

Evaluation of the project “Long-term institutional support for integrating gender equality into UNCCD”

Final report

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United Nations

Convention to Combat
Desertification

This independent final evaluation was undertaken to assess the performance and results of the project "Long-term institutional support for integrating gender equality into the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification". The evaluation was commissioned by the UNCCD Evaluation Office and authored by Zehra Kacapor-Dzihic in March-July 2026.

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Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CAD	Canadian Dollar
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DLDD	Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought
EQ	Evaluation Question
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GE	Gender Equality
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
IPLCs	Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JC	Judgement Criterion
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NFP	National Focal Point
PMF	Performance Measurement Framework
PPP	Partnership for Project Preparation
PRAIS	Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
ToR	Terms of Reference
TPP	Transformative Projects and Programmes
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests
VfM	Value for Money
WOCAT	World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies

Introduction

1. This report presents the key findings, conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations of the evaluation of the project "Long-term institutional support for integrating gender equality into the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification" (hereinafter: the Canada GAP Project). The project was funded by the Government of Canada and implemented by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM). The evaluation covers the implementation period from March 2020 to December 2025 and assesses the project's contribution to strengthening gender equality and women's empowerment within UNCCD policy, institutional processes, reporting, technical tools and project preparation support.¹ The evaluation examined the project's contribution to integrating gender equality and women's empowerment into UNCCD policy, institutional processes, reporting, technical tools and project preparation support.
2. The report is organized as follows: *Section 1* provides the introduction to the evaluation report; *Section 2* presents the context and background, including the global DLDD context, the gender equality and land governance context, the UNCCD Gender Action Plan, and the Canada GAP Project as the object of evaluation; *Section 3* describes the evaluation purpose, scope, intended users, methodology, data collection and analysis process, ethical considerations and limitations; *Section 4* presents the key findings of the evaluation, structured around the evaluation questions and OECD-DAC criteria; *Section 5* presents conclusions and recommendations; *Annexes* include the ToR, evaluation matrix, stakeholder map, list of documents reviewed, interview guides, survey tool, list of consulted stakeholders and selected evidence tables.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Desertification, land degradation and drought

3. Desertification, land degradation and drought were recognized at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) as among the most significant challenges to sustainable development, alongside climate change and biodiversity loss. They affect land productivity, food systems, biodiversity, water availability, climate resilience, livelihoods and social stability. DLDD also interacts with poverty, inequality, migration, conflict and humanitarian vulnerability, particularly in drylands and rural areas where households depend directly on land and natural resources for livelihoods.²
4. The UNCCD was established in 1994 and is the only legally binding international agreement that explicitly links environment and development to sustainable land management. It is one of the three Rio Conventions, alongside the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Its mandate centers on supporting countries in preventing, reducing and reversing land degradation, mitigating the effects of drought, promoting sustainable land management and supporting land degradation neutrality, with a particular focus on dryland ecosystems.³

1 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Canada Grant Final Report Draft 2026; UNCCD GAP Canada Inception Report, 2026.

2 UNCCD, Strategic Framework 2018-2030; UNCCD, Global Land Outlook; UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought on Women and Men, 2022.

3 UNCCD, Strategic Framework 2018-2030; UNCCD GAP Canada Inception Report, 2026.

5. Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) has become a central organizing framework for UNCCD implementation. LDN is understood as a state in which the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions, services and food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales. The LDN framework promotes a response hierarchy of avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation, and places land restoration within broader land-use planning, policy reform, financing and implementation systems.⁴
6. The UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework aims to strengthen implementation of the Convention and position land restoration as an instrument for improving livelihoods, food security, ecosystem resilience and sustainable development. The Strategic Framework is implemented by Parties, supported by the UNCCD secretariat, the Global Mechanism, scientific and technical bodies, partner organizations, financing institutions and civil society.⁵

Gender equality in the DLDD and land governance context

7. The impacts of DLDD are gendered because women and men often have different roles, responsibilities, rights, assets, labor burdens, decision-making authority and access to land, water, finance, information and technologies. Women in many affected areas contribute substantially to food production, land management and household resilience, yet they frequently face unequal access to land and natural resources, lower tenure security, limited access to extension services and finance, and weaker participation in formal decision-making.⁶
8. Gender inequalities can reduce women's ability to respond to land degradation and drought, while also limiting the effectiveness and sustainability of land restoration initiatives. Evidence from UNCCD and partner materials consistently points to the need for sex-disaggregated data, gender analysis, inclusive participation, attention to land tenure and access to productive resources, and gender-responsive project design. At the same time, women are not only affected by DLDD; they are also key agents of land restoration, drought resilience, sustainable agriculture, community resource management and innovation.⁷
9. Land tenure is a particularly important entry point for gender-responsive UNCCD implementation. Secure tenure can strengthen incentives for sustainable land management, improve access to finance and public support, reduce the risk of dispossession and conflict, and enable women and other land users to participate more meaningfully in restoration and LDN initiatives. However, tenure reform is also politically sensitive and shaped by legal, customary and institutional arrangements that vary substantially across countries.⁸
10. Drought management is another area where gender-responsive approaches are needed. Drought affects women and men differently through impacts on livelihoods, water collection, food security, health, migration, unpaid care work, asset loss and household decision-making. Gender-responsive drought policy and programming therefore require attention to both vulnerability and agency, including women's knowledge, coping strategies and role in risk reduction and resilience-building.⁹

4 UNCCD Science-Policy Interface, Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality, 2017; UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of DLDD on Women and Men, 2022.

5 UNCCD, Strategic Framework 2018-2030; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

6 UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought on Women and Men, 2022; WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive Sustainable Land Management Technology Group Profiles, 2022.

7 UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of DLDD on Women and Men, 2022; UNCCD, Manual for Gender Mainstreaming in LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, 2019; FAO and UNCCD, Technical Guide on the Integration of the VGGT into UNCCD Implementation and LDN, 2022.

8 FAO and UNCCD, Technical Guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure into the Implementation of the UNCCD and LDN, 2022; Landesa interview, 2026; TMG Think Tank interview, 2026.

9 UNCCD, Gender Mainstreaming in Drought Management; UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of DLDD on Women and Men, 2022.

Gender equality in the UNCCD framework

11. Gender equality has progressively become a more visible policy concern within the UNCCD. The Convention has long recognized women's role in implementation, particularly in awareness-raising, participation in programme design and implementation, decision-making in regional and national action programmes, capacity-building, education and public awareness at local level. These commitments were strengthened by the Conference of the Parties (COP) COP decisions and by the adoption of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan at COP13 in 2017.¹⁰
12. The Gender Action Plan accompanies the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework and seeks to make implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative. It provides guidance to Parties and other actors on mainstreaming gender equality and advancing the empowerment of women and girls in UNCCD-related policies and measures.
13. The Convention recognizes the critical role of women in achieving its objectives and identifies key areas for their engagement, including: (i) awareness-raising and participation in the design and implementation of programmes; (ii) participation in decision-making processes at local and national levels, including in the governance of regional and national action programmes; and (iii) capacity-building, education and public awareness, particularly through support to local organizations.
14. The GAP further specifies UNCCD's gender equality objectives through five priority areas:¹¹
 - i. enhancing women's role as agents of change by addressing gender inequalities in the context of DLDD;
 - ii. strengthening the capacities of women and girls to access resources, improve livelihoods, and build resilience to drought;
 - iii. strengthening the technical capacities of UNCCD stakeholders to design and implement gender-responsive policies, plans and programmes, including in land degradation neutrality (LDN) interventions;
 - iv. improving data, monitoring and reporting on gender-related issues in DLDD; and
 - v. mobilizing adequate financial resources to support gender equality objectives.
15. Subsequent decisions of the COP and the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) have progressively operationalized the GAP. This has included the development of a GAP Roadmap, strengthened attention to women's land rights and access to natural resources, the integration of gender-related elements into the UNCCD reporting framework, and the establishment of platforms such as the Gender Caucus, alongside communication and advocacy initiatives on women's land rights.

Object of the evaluation

16. The object of the evaluation is the Canada GAP Project, formally titled *"Long-term institutional support for integrating gender equality in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification."* (Project P005421, Arrangement 7418262). The project was established through a grant arrangement between the Government of Canada and the UNCCD in March 2020. It had a total budget of CAD 6 million and an implementation period initially reported as 2020-2024, later extended to December 2025.¹² The project is implemented jointly by the UNCCD secretariat and its Global Mechanism (GM).
17. The project was designed as institutional support rather than as a conventional country-level programme. It financed gender-related functions, expertise, workstreams, technical products and partnership-based support within the UNCCD system. The project was implemented

10 UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

11 UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

12 UNCCD, Canada Interim Report 2020; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Canada Grant Final Report Draft 2026.

through two main institutional streams: a *secretariat-led stream* focused on GAP implementation, policy processes, land tenure, reporting, awareness-raising, communications and the Gender Caucus; and a *GM-led stream* focused on gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes (TPPs), project preparation, gender assessments, feasibility studies, capacity-building and resource mobilization.¹³

18. The project's overall aim was to support gender-transformative results across the Convention through accelerated efforts to reduce the impacts of desertification and land degradation on women, girls and other marginalized groups. In practical terms, it sought to strengthen institutional capacity inside UNCCD, support Parties and partners to integrate gender considerations into UNCCD implementation and improve the design and financing of gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes.¹⁴
19. The project design is closely aligned with the GAP and the UNCCD Strategic Framework. It seeks to enhance gender equality outcomes in countries affected by DLDD while strengthening the institutional capacity of the UNCCD system to integrate gender considerations across its policies, processes and programmes. In practice, the project consolidates and advances ongoing gender-related work under the Convention, particularly in the areas of women's land rights and tenure, gender-responsive sustainable land management (SLM), and the integration of gender into large-scale LDN transformative projects and programmes.

