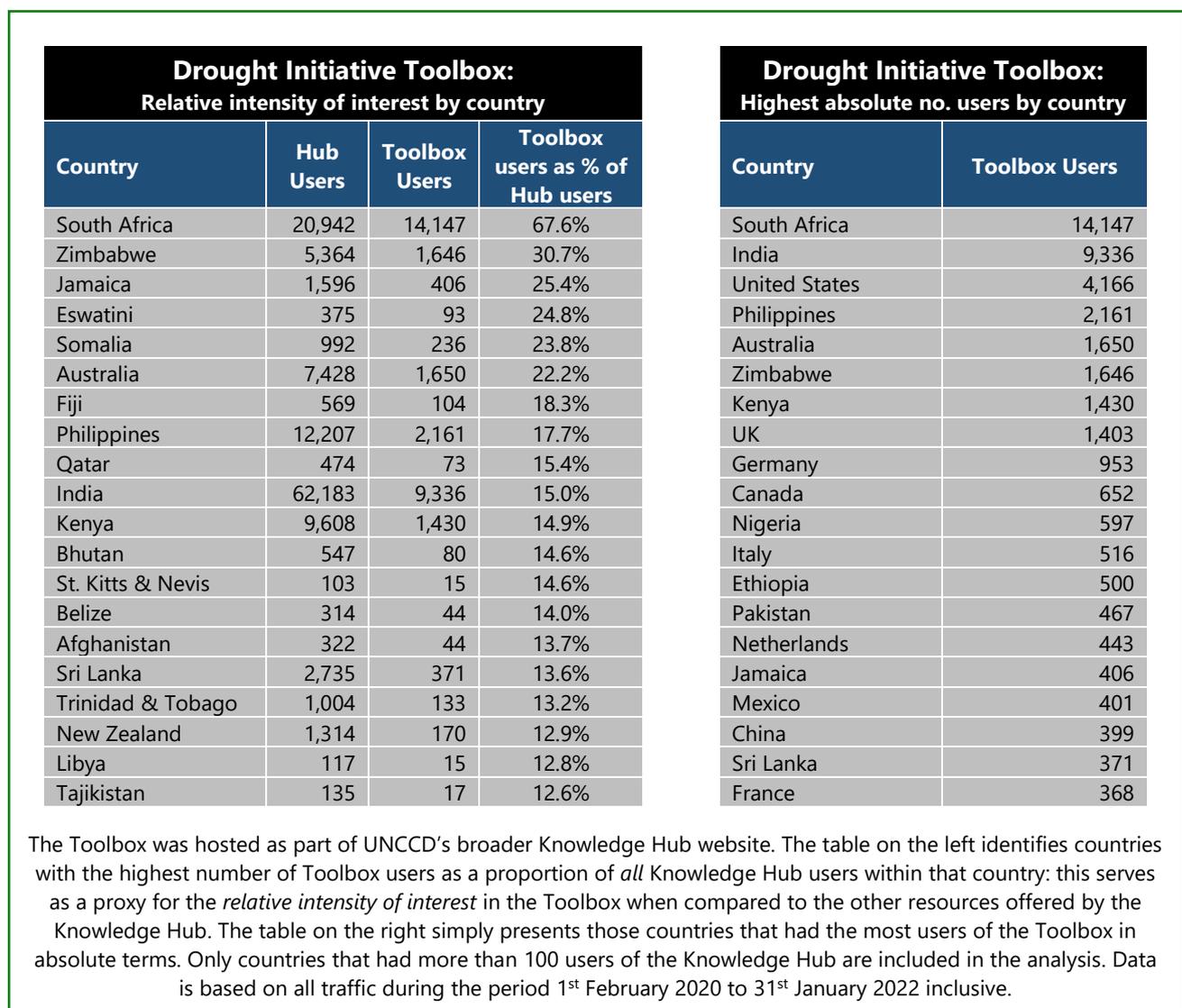


Fig. 6: Drought Initiative Toolbox web data 1st Feb 2020 – 31st Jan 2022

The Toolbox was also viewed as being highly complementary to the Initiative's other work on national and regional drought planning. Toolbox resources gave National Consultants and other country counterparts a solid starting point upon which to build their plans, and enabled them to approach

the planning process systematically. At the same time, a minority of interviewees felt that Toolbox resources focused too much on high-level concepts and generic principles, and that it would have been valuable to include more granular, action-oriented resources providing practical guidance on specific contexts and challenges.