Project logic: outcomes and outputs

20. The project was structured around two intermediate outcomes (see Table 1 below). *Intermediate Outcome 1* focused on improved implementation of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan. This outcome included support for policy frameworks and knowledge related to women's rights to land and natural resources, the generation and dissemination of gender-related knowledge products, support to GAP implementation processes, and improved understanding and capacity of LDN implementing agencies and practitioners to use gender-responsive SLM technologies in LDN projects.¹⁵
21. Under this outcome, *key areas of intervention* included the development of technical guidance on responsible land governance and tenure, support to the integration of gender into UNCCD reporting and PRAIS-related processes, work with WOCAT on gender-responsive SLM tools and profiles, Gender Caucus activities, communication and advocacy around women's land rights, and support to knowledge generation on the differentiated impacts of DLDD on women and men.¹⁶
22. *Intermediate Outcome 2* focused on improved design and implementation of large-scale and financially viable gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes. This outcome was led primarily by the Global Mechanism and implemented largely through partnership-based project preparation support. It included technical support, gender gap analyses, gender assessments, value-chain analyses, feasibility studies, stakeholder consultations, project concept notes and full proposals, as well as capacity-building for National Focal Points, ministries, implementing partners and financing partners.¹⁷
23. The GM stream evolved over time through the Partnership for Project Preparation, which aimed to improve project preparation by working through partnerships with UN agencies, development banks, regional organizations and technical partners. The project contributed to a portfolio of approved, submitted and under-development project concepts and proposals. By

13 UNCCD GAP Canada Inception Report, 2026; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Canada Grant Final Report Draft 2026.

14 UNCCD, Canada Interim Report 2020; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

15 UNCCD GAP Canada Inception Report, 2026; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2022-2025.

16 UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of DLDD on Women and Men, 2022; FAO and UNCCD, Technical Guide on the Integration of the VGGT into UNCCD Implementation and LDN, 2022; WOCAT and UNCCD, Questionnaire on Gender-Responsive SLM Technologies, 2022; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

17 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Canada Grant Final Report Draft 2026.

the end of March 2025, annual reporting indicated that 25 project proposals or expressions of interest supported through the Canada Grant had been approved for funding, six project concept notes or proposals had been submitted to targeted funding agencies, and 18 concept notes or proposals were under development.¹⁸

24. The project also supported the integration of gender into the second phase of the LDN Target Setting Programme. Support was provided to the initial 18 participating countries to ensure that revised LDN targets were not gender blind.¹⁹ These countries included Central African Republic, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Benin, Nigeria, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Jordan, Peru, Saint Lucia, Panama, Argentina, Türkiye, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The approach relied on country-selected partner agencies to support gender mainstreaming, with the intention of strengthening continuity beyond the timeline of the LDN TSP 2.0.²⁰
25. The total project budget was CAD 6 million. Prior evaluative evidence indicates that a substantial share of the Canadian contribution supported gender officer functions in the secretariat and GM, while the remaining resources supported GAP-related activities, land tenure and gender work, WOCAT/SLM tools, communications, capacity-building and GM-led project preparation support.²¹

Table 1. Project outcomes, key areas of intervention and indicators

Description	Key areas of intervention	Indicators
Outcome 1: Improved implementation of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan		
This outcome focuses on strengthening the implementation of the GAP and related gender-focused workstreams under the Convention.	- strengthening commitments and actions by Parties on gender-responsive land governance and tenure; - improving legal and policy frameworks relating to women's rights to land and natural resources; - enhancing knowledge and capacity to apply gender-responsive SLM technologies in LDN interventions; - increasing the visibility and integration of gender equality and land tenure issues in UNCCD decisions, reporting processes and institutional practices. These are supported by a set of immediate outcomes and outputs, including the development of technical guidance (such as on responsible governance of tenure and LDN), awareness-raising and capacity-building activities, improvements to gender-related reporting under PRAIS, and collaboration with WOCAT to develop and apply gender-responsive SLM tools.	- number of Parties committed to taking concrete actions on gender-responsive land governance and tenure; - number of stakeholders reporting progress in strengthening laws and policies related to women's land rights and access to resources; - number of LDN implementing agencies and partners reporting use of the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies gender tool or module; - number of references to gender equality and land tenure in official UNCCD documents and decisions.
Outcome 2: Improved design and implementation of large-scale and financially viable gender-responsive LDN transformative projects		
This outcome focuses on the role of the Global Mechanism in supporting the preparation of large-scale, financially viable, gender-responsive transformative	It aims to strengthen: - the number and quality of LDN TPPs that meet scale and financial viability criteria; - the integration of gender-responsive objectives, activities and safeguards in line with the standards of international financing institutions; - the mobilisation of additional financial resources for gender-responsive LDN investments;	- number of new or modified UNCCD TPPs that are large-scale and financially viable; - number of such TPPs that include gender-responsive objectives and activities aligned with financing standards; - total value of additional financial resources targeted or mobilised through project-supported activities; - number of TPPs incorporating private sector collaboration components.

18 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Canada Grant Final Report Draft 2026.

19 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

20 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

21 UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2022-2025.

projects and programmes.	the inclusion of private sector engagement components within TPPs. These are supported by immediate outcomes and outputs related to strengthening technical capacities of stakeholders, developing guidance materials (such as manuals on gender-responsive LDN TPPs), and supporting the preparation of gender analyses, assessments and action plans that inform specific TPPs and related investment processes.	
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Theory of Change

26. The project's Theory of Change assumes that if UNCCD has dedicated gender expertise, targeted technical resources, strengthened policy and reporting tools, and partnerships capable of supporting gender-responsive LDN project preparation, then the secretariat, GM, Parties and partners will be better able to mainstream gender into UNCCD policy processes, reporting, SLM technologies, land tenure work and transformative project portfolios. These changes are expected to contribute to more gender-responsive implementation of the Convention and, ultimately, to improved capacity of women and girls to access resources, manage land sustainably, improve livelihoods and strengthen resilience to drought and land degradation.²²

27. The causal logic rests on several assumptions. *First*, it assumes that gender expertise placed within the secretariat and GM can influence both institutional practices and external support to Parties. *Second*, it assumes that technical tools and guidance products will be used if they are relevant, accessible and promoted through suitable uptake mechanisms. *Third*, it assumes that gender-responsive project preparation can influence project design, financing and implementation where partner agencies, national stakeholders and financing institutions have sufficient capacity and incentives. *Fourth*, it assumes that Party demand, donor support and political commitment to gender equality will remain strong enough to sustain gender mainstreaming in a challenging multilateral environment.²³

28. Evaluation synthesis indicates that these assumptions were partly met. The project generated important policy, technical and portfolio-level outputs, but the sustainability of these outputs depended heavily on continued staffing, donor finance, partner uptake and country-level capacity. The evidence also points to a persistent gap between producing guidance or tools and ensuring their systematic adoption by Parties, National Focal Points, project developers and national institutions.²⁴

Scope of the evaluation

29. *Thematic and institutional scope.* The evaluation covered the full scope of the project as defined in the approved logic model and Performance Measurement Framework. This included:

- GAP-related and policy workstreams led by the UNCCD secretariat, including land tenure and women's land rights, gender-responsive reporting and guidance, awareness-raising activities, and the Gender Caucus.

22 UNCCD GAP Canada Inception Report, 2026; Gender plan logic model, 2017; UNCCD GAP objectives and Secretariat/GM activities logic models.

23 UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; stakeholder interviews conducted for this evaluation.

24 Evaluation synthesis based on document review, survey responses and interview transcripts; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

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- Project preparation and financing workstreams led by the Global Mechanism, with a focus on gender-responsive TPPs, gender assessments and related technical studies, as well as associated guidance and capacity development.
 - Cross-cutting institutional aspects, including the recruitment and functions of gender-related positions, and the integration of gender considerations into UNCCD systems and processes.
30. The evaluation assessed both intended results, as reflected in the project’s outcomes and indicators, and relevant unintended effects where these can be reasonably linked to the project.
31. *Temporal scope.* The evaluation covered the period from project inception in March 2020 to the end of implementation in December 2025. It drew on documentation covering the full implementation period and, where relevant, on stakeholder perspectives collected after project closure to capture reflections on results and sustainability.
32. *Geographic scope.* The Canada GAP Project had a global scope. It supported global and convention-wide processes such as COP and CRIC sessions, Gender Caucus activities, reporting frameworks, global guidance, technical tools, knowledge products, communication campaigns and partnerships. It also supported selected regional and country-level processes through gender assessments, land tenure consultations, WOCAT field testing, LDN Target Setting Programme support, project preparation processes and gender-responsive TPP development.²⁵
33. Country-level examples used in this evaluation include, among others, Jordan, Türkiye, Peru, Saint Lucia, Georgia, Benin, Central African Republic, Togo, the Philippines, Rwanda, the Zambezi Basin and the gender-responsive drought resilience initiative in Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. These examples are used to illustrate how global institutional support translated into technical assistance, project preparation, capacity development or policy engagement in specific contexts. The evaluation does not assess country-level outcomes exhaustively across all countries reached by the project.²⁶

Key actors and stakeholders

34. The project involved a broad range of stakeholders across the UNCCD system, UN agencies, technical partners, financing institutions, civil society and national counterparts. The main stakeholder groups are summarized below.