Even though the online platform was strong and valuable in itself, many interviewees felt that the Toolbox would have been an even stronger resource had its rollout been accompanied by in-person workshops and capacity development opportunities. Clearly, any programme of face-to-face Toolbox workshops was not a possibility during the coronavirus pandemic. But for many stakeholders this *absence* of in-person interaction also served to underline the great *value* of in-person interaction. Those interviewees felt that physical workshops were a strong tool for knowledge management: they allowed for deeper learning, and really helped to bridge cultural and context gaps between different countries.

3.4 Impact and Sustainability

EVALUATION QUESTION 5:

How likely is it that the Initiative's results will contribute to long-term impact?

EVALUATION QUESTION 6:

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

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Initiative was always conceived of as a very early step on the journey towards the ultimate impacts of increased resilience and reduced vulnerability to drought. However, even at this early stage there is a fair degree of consensus as to the likely *barriers* to impact and – by extension – factors that could improve the probability and sustainability of impact. Most notably, virtually all evaluation stakeholders identified the limited implementation of (and resources allocated towards) National Drought Plans as being the clearest barrier to impact. For many (but not all) countries, another commonly identified barrier was the risk of limited internal, cross-Ministry coordination. However, the Drought Initiative was credited with improving *international* coordination and partnership working on drought preparedness, and for raising the profile of this work, all of which has in turn improved the foundations for achieving impact.

The Drought Initiative aimed to provide an early contribution towards the longer-term impacts of reduced vulnerability to drought, increased resilience to drought and – ultimately – to the mitigation and minimisation of drought. The Initiative's theory of change (fig. 1 above) describes the underlying logic of the Initiative, including how the UNCCD's support is most likely to contribute to long term impacts. Based on the evaluation's findings, fig. 7 below assesses the Initiative's progress against that theory of change. This provides some context for the subsequent findings and analysis around how the UNCCD could further assure, deepen and sustain the Drought Initiative's impact.



Fig. 7: A **DROUGHT INITIATIVE** *ry of change*

Given the foundational, early-stage nature of the Drought Initiative’s intervention, it is unsurprising that some elements are assessed as amber (limited progress) or red (not started). In any case, the elements that the Drought Initiative had *direct* control over are mostly assessed as green (achieved

or likely to be achieved). Moreover, survey results indicate that stakeholders are generally positive about the foundations for impact that the Drought Initiative has laid:

Q: Thinking about the country and National Drought Plan that you worked with, 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 Drought Initiative's support has increased understanding of drought preparedness within the country	30	3%	0%	17%	37%	43%	7.92
The Drought Initiative's support has raised the political profile of drought preparedness in the country	30	0%	7%	13%	60%	20%	7.33
The Drought Initiative's support helped to strengthen institutional coordination for drought preparedness within the country	30	0%	7%	20%	50%	23%	7.25
The Drought Initiative's support has strengthened cross-border cooperation with other countries on drought preparedness	30	17%	13%	33%	37%	0%	4.75
A National Drought Plan would not have been developed without the Drought Initiative's support	29	3%	3%	14%	17%	62%	8.28
The National Drought Plan will be implemented	30	3%	3%	47%	43%	3%	6.00
The National Drought Plan will help to mitigate the effects of drought	30	3%	0%	17%	40%	40%	7.83

Fig. 8: National Consultant evaluation survey responses

Q: Based on your knowledge of international, regional and national approaches to drought preparedness, 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 Drought Initiative's support has increased understanding of drought preparedness	13	0%	0%	0%	77%	23%	8.08
The Drought Initiative's support has raised the political profile of drought preparedness	13	0%	8%	31%	23%	38%	7.31
The Drought Initiative's support has helped to strengthen institutional coordination for drought preparedness	12	0%	0%	8%	75%	17%	7.71
The Drought Initiative's support has strengthened cross-border cooperation on drought preparedness	10	0%	10%	60%	10%	20%	6.00
UNCCD Member States are placing more weight on drought preparedness as a result of the Drought Initiative	11	0%	18%	27%	27%	27%	6.59
Overall, the Drought Initiative has strengthened the foundations for drought mitigation	12	0%	8%	0%	50%	42%	8.13

Fig. 9: IWG evaluation survey responses

But the theory of change and the qualitative detail gathered through the evaluation does suggest some areas that may require increased attention from the UNCCD and its partners in the future.