Table 2. Summative overview of key stakeholders

Stakeholder group	Details	Strategic category
UNCCD secretariat	Responsible for GAP implementation, policy processes, COP/CRIC gender-related work, Gender Caucus support, communications, reporting, land tenure and gender-related knowledge products.	Decision-makers / Implementers
Global Mechanism	Responsible for gender-responsive project preparation support, TPP pipeline development, gender assessments, financing partnerships, capacity-building and resource mobilisation.	Decision-makers / Implementers
Government of Canada	Donor providing institutional support through the Canada GAP Project; primary accountability stakeholder and intended user of the evaluation.	Donor / Strategic partner
Parties and National Focal Points	Direct users or potential users of UNCCD guidance, reporting tools, capacity-building, gender assessments, LDN target-setting support and project preparation assistance.	Decision-makers / Implementers
UN agencies and implementing partners	UNDP, FAO, UNEP, UN Women, UNICEF and others supported or engaged in gender assessments, project preparation, technical guidance, country-level processes or policy dialogue.	Strategic partners / Implementers

25 UNCCD GAP Canada Inception Report, 2026; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

26 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; interview transcripts with UNDP Jordan, Türkiye NFP, Peru/UNCCD, AfDB and UNCCD Global Mechanism.

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Stakeholder group	Details	Strategic category
Technical partners	WOCAT, Landesa, IUCN, TMG and other technical organisations contributed to tools, land tenure guidance, SLM technology assessment, women's land rights initiatives and policy dialogue.	Technical partners
Financing partners and development banks	GEF, GCF, AfDB, BMZ-supported mechanisms and other financing actors were relevant to project preparation, gender standards, co-financing and investment mobilisation.	Financing partners
Civil society organisations, women's organisations, IPLCs and youth actors	Engaged through Gender Caucus activities, consultations, campaigns, advocacy, knowledge exchange and selected project preparation processes.	Rights-holders / Stakeholders
Women and men affected by DLDD	Intended ultimate beneficiaries of more gender-responsive UNCCD implementation, including women land users, farmers, pastoralists, rural communities and groups facing tenure insecurity or exclusion.	Rights-holders

Source: Evaluation Team based on document review and stakeholder consultations.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

Evaluation purpose and scope

35. The evaluation had three purposes: to support accountability for results and use of resources; to identify factors that enabled or constrained performance; and to inform future decisions on institutional arrangements, resourcing, partnerships and programming for gender equality under the Convention.
36. The assessment covered the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, together with prospects for higher-level impact. It also examined the participatory and gender-responsive quality of implementation. The scope included support to the UNCCD Gender Action Plan (GAP); gender-responsive policy and reporting; women's land rights and tenure security; sustainable land management (SLM) tools; gender-responsive Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) transformative projects and programmes; gender assessments and LDN target-setting; partner engagement; and institutional capacity within the UNCCD system.
37. The evaluation covered the full implementation period and drew on global and selected country-level evidence. It assessed plausible contribution rather than direct attribution because the project operated within a multilateral system and alongside other initiatives. Direct changes in the lives of women and men affected by desertification, land degradation and drought were outside the evaluable scope because no community-level beneficiary data were collected.

Intended users

38. The primary users are the UNCCD secretariat, the Global Mechanism and the Government of Canada. Secondary users include UNCCD governing bodies and Parties, National Focal Points, United Nations agencies, financing institutions, technical and civil society partners, women's and youth organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local community representatives, and other donors. The findings are intended to inform decisions on future gender-related institutional arrangements, support to Parties, partner coordination, resource mobilization and the design of gender-responsive land and drought programming.

Evaluation approach

39. The evaluation applied a theory-based, mixed-methods and utilization-focused approach. The project logic model, Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) and evaluation matrix defined the expected contribution pathways, judgement criteria, indicators and evidence sources.

40. A limited contribution analysis examined whether project activities and outputs plausibly contributed to observed institutional and programmatic changes. Documentary evidence, monitoring data, interviews, survey responses and the 2024 GAP evaluation were triangulated. Findings were assigned greater weight when evidence converged across sources and stakeholder groups; single-source observations were treated as provisional unless independently corroborated.
41. Structured qualitative synthesis was used to identify recurring patterns, differences across stakeholder groups, enabling factors, constraints, evidence gaps and disconfirming evidence. It supported internal quality assurance and did not replace evaluator judgement.

Evaluation questions

42. The evaluation questions were agreed with the evaluation manager and operationalized through the evaluation matrix. Table 3 presents the questions used to structure data collection and analysis.

Table 3. OECD DAC and EQs

Relevance	EQ1. To what extent was the project aligned with UNCCD priorities (including GAP), Canada’s gender priorities, and stakeholder needs?
Coherence	EQ2. To what extent was the project coherent with other UNCCD work and partner/donor initiatives?
Effectiveness	EQ3. To what extent did the project contribute to (a) changes in UNCCD gender policy/institutional work and (b) development and use of gender-responsive SLM tools and TPPs?
Efficiency	EQ4. To what extent were human, financial and technical resources used efficiently and in timely manner?
Impact prospects	EQ5. What plausible higher-level changes in gender equality within UNCCD processes, policies and project portfolios can be linked to the project?
Sustainability	EQ6. To what extent are project results likely to be sustained after closure?
Cross-cutting issues	EQ7. To what extent was the project implemented in a participatory and gender-responsive manner?

Data collection process and sampling

43. Data collection combined desk review, semi-structured interviews and group consultations, and an online survey. Sampling was purposive and designed to cover the secretariat-led workstreams on GAP implementation, policy, land tenure, reporting, communications and the Gender Caucus, and the Global Mechanism-led workstreams on project preparation, transformative projects and programmes, gender assessments, LDN target-setting and related technical studies. Table 4 below presents an overview of data collection methods and Table 5 presents institutional composition of stakeholders.

Table 4. Overview of data collection methods

Method	Coverage	Principal evidence generated
Document review	71 source documents	Project design and grant documents; annual and final reports; PMF, financial and communications records; technical and guidance products; UNCCD governing-body and reporting materials; partner documents; and the 2024 GAP evaluation.
Interviews and group consultations	32 individual stakeholder participants	Institutional experience of implementation, results, uptake, constraints and sustainability. The participant composition is presented in Table 5.
Online stakeholder survey	25 responses	Perceptions of relevance, usefulness, uptake, limitations and sustainability among selected Parties and partners directly engaged in project-supported work.
No direct beneficiary-level data were collected through the evaluation.		

Table 5. Stakeholder groups

Stakeholder group	Female	Male	Total
UNCCD system personnel	6	1	7
United Nations and multilateral institutions	9	0	9
National Focal Points and government/country-level representatives	2	2	4
Bilateral, technical and knowledge partners	5	1	6
Civil society and other international partner organizations	2	1	3
Academia	1	0	1
Technical specialists with no institution recorded	1	1	2
Total	26	6	32

44. The online survey received 25 responses from stakeholders engaged in UNCCD work on gender equality and land tenure. Respondents represented all main regional groups, with the largest shares from Africa and Western Europe and other countries, followed by Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, and more limited representation from Central and Eastern Europe. Most respondents were from government institutions, while smaller groups represented UN or other intergovernmental organizations, scientific organizations, and national or regional technical agencies. The respondent group was gender-balanced enough to provide views from both women and men, although women represented the majority of respondents, with 15 female respondents and 10 male respondents. The survey was used to assess stakeholder perceptions of relevance, usefulness, uptake, constraints and sustainability. Results were analyzed descriptively and were not treated as statistically representative.

Data analysis and quality assurance

45. Qualitative evidence from interviews, open-ended survey responses and documents was analyzed thematically against the evaluation questions, judgement criteria and indicators. Quantitative evidence from the PMF, annual reports, survey and project portfolio was analyzed descriptively to assess progress against targets, reported reach, participation, pipeline status and selected indicators of efficiency and uptake.
46. The analysis applied a gender-responsive, human rights-based and intersectional lens, with attention to women’s land rights, participation, access to knowledge and finance, gender-disaggregated data, institutional capacity and interactions with rural livelihoods, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, youth, socio-economic vulnerability, climate and drought resilience.
47. Triangulation was applied throughout. Differences between official reporting, prior evaluations and stakeholder accounts were examined rather than averaged. Findings were qualified when evidence was incomplete, inconsistent or based on a narrow source base, and evaluative judgements were separated from descriptive evidence.

Ethical considerations and limitations

48. The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation. Participation was voluntary; interviewees were informed of the evaluation purpose and intended use of evidence; and responses were handled confidentially.
49. The evidence base had four principal limitations. The interview and survey samples were purposive and do not support statistical generalization. Country-level coverage was selective. The evaluation relied partly on project-reported figures that could not be independently verified in all cases. No direct consultations were held with community-level beneficiaries. These limitations reduced the strength of claims about population-level effects and causal impact, but did not prevent assessment of institutional relevance, implementation performance, contribution pathways and prospects for sustainability.

KEY FINDINGS

50. This section presents the key findings of the evaluation, derived from document review, survey data, semi-structured interviews and structured evidence synthesis. The findings reflect evaluative judgement grounded in triangulation across multiple evidence sources.
51. Findings are organised according to the evaluation criteria and analytical areas used in the evaluation matrix: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact prospects, sustainability, and participatory and gender-responsive implementation. References to evaluation questions are made throughout the report to indicate the corresponding elements of the evaluation matrix and to ensure traceability of evidence. Where targets were available, the evaluation assessed reported progress; where they were incomplete, contribution was assessed through triangulation.
52. The evaluation also distinguishes between normative and operational results. Normative results refer to changes in policy language, COP and CRIC processes, gender visibility, guidance, reporting frameworks and institutional positioning. Operational results refer to the use of gender-responsive approaches in project preparation, LDN target-setting support, country-level gender assessments, SLM technologies, land tenure tools and financing partnerships. This distinction is important because the evidence shows that the project’s contributions were generally stronger at the normative and technical-output levels than at the level of sustained country-level uptake and ground-level change.

RELEVANCE

EQ1. To what extent was the project aligned with UNCCD priorities, including the GAP, Canada’s gender priorities, and stakeholder needs?

Alignment with UNCCD and GAP priorities

Finding 1. The Canada GAP Project was highly aligned with UNCCD priorities and the Gender Action Plan. The project directly supported the main institutional priorities of the UNCCD gender agenda, including women’s land rights and access to resources, gender-responsive sustainable land management, gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes, improved gender-related reporting, and the visibility of gender equality in COP and CRIC processes. This alignment was strongest at the normative and institutional levels, while the translation of formal alignment into systematic country-level uptake was more uneven.

53. The project design was closely linked to the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018–2030 and to the Gender Action Plan²⁷ adopted by Parties at COP13 in 2017. It was explicitly framed as institutional support to operationalise this agenda, with a secretariat-led workstream on GAP implementation, land tenure, reporting, awareness-raising and capacity-building, and a Global Mechanism-led workstream on gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes.²⁸ The findings indicate that this structure corresponded directly to the GAP priorities on women’s participation, women’s economic empowerment, women’s land rights and access to resources, women’s access to knowledge and technologies, technical capacities of UNCCD stakeholders, monitoring and reporting, and resource mobilisation. (JC1.1; I-1.1.1)
54. Alignment was particularly clear in relation to women’s land rights and tenure. Findings indicate that the project built on the UNCCD’s post-COP14 land tenure agenda and supported responsible land governance work, including technical guidance on integrating the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure into UNCCD implementation and LDN.²⁹ Land tenure and women’s land rights provided a strong entry point for connecting UNCCD’s mandate with broader gender equality, climate, biodiversity and food security debates.³⁰ This made land tenure a relevant bridge between the GAP, the UNCCD mandate and stakeholder demand for practical guidance on gender-responsive land governance. (JC1.1; I-1.1.1, I-1.1.2)
55. The project was also aligned with UNCCD priorities on gender-responsive SLM technologies. The partnership with WOCAT addressed a recognised evidence and methodology gap by developing a gender-responsive SLM questionnaire and technology profiles to assess how SLM technologies and approaches affect women and men differently.³¹ This was directly relevant to the GAP priority on enhancing women’s access to improved knowledge and technologies and to the need for sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data on SLM adoption and impacts.³² (JC1.1; I-1.1.1)
56. The GM workstream was aligned with UNCCD priorities on LDN target-setting, project preparation and resource mobilisation. The project supported gender gap analyses, gender action plans, value-chain studies, socio-economic and gender analyses, feasibility studies and project preparation support in multiple countries and regions, including Togo, the Philippines, the Zambezi Basin, Rwanda, Southern Africa and the second phase of the LDN Target Setting

²⁷UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017; FAO and UNCCD, VGGT Technical Guide, 2022.

³⁰Interviews with Landesa, TMG Think Tank and GIZ, June 2026.

³¹WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive SLM Questionnaire, 2022; WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive Sustainable Land Management Technology Group Profiles, 2022.

³²UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive Sustainable Land Management Technology Group Profiles, 2022.

Programme.³³ This was directly aligned with GAP Objective 3 on building technical capacities for gender-responsive plans and programmes and GAP Objective 5 on mobilising resources for gender equality objectives.³⁴ (JC1.1; I-1.1.1)

57. The project's alignment with UNCCD priorities was further reinforced by the way its main themes reflected the evolving direction of intergovernmental discussions under the Convention. During the project period, gender equality, women's land tenure, women's participation and gender-responsive land restoration remained visible in COP and CRIC spaces through the Gender Caucus, land tenure events, GAP roadmap discussions, reporting processes and policy dialogue with Parties and partners.³⁵ The project operated within the broader context of UNCCD's work, which added value and relevance as it also served as an enabler of other workstreams that were already connected to the Convention's formal agenda and to areas where Parties had expressed demand for practical support. This reinforced the fit between the project's focus and the institutional trajectory of the UNCCD gender agenda. At the same time, the alignment at the level of mandate, priorities and policy direction, did not fully reflect in the depth of uptake by Parties and national institutions, and varied across tools, countries and workstreams. (JC1.1; I-1.1.1, I-1.1.2)

Alignment with Canada's priorities and stakeholder needs

***Finding 2.** The project was strongly aligned with Canada's feminist international assistance priorities and responded to concrete needs expressed through Parties, National Focal Points, COP/CRIC processes, country-level gender assessments and project preparation work. Its alignment with Canada's priorities was strongest in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, women's participation, women's land rights and access to resources, climate resilience, gender-responsive land restoration and support to women and girls affected by desertification, land degradation and drought.*

Practical support to countries and partners through gender assessments, land tenure guidance, WOCAT/SLM tools, gender-responsive LDN target-setting, reporting support, capacity-building and GM-led project preparation responded to stakeholder needs. However, the project interventions were more responsive to the needs of Parties, National Focal Points, country-level institutional actors, technical partners and financing partners, while there is no clear effort to engage women land users and other community-level rights-holders and ensure their voices are heard.

58. The project was closely aligned with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, which places gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls at the centre of international assistance.³⁶ The project's focus on women's land rights, women's participation, access to resources, gender-responsive SLM technologies, gender-sensitive data and gender-responsive LDN project preparation was directly consistent with the gender equality priorities stipulated in this policy and broader Canada's commitments to gender. (JC1.2; I-1.2.1)

59. The project was also aligned with Canada's concern for the differentiated impacts of land degradation and environmental stress on women and girls. Document review and stakeholder interviews describe the grant as support for gender-transformative results across the Convention, through accelerated efforts to reduce the impacts of desertification and land

³³UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Gender in the 2022–2023 National Reporting Process; UNCCD, COP15 and COP16 Gender Caucus documentation.

³⁶UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017, Foreword by Global Affairs Canada.

- degradation on women, girls and other marginalised groups.³⁷ This framing connects Canada’s gender equality priorities with the specific UNCCD mandate on desertification, land degradation, drought, land restoration and LDN. The project was therefore relevant to Canada because it supported gender equality in general, and because it applied that priority to a policy area where women and girls face specific barriers related to land rights, access to resources, agricultural livelihoods, technologies, information, finance and participation in land governance. (JC1.2; I-1.2.1)
60. The Canadian contribution also aligned with Canada’s broader interest in climate resilience and climate-smart development. The GAP document recalls Canada’s commitment to building local capacity and climate resilience and to promoting climate-smart agriculture, and links these priorities to the need for women’s equal participation in addressing land and water challenges.³⁸ The Project reflected this orientation by supporting gender-responsive land restoration, gender-responsive SLM technologies, gender-sensitive LDN target-setting and project preparation for land, drought and resilience-related programming. This made the project a good fit with Canada’s interest in linking gender equality with climate resilience, sustainable natural resource management and inclusive environmental governance. (JC1.2; I-1.2.1)
61. The project also responded to needs expressed through COP and CRIC processes. During the project period, gender equality, women’s land tenure, women’s participation and gender-responsive land restoration remained visible in UNCCD intergovernmental processes through the Gender Caucus, land tenure events, GAP roadmap discussions, reporting processes and COP/CRIC dialogue.³⁹ These processes created demand for practical tools, technical guidance and implementation support that could help Parties move from general gender commitments to more concrete action. The Project responded to this demand by supporting the GAP roadmap, gender-related reporting visibility, land tenure guidance, WOCAT gender-responsive SLM tools, Gender Caucus engagement and technical inputs for gender-responsive project preparation. (JC1.2; I-1.2.2, I-1.2.3)
62. Country-level evidence confirms that the support was relevant to Party and National Focal Point needs. In Türkiye, UNCCD support for hiring a national gender consultant presented the first structured effort to assess gender issues in relation to land degradation and LDN targets, and stakeholders noted that this would not have been undertaken in the short term without UNCCD support.⁴⁰ In Jordan, stakeholders noted gender assessment and target-setting work was useful for integrating gender into LDN targets and for shifting gender from a separate annex into the wording and design of targets.⁴¹ In Peru, stakeholders reported that global examples and methodological guidance were useful for framing gender and desertification analysis, while also noting that national adaptation was needed because many actors had limited familiarity with the relationship between gender and DLDD.⁴² These examples show that the project responded to practical country-level needs for technical assistance, contextualised analysis and support to translate gender commitments into LDN-related planning and targets. (JC1.2; I-1.2.2, I-1.2.3)
63. Canada-funded support also responded to technical needs identified by Parties, National Focal Points and implementing partners. The GAP evaluation noted that National Focal Points identified training needs related to understanding gender issues for UNCCD and other Convention reporting, developing project proposals for GEF, GCF and other funders, and, to some extent, developing national gender policies.⁴³ The Canada GAP Project addressed these

³⁷UNCCD, Canada Interim Report 2020; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2023, 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

³⁸UNCCD, Gender Action Plan, 2017, Foreword by Global Affairs Canada; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

³⁹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD COP15/COP16 Gender Caucus documentation.