Limited implementation of national drought plans is the clearest barrier to impact

Figure 7 above indicates that the clearest challenges to impact will be ensuring timely implementation of drought plans and securing adequate resources (whether domestic or external) to deliver those plans. Indeed, there was near-universal consensus on these points across all evaluation interviews and survey responses. The National Drought Plans have only recently been developed, and delivery of these plans will be an ongoing, long-term process. However, the current status of those plans does lend weight to the concerns of evaluation stakeholders:

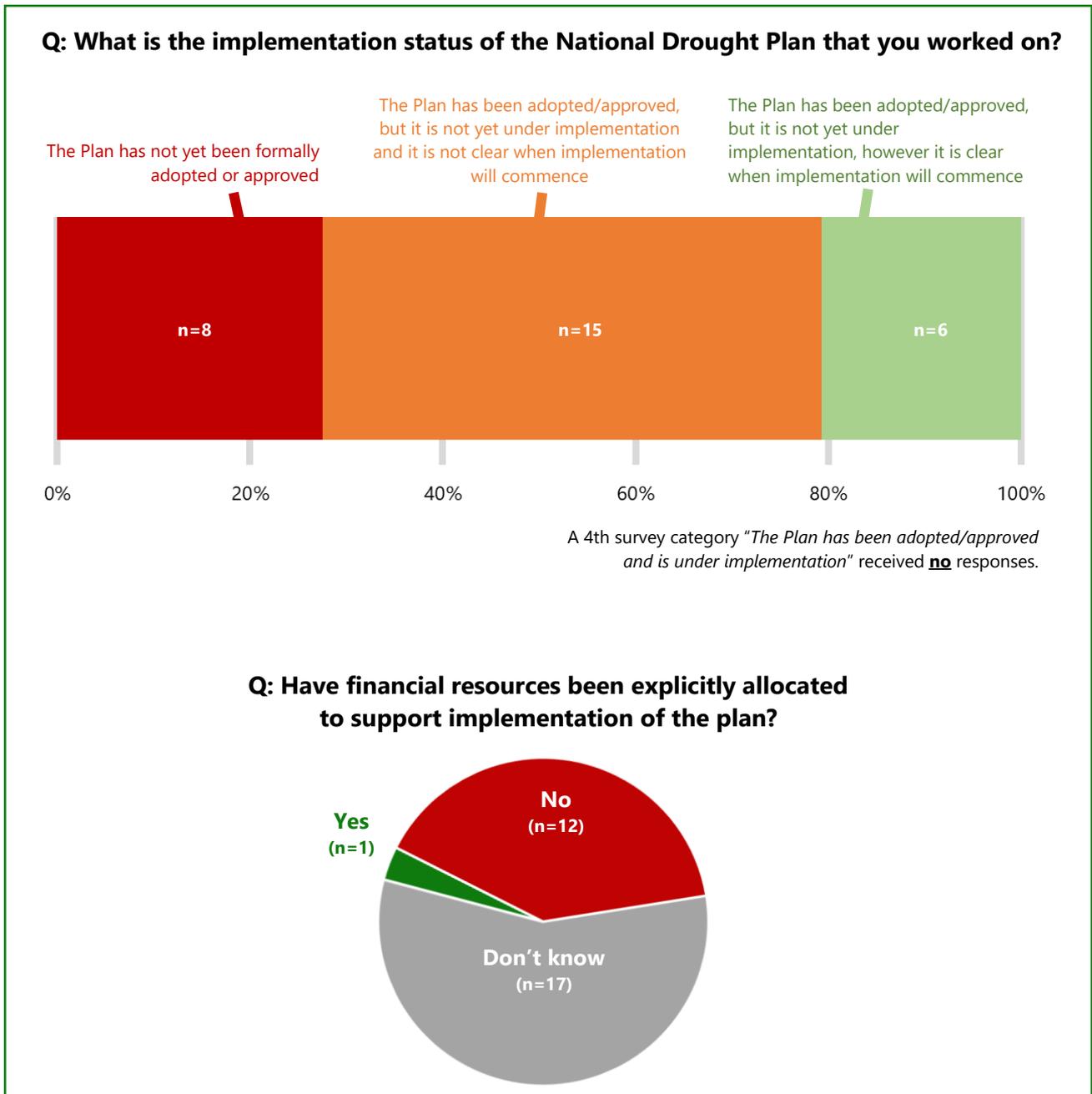


Fig. 8: National Consultant evaluation survey responses

The situation is best exemplified by a representative quote from one interviewee: "we have all these good quality documents coming out of the process, but what now?". The dominant concern was that any profile and momentum gained during the Drought Initiative process could be lost if there are not at least some examples of countries or regions starting to implement their Drought Plans. In this

context interviewees often referenced the UNCCD's previous LDN-related support, and requested more assistance from the UNCCD to help secure resources for the delivery of National Drought Plans. This was not a universal request though, with other interviewees suggesting that more emphasis and effort needed to be placed on corralling and allocating *domestic* resources for drought preparedness.