⁴⁰Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁴¹Ibid

⁴²Ibid.

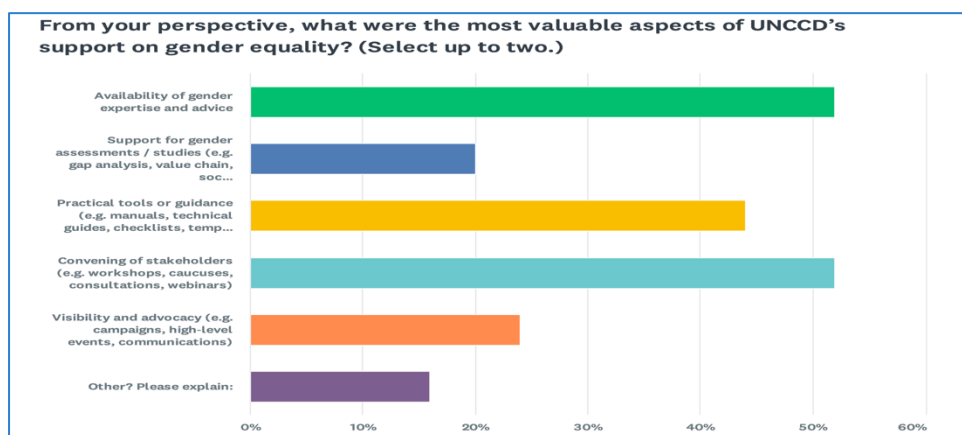
⁴³UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.; Stakeholder interviews

needs through gender assessments, technical guidance, support to project preparation, WOCAT tools, land tenure guidance and gender-responsive LDN target-setting support.⁴⁴ This support responded to practical needs expressed by countries and implementation actors trying to apply gender commitments in reporting, target-setting and resource mobilisation. (JC1.2; I-1.2.2, I-1.2.3)

64. The project also filled important needs in project preparation and gender-responsive financing. Parties and implementing partners often require specialised technical inputs to meet the requirements of financing windows such as GEF, GCF, AfDB, the Adaptation Fund and other financing mechanisms. Canada-funded support helped finance gender gap analyses, Gender Action Plans, socio-economic and gender studies, value-chain analysis, feasibility studies and consultations that informed project documents and proposals.⁴⁵ These inputs helped country and regional stakeholders translate gender commitments into analyses, design features, budgets, indicators and financing documentation required for fundable LDN proposals. The relevance of this support was particularly strong because many countries and partners had limited internal capacity to prepare technically robust gender-responsive LDN proposals without external support. (JC1.2; I-1.2.2, I-1.2.3)

65. Stakeholders also described the gender-responsive SLM tool as filling a gap in the availability of gender-disaggregated data and practical assessment methods for SLM technologies.⁴⁶ Land tenure and civil society partners viewed women’s land rights and tenure as a relevant and strategic entry point because it connected gender equality with a concrete area of land governance where Parties and partners required practical guidance.⁴⁷ Country and project-preparation stakeholders valued support that helped them integrate gender into LDN targets, project documents and financing processes.⁴⁸ Survey data reinforced these findings. The most valued aspects of UNCCD’s gender-related support, as reported by survey respondents, were the availability of gender expertise and advice, the convening of stakeholders through workshops, caucuses and consultations, and the provision of practical tools and guidance. These responses point to a demand pattern that the project was well positioned to address and broadly did address across its workstreams. (JC1.2; I-1.2.3)

Figure 1. Most valuable aspects of UNCCD support on gender equality (n=25)



Source: Evaluation Survey, 2026

66. However, evaluation findings indicate that stakeholder relevance was more strongly evidenced for Parties, National Focal Points, country-level institutional actors, technical partners, financing partners and other institutional users than for women land users, pastoralists, farmers,

⁴⁴UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

⁴⁵UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026; Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁴⁶Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

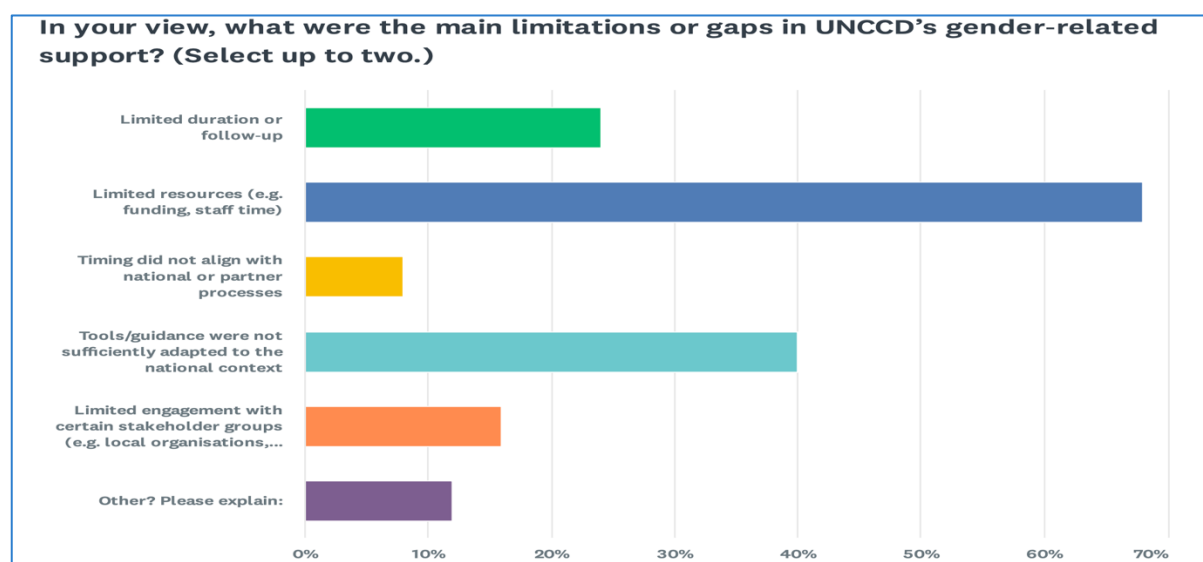
⁴⁷Ibid

⁴⁸Ibid

Indigenous Peoples and other community-level rights-holders.⁴⁹ The project operated mainly through global policy processes, COP/CRIC spaces, technical partnerships, reporting, tools and project preparation systems. As a result, the evaluation findings point to strong alignment with Canada’s priorities and with the needs of countries, Parties and institutional stakeholders, but cannot verify with the same level of confidence whether the project fully reflected the lived priorities of women and communities most affected by DLDD (See also EQ 7). (JC1.2; I-1.2.2, I-1.2.3)

67. Survey data on limitations is consistent with this finding. Approximately 70 per cent of respondents identified limited resources, including funding and staff time as a main gap in UNCCD’s gender-related support, and approximately 40 per cent identified tools and guidance as insufficiently adapted to the national context. Limited engagement with certain stakeholder groups, including local organisations, was also cited (Figure 2). These responses indicate that while the project’s institutional reach was broad, its depth of engagement at national and community level was constrained by the same resource and adaptation gaps that shaped the project’s overall implementation model. (JC1.2; I-1.2.2, I-1.2.3)

Figure 2. Main limitations or gaps in UNCCD’s gender-related support (n=25)



Source: Evaluation survey, 2026

COHERENCE

EQ2. To what extent was the project coherent with other UNCCD work and partner/donor initiatives?

Internal coherence

Finding 3. The Canada GAP Project was internally coherent in design because it deliberately combined a secretariat-led policy and institutional workstream with a Global Mechanism-led project preparation workstream. This dual structure was appropriate to the nature of the UNCCD gender agenda because gender mainstreaming requires both normative work, including COP/CRIC decisions, GAP implementation, reporting, knowledge products and the Gender Caucus, and operational work, including gender-responsive LDN target-setting, project preparation, feasibility studies and financing partnerships. Available evidence indicates that this coherence was stronger at the level of design than at the level of day-to-day implementation. The secretariat and GM

⁴⁹ Document review, survey data and interviews

workstreams were mutually relevant, but they were not always sufficiently integrated through joint planning, shared results management, routine exchange of lessons or common strategic positioning.