Insufficient resources were not the only possible upcoming barrier to implementation though. Most interviewees also noted the institutional and political challenges common to many countries and regions. Often, drought preparedness was the responsibility of (or influenced by) multiple different Ministries and Agencies in any given country. Generally, the more institutions involved, the greater the coordination complexity. Coupled with this, the Ministries that the UNCCD and the Drought Initiative usually engaged with (typically the Ministry of Environment or equivalent) tended to have relatively limited political 'clout' within countries. And there will always be a risk that any drought preparedness process could get derailed by shifting internal political priorities, including changes of government. While all these risks are well-recognised and certainly not exclusive to drought preparedness, some interviewees questioned whether institutional and political risk mitigation could have been stronger if the Drought Initiative had allocated more time and resources towards the planning process, particularly for national consultation and consensus building. Looking ahead, some interviewees suggested that countries and regions did not necessarily require additional technical or scientific support on drought to implement their plans, instead a more pressing need was targeted support for strengthening institutional relationships and coordination.

Improved international coordination and UNCCD's added value

While most interviewees felt that national and regional-level coordination represented a key upcoming challenge, interviewees also felt that *international* coordination had improved and was in a healthy state. Of course, multilateral initiatives and international coordination platforms for drought preparedness have been in place for years, and indeed the Drought Initiative's concept and design was grounded in much of that foregoing work. However, the UNCCD's external partners credit the Drought Initiative – and the IWG – with sharpening the focus and helping to strengthen the coordination of those international drought preparedness efforts.

But in the view of external partners, the Drought Initiative's *most* substantial contribution within the international arena has been the profile raising and political momentum building that it has supported. Partners felt that the UNCCD's status as a UN Convention – and its associated convening power – was particularly helpful here. When compared with other institutions working on drought preparedness, the UNCCD's clearest added value was its political visibility and connections within *all* countries. The UNCCD was also viewed as being in the best (and most appropriate) position to secure ongoing political support and buy-in to international drought preparedness efforts.

Some results already being sustained

While there are challenges to the long-term impact and sustainability of the Drought Initiative, it is important to note that some of the Initiative's contributions and results are *already* being continued and sustained. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) funded and FAO-implemented [Enabling Activities for Implementing UNCCD COP Drought Decisions](#) project will continue to develop and deliver some work that was introduced through the Drought Initiative. Amongst other objectives this new project (for which UNCCD is an Executing Agency) will continue to develop and upscale the Toolbox, and will support some countries to further develop and embed their National Drought Plans. Much of the planned work will help to address some of the sustainability challenges identified within this evaluation. For example there is scope within the project to provide more direct, potentially in-person Toolbox support, and the envisaged National Drought Plan support aims to

improve domestic coordination, and could include initial support for mobilising resources for drought plan implementation.

3.5 Gender mainstreaming

EVALUATION QUESTION 7:

To what extent was the Initiative gender-responsive?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Gender was well-addressed by the Initiative, with this success underpinned by a high quality, practically-orientated set of guidelines on gender mainstreaming in drought management. Crucially, these guidelines were taken up by participating countries with virtually all National Drought Plans incorporating gender mainstreaming considerations. The Initiative has therefore had a widespread, tangible influence and – once National Drought Plans are operationalised – the foundations are in place for countries to address gender in a substantive way.

High quality guidelines from UNCCD underpinned gender responsive national drought plans

The Initiative's primary means for addressing gender was through production and application of the *Gender Mainstreaming in Drought Management* guidelines. This document was shared with all the National Consultants that were facilitating the development of National Drought Plans. Consultants encouraged participating countries to apply the principles and processes within their plans, which countries invariably did. Crucially, the guidelines were not generic (i.e. they were targeted *specifically* at the drought planning process); they went well beyond merely presenting the 'high-level' logic and principles of gender-responsive design, and provided clear direction as to where (and why) gender could be discussed and addressed within national plans.

In parallel to this evaluation of the Drought Initiative, the UNCCD have also been undertaking a broader review of gender-related impacts¹, with this review including an assessment of the extent to which UNCCD-supported material takes into account gender considerations. That assessment found that National Drought Plans were strong at taking into account gender considerations (performing better than the other material reviewed), and that the plans did not merely 'copy and paste' generic text, rather plans presented context-specific analyses and responses. The review authors directly linked this positive performance to the Drought Initiative gender guidelines: the National Drought Plans successfully addressed gender considerations *as a direct result* of the good quality guidelines.

¹ *Study on the Differentiated Impacts of Land Degradation, Desertification and Drought on Women and Men*, Lorena Aguilar, 2022.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The Drought Initiative was a relevant, efficient and effective intervention that was greatly welcomed by countries, regions and international partners alike. Multiple tangible outputs have been delivered through the Initiative, most notably National Drought Plans for 60 individual countries, Regional Drought Plans for the Southern Africa Development Community and for Central Asia, and an online Toolbox that consolidates previously disparate resources on drought preparedness. These outputs – and the *process* of developing these outputs – have helped to raise awareness of both the need for drought preparedness, and of the potential mechanisms for strengthening drought preparedness.

The Drought Initiative's work has also helped to build more political momentum behind drought preparedness at the national, regional and international levels. The UNCCD's contribution has been critical here, with external partners identifying UNCCD's added value as being its political credibility and weight, and its associated convening power. External partners also credit the Drought Initiative and the related IWG with helping to strengthen the basis and coordination of international and multilateral drought preparedness efforts.

Encouragingly, work is already underway to sustain and develop some of the Drought Initiative's results, with a GEF-funded, FAO-implemented project being used to upscale the Toolbox and help some of the participating countries to strengthen and implement their National Drought Plans. However, further work could be undertaken to ensure that the potential impact of the Drought Initiative's work is maximised, and that the Initiative's outputs continue to be useful and influential. There are also opportunities for strengthening future UNCCD initiatives that – regardless of sector or focal area – might adopt a similar model and approach as applied for the Drought Initiative. Against that background, the following recommendations are presented in priority order.

Strengthening resources and support for institutional and political coordination

Drought is a multi-disciplinary problem, relevant to and influenced by many different environmental, economic and social processes and factors. Equally, within any given country a multitude of Government Ministries and Agencies will have at least some responsibility for – or involvement in – drought preparedness. Several evaluation interviewees noted the significant coordination challenges that this reality is likely to bring when it comes to securing resources and implementing the Drought Initiative-facilitated national and regional drought plans. Interviewees were sometimes concerned that – even where technically solid policies and plans are in place – the difficulties of institutional and political coordination could significantly undermine efforts to deliver national and regional drought plans. Yet these institutional and political coordination challenges are regularly faced by multi-disciplinary, policy-related interventions, whether focused on drought or otherwise. For example countries that participated in the UNCCD's foregoing LDN projects faced similar challenges. Some stakeholders suggested that – in *addition* to the scientific and technical expertise on drought – the UNCCD could support countries and regions by also developing a database or cadre of professional support that specialises in institutional and political coordination.

Recommendation 1

Looking beyond technical and scientific inputs, the UNCCD / GM should develop a strategy for supporting the institutional coordination necessary to implement national and regional plans and policies. While institutional and political coordination is clearly the responsibility of individual countries and regions, UNCCD should explore the possibility of supporting the necessary coordination. This could involve - for example - building up a database or cadre of specialists with specific expertise in institutional coordination. Most immediately, these institutional specialists

could support countries and regions to mainstream, resource and implement their drought plans. However, such specialists would almost certainly be a useful resource indefinitely, as their skill set would be relevant to other ongoing and future UNCCD initiatives.

Ensure that future projects have high-profile international and national inductions

Several stakeholders felt that the Initiative did not always build adequate national momentum or ownership of the drought preparedness process. The Drought Initiative-facilitated process was comparatively rapid and – in contrast to the earlier LDN target setting project – the Initiative simply did not have sufficient resources to support extensive consultation processes within all 66 participating countries. In some instances the National Consultants appointed by the UNCCD ended up operating in relative isolation, with limited support or engagement from the relevant national authorities. Some stakeholders suggested that awareness and ownership of the process could have benefitted from formal introductory meetings within each country that – as far as possible – involved senior politicians and/or civil servants from each relevant Ministry. While the UNCCD did formally request introductory meetings that involved all relevant Ministries, the pandemic and the Initiative's resource limitations compromised the extent to which the UNCCD could ensure that such introductory meetings were effective, participative, or even held. Ensuring systematic, formal introductory meetings or 'launches' could be beneficial for future policy-focused interventions.

Recommendation 2

For future national policy-focused projects the UNCCD / GM should consider insisting on formal introductory meetings that involve senior politicians or civil servants from all relevant, explicitly identified Government Ministries and Agencies. This could be a pre-condition of support, would raise the profile of the work (and the UNCCD) in the country, and should at least improve the chances for stronger ownership of the project and any related policy or consultation processes.

Formalise internal coordination for future UNCCD / GM projects

Drought Initiative coordination was efficient and effective, with external stakeholders routinely praising the quality and responsiveness of support provided by the staff of the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM. However, some staff provided suggestions for strengthening the *internal* coordination of any future UNCCD initiatives, particularly those that will involve working across both the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM.

While there was strong coordination and communication between the Drought Initiative's *senior* leadership, staff working *within* individual components sometimes felt disconnected from work being undertaken elsewhere across the Initiative. The Initiative's internal coordination, collaboration and knowledge management could potentially have been stronger had there been regular, formal internal meetings and/or learning sessions.