68. The project design shows a clear internal logic linking the secretariat and GM workstreams. The secretariat component focused on GAP implementation, land tenure, reporting, awareness-raising and capacity-building, while the GM component focused on preparing and financing gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes.⁵⁰ This division of labour reflected the institutional mandates of the two UNCCD entities and allowed the project to address both policy and operational dimensions of gender mainstreaming.⁵¹ The annual reports similarly describe the Canadian contribution as enabling the secretariat and GM to strengthen their capacities and leverage the GAP to support Parties, including through land tenure, technologies and LDN transformative projects and programmes.⁵² The opportunity for the secretariat to maintain gender visibility in UNCCD normative processes, and for GM to support practical integration of gender into project design and financing was seen as conceptually conducive for promoting gender mainstreaming from these two aspects. (JC2.1; I-2.1.1)
69. The evaluation also found evidence of internal complementarity through the recruitment of dedicated gender expertise.⁵³ The Canada grant supported gender capacity in both the secretariat and the GM, envisaging two gender officers to enable each institutional stream to move gender work forward. However, the changes in the project structure and substantial turnover of dedicated gender officers did not operationally contribute to maintaining this momentum. (JC2.1; I-2.1.1, I-2.1.2)
70. Internal coherence at the level of frameworks and tools was well established. The project generated shared internal outputs and cross-institutional entry points.⁵⁴ The gender parity analysis covered subsidiary bodies and institutions across the Convention, including CST, SPI, CRIC Bureau, COP Bureau, UNCCD secretariat staff, GM staff and national delegations.⁵⁵ The GAP roadmap identified actions for Parties, the secretariat, the GM and other relevant institutions, which created a common reference point for gender-related work across the Convention.⁵⁶ The Canada-supported work on gender-responsive project preparation also drew on earlier UNCCD guidance, including the Manual for Gender-Responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, which had been developed with UN Women and IUCN and remained relevant to GM project preparation support.⁵⁷ These examples show that the two workstreams were not conceptually disconnected; they drew on a common UNCCD gender architecture and shared normative reference points.. (JC2.1; I-2.1.1)
71. The evaluation found that this design-level coherence was not matched by sufficiently systematic operational integration between the secretariat and GM.⁵⁸ Several interviews described the two entities as working in parallel, with limited cross-fertilisation between the policy-oriented GAP work and the GM's project preparation work.⁵⁹ Several stakeholders observed that the intentions of both entities were aligned but that there was “*a bit of siloing*” and limited borrowing of language or operational linkage between gender decisions and GM work.⁶⁰ Other stakeholders similarly described limited coordination at management level and

⁵⁰UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

⁵¹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

⁵²UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

⁵³UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

⁵⁴UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

⁵⁵UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Gender Parity Analysis, 2024.

⁵⁶UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

⁵⁷UNCCD, UN Women and IUCN, Manual for Gender-Responsive Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes, 2019.

⁵⁸Document review, survey data and stakeholder interviews.

⁵⁹Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁶⁰Stakeholder interviews June 2026.

noted that information shared through the Gender Caucus focused mainly on secretariat work, with little visibility of GM gender-related project preparation.⁶¹ This indicates that the project had a coherent institutional design, but lacked a sufficiently routine coordination mechanism to connect policy commitments, technical guidance, Gender Caucus discussions and project preparation experience into one shared learning cycle. This reduced the extent to which normative results and project-preparation results could reinforce each other. (JC2.1; I-2.1.2)

72. This limited integration also affected how tools, guidance and learning were used across the two workstreams. The WOCAT gender-responsive SLM tool was relevant to both policy and project preparation work, yet interview evidence suggests that it was not systematically taken up by the GM or converted into a common project design checklist for gender-responsive LDN programming.⁶² The land tenure toolbox, developed through GM-related work with a gender equality and social inclusion lens, also had strong potential to link policy commitments on land tenure with project preparation, but it remained in draft or consultation form for much of the project period and had not yet been fully institutionalised at the time of the evaluation.⁶³ These examples suggest that the project produced relevant bridging instruments, but that internal arrangements for cross-use, management follow-up and institutional uptake were not yet strong enough to ensure that tools moved consistently across policy, technical and financing workstreams. (JC2.1; I-2.1.1, I-2.1.2)

73. Despite these constraints, the GM used the Partnership for Project Preparation as an operational mechanism for delivering gender-responsive project preparation support. This was a pragmatic and useful adaptation, but it also confirms that internal coherence relied partly on workaround arrangements rather than on a fully institutionalised joint secretariat–GM gender system. The project functioned coherently enough to deliver outputs, but not coherently enough to ensure systematic feedback between policy development, technical tools, financing practice and country-level learning. (JC2.1; I-2.1.1, I-2.1.2)

External coherence and complementarity

Finding 4. The project was externally coherent with a broad range of partner and donor initiatives, particularly in relation to WOCAT, FAO, UN Women, UNDP, IUCN, Landesa, TMG, AfDB, GEF/GCF-linked project preparation and the Women's Land Rights Initiative. The project's strongest external coherence was visible where partnerships produced concrete outputs, such as gender-responsive SLM tools, land tenure guidance, Gender Caucus sessions, LDN project preparation support, gender assessments and gender-responsive drought resilience initiatives. However, external coherence was uneven across partners and financing arrangements. Some partnerships were strategic and catalytic, while others were affected by delays, limited institutional capacity, fragmented communication, differing partner mandates and heavy dependence on individual relationships.

74. The project established or built on several relevant external partnerships. The WOCAT partnership was a clear example of technical complementarity because it connected UNCCD's gender and SLM priorities with WOCAT's role as the main UNCCD-associated repository of SLM technologies and practices.⁶⁴ The joint work developed a methodology and questionnaire to assess the gender-responsiveness of SLM technologies and approaches, tested the tool through WOCAT network partners, and generated SLM gender profiles and recommendations.⁶⁵ This partnership addressed a gap in the availability of sex-disaggregated

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²WOCAT interview, June 2026; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

⁶³UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁶⁴Stakeholder interviews, June 2026; Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

⁶⁵UNCCD, Canada Interim Report 2020; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

- evidence and practical methods for assessing how SLM technologies affect women and men differently. It was coherent with the GAP priority on women's access to knowledge and technologies and with the wider UNCCD knowledge infrastructure. The evaluation judges this strand as strongly coherent at the level of technical design and thematic fit. (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)
75. The project was also coherent with FAO and land tenure work. The technical guide on integrating the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure into UNCCD implementation and LDN was developed in collaboration with FAO and aligned UNCCD's land tenure agenda with internationally recognised tenure guidance.⁶⁶ At COP15, UNCCD, FAO and Landesa organised a workshop on gender and land tenure involving 70 participants, 52 per cent of whom were women, to increase the capacity of UNCCD National Focal Points and other stakeholders to address gender and tenure in Convention implementation and LDN.⁶⁷ This partnership was coherent because it combined FAO's tenure expertise, Landesa's women's land rights experience and UNCCD's specific mandate on land degradation, land restoration and LDN. The evidence indicates substantial external coherence in this area. (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)
76. The project's external coherence was also visible through the Gender Caucus, which connected Parties, civil society, UN agencies, youth actors and technical partners around gender equality in UNCCD processes. Its added value for coherence was its convening function: it helped link intergovernmental deliberation with civil society and partner perspectives. At the same time, evaluation evidence suggests that follow-up from Caucus discussions into implementation systems was not always systematic. (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)
77. Collaboration with UN Women was coherent at the normative level and provided an important link to wider UN gender expertise. An MoU with the UNCCD secretariat supported engagement across different workstreams, including intergovernmental work and selected programmatic and operational activities.⁶⁸ UNCCD also organised two side events with UN Women at the UNFCCC COP28 Land and Drought Pavilion, which helped connect gender inequalities related to DLDD with wider climate policy discussions.⁶⁹ The evaluation findings indicate that operational collaboration with the GM, including on LDN-related work, did not fully materialise because of capacity challenges and the difficulty of aligning workplans and operational requirements.⁷⁰ This shows that formal complementarity existed, but operational coherence depended on capacity, timing and feasible partnership modalities. On this basis, coherence with UN Women is assessed as strong at normative level and moderate at operational level. (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)
78. The GM's collaboration with UNDP demonstrates a strong example of external coherence in project preparation. The Canada grant supported a partnership agreement with UNDP to strengthen gender and land mainstreaming for selected GEF-funded projects, including the Blue and Green Integrated Programme and selected child projects.⁷¹ UNDP stakeholders described the arrangement as useful because resources channelled through the UNDP global team allowed stronger quality assurance, technical oversight and aggregation of results than direct small-scale agreements with individual country offices.⁷² This partnership was particularly relevant because it allowed UNCCD priorities on LDN and gender to be inserted into projects that might otherwise have remained focused primarily on biodiversity or climate objectives. It provided a practical mechanism for Rio Convention synergies and for connecting UNCCD priorities with GEF project design. (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)

⁶⁶FAO and UNCCD, Technical Guide on the Integration of the VGGT into the Implementation of the UNCCD and LDN, 2022.

⁶⁷UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

⁶⁸Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁶⁹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; Stakeholder interviews

⁷⁰Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁷¹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁷²Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

79. The project was also coherent with financing partner initiatives, particularly through AfDB and regional programmes. Annual reports show that the Canada grant helped leverage the AfDB-funded “Gender Transformative Resilience to Drought in Transition States in Southern Africa” project, covering Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.⁷³ The project aimed to improve the enabling environment for drought resilience of women and girls, with objectives related to gender mainstreaming in drought resilience, vulnerability mitigation and investment catalysis.⁷⁴ This made the partnership strategically coherent because it connected gender-responsive drought programming, project financing and UNCCD technical capacity. However, this partnership was affected by operational complexity of the project, as implementation was affected by delays in implementation, disbursement timelines, competing priorities and stretched staffing. (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)
80. The project further contributed to coherence across the Rio Conventions through women’s land rights and land tenure engagement. Stakeholders described how work on women’s land rights was used as an entry point to connect the UNCCD land tenure agenda with climate and biodiversity processes and to support the Women’s Land Rights Initiative, co-hosted by TMG, the Robert Bosch Stiftung, the Huairou Commission and the three Rio Conventions.⁷⁵ Stakeholders also emphasised the need for further strengthening of the Rio Convention cooperation on gender matters, including harmonising targets, indicators and goals, sharing best practices and promoting joint efforts across UNCCD, UNFCCC and CBD.⁷⁶ The Project contributed to this agenda through events, technical products and partnership engagement, but the evidence suggests that Rio Convention coherence remains an area of potential rather than a fully institutionalised mechanism.⁷⁷ (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)
81. Despite the breadth of partnerships, external coherence was affected by fragmented communication and uneven follow-through. WOCAT stakeholders noted that the gender-responsive SLM tool was technically relevant and used beyond the project, but that its dissemination to Parties was limited because it was not officially communicated to all UNCCD focal points through secretariat channels.⁷⁸ n. Land tenure stakeholders noted that the toolbox had innovative elements, particularly the business case and stakeholder and financing mapping, but that its continued relevance would depend on finalisation, release and active promotion.⁷⁹ These examples do not indicate a general weakness across all partnerships, but they suggest that some products and collaborations required stronger institutional handover, communication to intended users and follow-up after development. This constrained the extent to which external coherence translated into sustained use. (JC2.2; I-2.2.1, I-2.2.2)

EFFECTIVENESS

EQ3. To what extent did the project contribute to (a) changes in UNCCD gender policy/institutional work and (b) development and use of gender-responsive SLM tools and TPPs?

UNCCD gender policy and institutional change

Finding 5. The Canada GAP Project made a substantive contribution to strengthening UNCCD gender policy and institutional work, particularly by financing dedicated gender expertise, supporting implementation of the GAP, strengthening the Gender Caucus, advancing gender-

⁷³UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁷⁶Stakeholder interviews, June 2026; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

⁷⁷Document review and stakeholder interviews.

⁷⁸Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

⁷⁹Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

related policy and reporting work, and increasing the visibility of gender equality and women's land rights in UNCCD processes. The project helped move gender equality from a broad normative commitment toward a more visible and operational workstream within the Convention. However, these institutional gains remained fragile because they depended heavily on voluntary funding, time-bound posts, individual champions and external partners, rather than on fully institutionalized core capacity and regular budget support.

82. The evaluation findings indicate that the most direct institutional contribution of the project was the financing of dedicated gender expertise in the UNCCD system. Having gender officer on board at UNCCD helped to accelerate implementation of the Gender Action Plan and the first UNCCD Gender Policy, which had previously been attempted through consultants but not finalised. An internal work session held in January 2023 engaged all secretariat units and resulted in a final draft of the Gender Policy to be tabled for management approval.⁸⁰ This represented a significant institutional result because it moved gender mainstreaming from external advocacy and GAP implementation toward internal organisational policy, clarifying how gender equality should be addressed within UNCCD's own systems, procedures and responsibilities. It also enabled stronger analytical work within the secretariat.⁸¹ The project supported the first analytical report on gender parity within the UNCCD, undertaken in response to a COP15 decision and established a baseline for monitoring gender parity across the Convention, including the CST, SPI, CRIC Bureau, COP Bureau, UNCCD secretariat staff, Global Mechanism staff and national delegations to CRIC and COP.⁸² This strengthened the evidence base for institutional accountability and created a basis for future monitoring of women's participation and representation across UNCCD bodies and processes. These interventions show that such dedicated capacity was important because gender mainstreaming had previously depended more heavily on staff with multiple portfolios, consultants or ad hoc partner support, which constrained the depth and continuity of gender work within the institution. This dedicated focus also helped bridge UNCCD's work streams both internally and externally at the policy and project level.⁸³ (JC3.1; I-3.1.3, I-3.1.5)

83. The project contributed to strengthening GAP implementation mechanisms. In response to Decision 12/COP14, the UNCCD developed a roadmap to accelerate implementation of the GAP, and the Canada-funded work supported continued attention to that roadmap through communications, policy dialogue and Gender Caucus processes.⁸⁴ An infographic triptych of the roadmap was designed and rolled out in 2023 to facilitate stakeholder familiarity with the roadmap and with respective roles and commitments.⁸⁵ The roadmap contributed to effectiveness by making the GAP more usable for Parties and partners, even though evidence on the depth of subsequent uptake remains uneven.⁸⁶ (JC3.1; I-3.1.2, I-3.1.4)

84. The Gender Caucus represents one of the clearest institutional workstreams strengthened through the project. At COP15, Gender Caucus events involved more than 690 participants and generated recommendations and the Abidjan Declaration, both of which were included in the official COP15 documentation.⁸⁷ After the Gender Policy Officer was recruited in July 2023, the Gender Caucus was revitalised with 29 standing members and online planning meetings involving CSOs, Parties and UN agencies. Two in-person Gender Caucus sessions organised at CRIC21 brought together 123 participants and focused on land tenure, sustainable finance and

⁸⁰UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

⁸¹Ibid

⁸²UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

⁸³ Document review, stakeholder interviews and evaluation debrief session, June 2026.

⁸⁴UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

⁸⁵UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

- recommendations to the plenary.⁸⁸ The turnover of staff and eventual loss of the position affected the continuity somewhat, but more recent data shows that monthly online Gender Caucus meetings have continued beyond the project period, indicating that this institutional space has become an ongoing engagement mechanism, even in the absence of new dedicated funding.⁸⁹ These results indicate that the project strengthened an institutional space through which gender equality could be discussed, made visible and linked to Convention processes, rather than being confined to isolated side activities. (JC3.1; I-3.1.1, I-3.1.4)
85. The project also strengthened gender visibility in UNCCD reporting. For instance, over the 2022–2023 reporting cycle, 85 of 117 national reports included information on approaches or experiences related to women or gender.⁹⁰ This represented a higher level of reporting than the 2018 cycle and indicates that gender equality became more visible in national implementation reporting.⁹¹ This cannot be attributed only to the Canada GAP Project, but the project's support to GAP implementation, reporting-related work and institutional gender capacity plausibly contributed to this stronger reporting profile. (JC3.1; I-3.1.2, I-3.1.5)
86. The project's institutional effectiveness was also expressed through advocacy and visibility work that extended beyond the direct outputs of the grant. The "Her Land Her Rights" campaign, led by the UNCCD secretariat, generated engagement with high-profile UN partners and women leaders, including through an event at the United Nations General Assembly in 2023 when desertification and drought were the thematic focus of international attention. While this campaign was not exclusively financed through the Canada grant, it drew on the institutional capacity and partnerships that the grant had helped build.⁹² Besides, the co-establishment of the Bonn International Gender Champions Hub by the UNCCD Executive Secretary, brings together actors within the UN system, the diplomatic community and other international organisations to continue the gender advocacy agenda.⁹³ These activities represent a catalytic dimension of institutional effectiveness: their impact is not captured in output counts or PMF indicators, but they leveraged human and institutional resources from partners and contributed to the sustainability of UNCCD's gender engagement. (JC3.1; I-3.1.1, I-3.1.4)
87. Evidence further confirms that the project strengthened the UNCCD gender mandate but also shows that the depth of institutionalisation remained weak.⁹⁴ Stakeholders generally confirmed that Canada's support strengthened the UNCCD gender mandate by creating a clearer institutional focal point, improving continuity in COP and CRIC preparations, and supporting gender-related engagement in politically sensitive spaces. At the same time, they stressed that institutionalisation remained incomplete because gender work still depended heavily on designated individuals rather than being fully embedded as a shared responsibility across units and workstreams.⁹⁵ UNCCD stakeholders though noted that parallel functioning of the secretariat and the GM was partly a reflection of distinct COP decision mandates, each entity reporting back to Parties within the scope of its own institutional mandate, rather than solely an organisational coordination failure.⁹⁶ (JC3.1; I-3.1.3, I-3.1.5)
88. At the same time, the project's institutional contribution was weakened by turnover and dependence on voluntary funding. Gender officer posts were time-bound, and gaps in

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹ UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

⁹⁰ UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Gender in the 2022–2023 National Reporting Process.

⁹¹ UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

⁹² UNCCD Communications, External Relations and Partnerships team, evaluation debrief session, June 2026; UNCCD, Her Land Her Rights campaign documentation.

⁹³ UNCCD Communications, External Relations and Partnerships team, evaluation debrief session, June 2026.