Recommendation 3

For future projects the UNCCD / GM should hold formal, periodic coordination meetings and/or knowledge management sessions involving all staff working on the project.

The Initiative's workplans and allocation of responsibilities were clear. However, responsibility for financial management did not rest with the Initiative's component leads. Consequently, for staff working on the Initiative there was considerably less transparency and certainty around the budget and day-to-day expenditure on the Initiative.

Recommendation 4

For future projects the UNCCD / GM should ensure that the Project Manager(s) either has full budgetary control, or at least has permanent access to budget and expenditure data.

There was a reasonable degree of synergy between the Drought Initiative and the IWG, with the IWG providing some important inputs for the Drought Initiative. However, the IWG was never tasked with providing *direct* oversight or guidance for the Initiative. Moreover, the timelines and workplans of the Initiative and the IWG were not always in synch: potentially valuable, strategically insightful inputs from the IWG were not necessarily available at the most opportune time for the Drought Initiative's day-to-day operations.

Recommendation 5

For future projects the UNCCD / GM should consider forming Project Steering/Advisory Committees that have responsibility for high-level monitoring and the provision of strategic direction and advice. Such Committees should be relatively small (3-5 members), potentially drawn from existing UNCCD bodies (for example, in the Drought Initiative's case a Steering/Advisory Committee would most logically have been a sub-group of the IWG).

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, foundational stage at which the Drought Initiative provided policy and technical support to countries and regions, 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 Drought Initiative'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 relevant was the Initiative to participating countries, regions and institutions?	1.1 To what extent was the project relevant to the priorities and needs of participating countries and regions?
	1.2 To what extent was the Initiative relevant to UNCCD's mandate?
COHERENCE	
2. To what extent was the Initiative aligned with – and complementary to – other work on drought preparedness?	2.1 How did the Initiative ensure alignment with participating countries' existing approaches to drought preparedness?
	2.2 How did the Initiative identify and coordinate with other institutions that were supporting drought preparedness?
EFFICIENCY	
3. How efficient was the Initiative's delivery?	3.1 Was the Initiative's plan clear, appropriate and realistic?
	3.2 How efficient and effective were the Initiative's management arrangements? Were roles, responsibilities and accountabilities sufficiently clear?
	3.3 How effective were the Initiative's monitoring processes?
EFFECTIVENESS	
4. Did the Initiative deliver its planned results?	4.1 How effective was the Initiative's support for national drought planning processes?
	4.2 How effective was the Initiative's regional-level work?
	4.3 How effective has the Toolbox been? Who has been using the Toolbox, and for what purposes?
	4.4 To what extent and how did the Initiative influence institutional collaboration and coordination on drought preparedness?
	4.5 How effective was the Initiative's support to the IWG?
POTENTIAL FOR IMPACT	
5. How likely is it that the Initiative's results will contribute to long-term impact?	5.1 Are countries implementing (or planning to implement) their national drought plans? What resources are countries allocating to support implementation of the plans?
	5.2 What plans are in place to ensure that any momentum generated by the Initiative is maintained?
	5.3 How will the Initiative's long-term contribution to impact be monitored and measured?

SUSTAINABILITY	
6. To what extent are the Initiative's results likely to be sustained?	6.1 To what extent have capacities developed through the Initiative been embedded (whether at national, institutional or individual level)?
	6.2 How will the Toolbox be managed and maintained in the long-term?
	6.3 What are they key factors that will affect (negatively or positively) the sustainability of the Initiative's contributions?
	6.4 What gaps and needs were not addressed by the Initiative?
GENDER MAINSTREAMING	
7. To what extent was the Initiative gender-responsive?	7.1 How was gender addressed across the Initiative?
	7.2 To what extent was the Initiative's guidance on gender applied within national drought plans?

Annex B: Interviewees

Name	Affiliation
Aguilar, Lorena	Consultant (Gender)
Aidar, Rockaya	UNCCD
Allotey, Jonathan	National Consultant, Ghana
Baker, Louise	UNCCD Global Mechanism
Crossman, Neville	Consultant (Toolbox, Philippines, Marshall Islands)
Khiari, Habiba	UNCCD Global Mechanism
King, Caroline	IWG Member
Lamba, Barthélemy	National Focal Point, Central African Republic
Lara Almuedo, Pedro	UNCCD Global Mechanism
Lopez, Mario	Consultant (Argentina, Cuba, Honduras, Panama, Peru)
Mavhenge, Melissa	IUCN (SADC regional work)
Nordheim-Larsen, Camilla	UNCCD Global Mechanism
Richaud, Bertrand	UNEP-DHI (Toolbox work)
Saruchera Davison, Tariro	IUCN (SADC regional work)
Salman, Maher	FAO, IWG Member
Stefanski, Robert	WMO, IWG Member
Simon Masuku, Bongani	National Focal Point, Eswatini
Touzi, Sarra	National Consultant, Tunisia
Tsegai, Daniel	UNCCD
van Dalen, Jeroen	UNCCD

Annex C: National Consultant survey results

An online survey was circulated 53 National Consultants that were contracted by the UNCCD to support the development of National Drought Policies within 69 participating countries. The survey was conducted during the period to 4th to 17th February 2022, and was made available in English, French and Spanish. 30 responses were received, representing a 57% 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 are not compiled here, in order to maintain respondent confidentiality.

Q1: Within which UNCCD region are you based?

	n	%
Africa	16	53%
Asia	4	13%
Latin America and the Caribbean	9	30%
Northern Mediterranean	0	0%
Central and Eastern Europe	1	3%
Country not belonging to a regional implementation annex	0	0%
TOTAL	30	100%

Q2: What written guidance provided by the UNCCD did you use to support development of the National Drought Plan?

	n	%
Model National Drought Plan	28	97%
Drought Impact and Vulnerability Assessment: Available Approaches and Policy Recommendations	9	31%
Gender Mainstreaming in Drought Management	16	55%
I did not use any of the above resources	0	0%
TOTAL*	29	100%

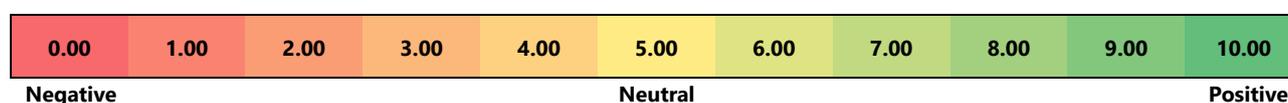
*NB: This is the total number of respondents to the question: respondents could provide more than one answer

Q3: What components of the Drought Initiative Toolbox did you use to support the development of the National Drought Plan?

	n	%
Monitoring and Early Warning	17	57%
Vulnerability and Risk Assessment	21	70%
Risk Mitigation Measures	16	53%
I did not use the toolbox	8	27%
TOTAL*	30	100%

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

NOTE: Questions 4, 5 and 9 required respondents to rate various aspects of the Drought Initiative 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:



Q4: How useful was the written guidance for the development of the National Drought Plan?

	n	Not at all useful	Slightly useful	Moderately useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Weighted Average Score (out of 10)
Model National Drought Plan	28	0%	0%	14%	57%	29%	7.86
Drought Impact and Vulnerability Assessment:	8	0%	13%	0%	38%	50%	8.13
Gender Mainstreaming in Drought Management	16	0%	25%	13%	38%	25%	6.56

Q5: How useful were the following Toolbox components for the development of the National Drought Plan?

	n	Not at all useful	Slightly useful	Moderately useful	Very useful	Extremely useful	Weighted Average Score (out of 10)
Monitoring and Early Warning	17	0%	0%	24%	53%	24%	7.50
Vulnerability and Risk Assessment	20	0%	0%	15%	60%	25%	7.75
Risk Mitigation Measures	16	0%	0%	13%	69%	19%	7.66

Q6: What was the single most valuable resource within the Drought Initiative Toolbox?

[17 open text responses received]

Q7: Apart from the resources provided through the UNCCD, did you use any other guidance or tools during the development of the National Drought Plan?

	n	%
Yes	23	77%
No	7	23%
TOTAL	30	100%

Q8: If yes, what other guidance or tools did you use?

[23 open text responses received]

Q9: Thinking about the country and National Drought Plan that you worked with, 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 Drought Initiative's support has increased understanding of drought preparedness within the country	30	3%	0%	17%	37%	43%	7.92
The Drought Initiative's support has raised the political profile of drought preparedness in the country	30	0%	7%	13%	60%	20%	7.33
The Drought Initiative's support helped to strengthen institutional coordination for drought preparedness within the country	30	0%	7%	20%	50%	23%	7.25
The Drought Initiative's support has strengthened cross-border cooperation with other countries on drought preparedness	30	17%	13%	33%	37%	0%	4.75
A National Drought Plan would not have been developed without the Drought Initiative's support	29	3%	3%	14%	17%	62%	8.28
The National Drought Plan will be implemented	30	3%	3%	47%	43%	3%	6.00
The National Drought Plan will help to mitigate the effects of drought	30	3%	0%	17%	40%	40%	7.83

Q10: What is the implementation status of the National Drought Plan that you worked on?

	n	%
The Plan has not yet been formally adopted or approved	8	28%
The Plan has been adopted/approved, but it is not yet under implementation and it is not clear when implementation will commence	15	52%
The Plan has been adopted/approved, but it is not yet under implementation, however it is clear when implementation will commence	6	21%
The Plan has been adopted/approved and is under implementation	0	0%
TOTAL	29	100%

Q11: Have financial resources been explicitly allocated to support implementation of the plan?

	n	%
Yes	1	3%
No	12	40%
Don't know	17	57%
TOTAL	30	100%

Q12: If yes, what are the source/s (e.g. government, multilateral development banks, bilateral donors) and volume of funding?

[1 open text response received]

Q13: What was the most valuable aspect of the Drought Initiative's support? What did it do well?

[26 open text responses received]

Q13: How could the Drought Initiative's support have been improved?

[27 open text responses received]

Q14: Any final comments?

[22 open text responses received]

Annex D: IWG Membership survey results

An online survey was circulated all 33 IWG Members. The survey was conducted during the period to 3rd to 17th February 2022, and was made available in English, French and Spanish. 13 responses were received, representing a 39% 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 are not compiled here, in order to maintain respondent confidentiality.

NOTE: Questions 1 and 6 required respondents to rate various aspects of the Drought Initiative 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:



Q1: Thinking of your experiences and discussions at the IWG on the variety of potential measures to address drought under the UNCCD, how important were the following features of the Drought Initiative?

	n	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important	Weighted Average Score (out of 10)
The main objectives and content of the Drought Initiative were agreed by the COP by consensus	13	0%	0%	8%	54%	38%	8.27
The UNCCD secretariat and the GM led and managed the Drought Initiative activities	13	0%	0%	8%	69%	23%	7.88
Drought Initiative activities were based on existing knowledge and expertise	13	0%	0%	23%	31%	46%	8.08
Many Drought Initiative activities involved partners outside the UNCCD	13	0%	0%	15%	38%	46%	8.27
The country- level activities allowed for adjustments according to each country’s specific situation	13	0%	8%	0%	31%	62%	8.65
Every participating country was supported with a UNCCD-contracted local consultant	13	0%	0%	8%	69%	23%	7.88
When the COP approved the Drought Initiative, it also approved funding from UNCCD’s core budget that was adequate to carry out key activities	13	0%	0%	8%	46%	46%	8.46
Financial and implementation partners were able to join the initiative and implement its content with additional funding	10	0%	0%	0%	40%	60%	9.00

Q2: Please feel free to provide additional comments to support your above assessments.

[4 open text responses received]

Q3: Apart from your membership of the IWG, were you involved in any of the following Drought Initiative activities?

	n	%
I was involved in the National Drought Planning process supported by the Drought Initiative	6	46%
I was involved in the Drought Initiative Regional work in SADC and/or Central Asia	2	15%
I contributed to the development and/or content of the Drought Initiative toolbox	2	15%
Other (please specify)	1	8%
I was not involved in any Drought Initiative activities	5	38%
TOTAL*	13	100%

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

Q4: Did the work of the Drought Initiative influence your work in the IWG?

	n	%
Yes	8	62%
No	5	38%
TOTAL	13	100%

Q5: If yes, how did the Drought Initiative influence your work on the IWG?

[7 open text responses received]

Q6: Based on your knowledge of international, regional and national approaches to drought preparedness, 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 Drought Initiative's support has increased understanding of drought preparedness	13	0%	0%	0%	77%	23%	8.08
The Drought Initiative's support has raised the political profile of drought preparedness	13	0%	8%	31%	23%	38%	7.31
The Drought Initiative's support has helped to strengthen institutional coordination for drought preparedness	12	0%	0%	8%	75%	17%	7.71
The Drought Initiative's support has strengthened cross-border cooperation on drought preparedness	10	0%	10%	60%	10%	20%	6.00
The Drought Initiative has increased awareness of the UNCCD and its role	13	0%	0%	8%	54%	38%	8.27
UNCCD Member States are placing more weight on drought preparedness as a result of the Drought Initiative	11	0%	18%	27%	27%	27%	6.59
Overall, the Drought Initiative has strengthened the foundations for drought mitigation	12	0%	8%	0%	50%	42%	8.13

Q7: What was the most valuable aspect of the Drought Initiative's support? What did it do well?

[11 open text responses received]

Q8: How could the Drought Initiative's support have been improved?

[11 open text responses received]

Q9: Now that the Drought Initiative is concluding, what should the UNCCD do to support drought preparedness?

[11 open text responses received]

Q10: Any final comments?

[5 open text responses received]

Annex E: References

- Aguilar, Lorena, *Study on the Differentiated Impacts of Land Degradation, Desertification and Drought on Women and Men*, (2022), UNCCD
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