⁹⁴ Stakeholder interviews and document review; Evaluation synthesis based on stakeholder interviews and document review.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Interviews with UN Women, WOCAT, GIZ and UNCCD/GM stakeholders, June 2026.

dedicated gender capacity affected continuity, institutional memory and follow-up.⁹⁷ This does not diminish the project's effectiveness during implementation, but it qualifies the depth of institutional change achieved, since evidence shows that the project strengthened gender work while funded expertise was in place, without fully converting that capacity into a permanent institutional function, mainly due to lack of sustained focus on gender.⁹⁸ Evaluation also found that the geopolitical environment has made sustained gender work increasingly difficult, with growing resistance to gender-related terminology among some Parties and a reduction in US funding for gender-related initiatives in international development. In this context, the UNCCD has continued gender-related work by blending the Canada grant with other voluntary contributions, demonstrating that the grant generated institutional confidence and leverage that extended beyond its own financing period.⁹⁹ (JC3.1; I-3.1.3, I-3.1.5)

Gender-responsive SLM tools

Finding 6. The project made a strong contribution to the development of gender-responsive SLM tools, especially through the WOCAT partnership, the gender-responsive SLM questionnaire, SLM technology group profiles, outreach materials and work toward scaling up the tool through additional organizations and countries. The WOCAT tool filled a clear methodological gap by helping practitioners assess whether SLM technologies and approaches are gender-responsive. However, the evidence on actual use, institutionalization and effects on practice is more limited than the evidence on tool development. The main constraint was not technical quality, but dissemination, uptake and systematic integration into UNCCD and partner workflows.

89.The project supported development of a WOCAT gender-responsive SLM questionnaire to assess the gender-responsiveness of SLM technologies and approaches.¹⁰⁰ This tool responded to a recognised gap in the UNCCD system, where evidence on gender-differentiated use, benefits and impacts of SLM technologies had been limited.¹⁰¹ The questionnaire was developed collaboratively by WOCAT, UNCCD and specialists, and it was intended to strengthen the capacity of LDN implementing agencies and practitioners to use gender-responsive SLM technologies in LDN projects.¹⁰² (JC3.2; I-3.2.1, I-3.2.3)

90.The project also supported the development and publication of gender-responsive SLM technology group profiles. These profiles were designed to show how selected SLM technology groups can have different implications for women and men, including in relation to labour, access to resources, decision-making, benefits and constraints.¹⁰³ The profiles provided practical examples that could support project designers, national practitioners and technical experts to understand gender entry points in SLM more concretely.¹⁰⁴ This contribution moved gender mainstreaming beyond general principles and into technology-specific questions that practitioners can apply during project design and implementation. (JC3.2; I-3.2.1, I-3.2.3)

91.The uptake of the WOCAT gender-responsive SLM tool exceeded the original target. Available documentary records show that 36 countries had applied the WOCAT gender and SLM tool, compared with an original target of five.¹⁰⁵ Annual reporting noted that the second phase of the WOCAT project was intended to upscale the initiative to at least 10 additional countries,

⁹⁷UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

⁹⁸Evaluation synthesis based on stakeholder interviews and document review.

¹⁰⁰WOCAT and UNCCD, Questionnaire on Gender-Responsive Sustainable Land Management Technologies, 2022.

¹⁰¹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive SLM Questionnaire, 2022.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive Sustainable Land Management Technology Group Profiles, 2022.

¹⁰⁴WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive Sustainable Land Management Technology Group Profiles, 2022; evaluation synthesis based on document review and interviews.

¹⁰⁵UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; evaluation synthesis based on document review.

adjust the questionnaire based on feedback and install a gender module in WOCAT's central database.¹⁰⁶ In 2024, materials were developed to scale up the tool to at least 30 additional organisations.¹⁰⁷ These figures indicate strong progress in tool testing and planned expansion, while also pointing to the need to distinguish between initial application, wider dissemination and sustained use. (JC3.2; I-3.2.1, I-3.2.2)

92. Stakeholder feedback on the usefulness of the WOCAT tool was generally positive, with interlocutors describing the tool as filling a gap because it helped structure gender analysis around concrete SLM technologies rather than leaving gender as a generic cross-cutting issue.¹⁰⁸ They also noted that the tool had potential value beyond the project, including for other institutions and practitioners working on land, biodiversity and climate-related programming. This feedback corroborates the finding that the tool was relevant and technically useful, particularly because it translated gender equality into practical assessment questions for SLM technologies and approaches.¹⁰⁹ (JC3.2; I-3.2.3)

93. The project's contribution to tools was broader than WOCAT alone. The GM workstream continued to use and disseminate the Manual for Gender-Responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, originally prepared with UN Women and IUCN, and the Canada-funded project supported translation and a planned update of this manual to reflect changes in funding partner requirements and gender equality standards.¹¹⁰ The project also supported guidance and knowledge products on land tenure, responsible governance of tenure, gender-responsive project development and gender-differentiated impacts of DLDD.¹¹¹ Jointly, these outputs expanded the practical toolset available to Parties, project developers, technical partners and implementing agencies. (JC3.2; I-3.2.3)

94. The evaluation found weaker evidence on the extent to which tools were systematically used to change practice. Stakeholders noted that the gender-responsive SLM tool had not been formally communicated to all UNCCD National Focal Points through an official secretariat message, which limited its visibility and reach.¹¹² The evaluation also found that some tools and checklists were applied by external consultants, but that individuals and institutions did not always develop the internal capacity to use them independently.¹¹³ This suggests that the project was effective in producing tools and supporting initial use, but less effective in ensuring that tools became embedded in routine practice by Parties, implementing agencies and project developers. Consistent promotion of completed tools remains a challenge linked directly to the availability of a dedicated gender post to champion their use.¹¹⁴ (JC3.2; I-3.2.2, I-3.2.3)

Gender-responsive TPPs and GM practice

Finding 7. The project made a substantive contribution to strengthening gender-responsive TPPs and Global Mechanism practice, particularly through the Partnership for Project Preparation, gender gap analyses, value-chain analyses, feasibility studies, gender assessments, LDN Target Setting Programme support and the mobilisation of financing for gender-responsive project portfolios. The evidence shows substantial progress in the number of project concepts and proposals supported, including projects reaching approval and financing stages. Country-level evidence indicates that the contribution of the project was meaningful because it operated in

¹⁰⁶ UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2024.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁰⁹ Document review, interviews and survey.

¹¹⁰ UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026

¹¹¹ FAO and UNCCD, VGGT Technical Guide, 2022; UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of DLDD on Women and Men, 2022; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

¹¹² Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹¹³ UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

¹¹⁴ Document review, interviews and survey

contexts where gender is a politically sensitive or under-addressed topic: raising awareness, generating the first gender-focused analyses in relation to land degradation and LDN, and demonstrating that gender can be integrated into national planning processes. Progress was uneven and sometimes delayed by limited country capacity, differing funder requirements, complex project preparation processes, staffing instability and continued reliance on external consultants rather than institutionalised national gender capacity.

95. The GM workstream integrated gender equality and women's empowerment perspectives throughout its support to LDN Target Setting and project preparation, including capacity-building, assessments, feasibility studies, stakeholder consultations, project concept notes and full project proposals. This was delivered primarily through the Partnership for Project Preparation, which was funded by the Canada Grant, BMZ PPP grant, the Changwon Initiative and the Ankara Initiative until its closure in December 2023.¹¹⁵ GM used a partnership model to maximise the potential within operational context where project development requires specialist technical inputs, high costs and long timelines to meet different financing agency requirements.¹¹⁶ When gender expertise was not available within the GM during staffing gaps, the GM adapted by amending existing agreements with national partners already engaged in the LDN Target Setting Programme 2.0, thereby mobilising gender expertise from partners with country-level presence and allowing work to continue without significant interruption or hiring experts to support the process.¹¹⁷ This model allowed Canada funding to be used as part of a broader platform for gender-responsive project preparation. (JC3.3; I-3.3.1, I-3.3.2)
96. Reported portfolio results indicate substantial progress. UNCCD data shows that Canada funding supported improved design of large-scale and financially viable gender-responsive LDN transformative projects in a total of 25 approved project proposals or expressions of interest, six submitted project concept notes or proposals, and 18 project concept notes or proposals under development.¹¹⁸ Earlier annual reporting identified approved projects in the Philippines, Togo, Rwanda and the PIDACC Zambezi Zone, as well as additional concept notes and proposals in Ethiopia and the Zambezi Climate Investment Fund.¹¹⁹ The draft final report similarly lists examples of gender inclusion in project documents, including gender gap analysis in Togo, gender-sensitive value-chain analysis in the Philippines and gender-responsive pre-feasibility work in the Zambezi Watercourse.¹²⁰ These results show that the GM workstream moved beyond general advice and contributed to concrete design inputs in project documents and financing processes. (JC3.3; I-3.3.2, I-3.3.3, I-3.3.4)
97. The Togo project illustrates how the project contributed to gender-responsive project design. A gender gap analysis was completed to inform mainstreaming of gender in the Togo project proposal and to develop a Gender Action Plan for implementation.¹²¹ The analysis examined different needs, roles, benefits, risks and access to resources for women and men, and the Gender Action Plan was annexed to the GEF project proposal as required by the GEF.¹²² This shows that Canada-supported technical work contributed to the quality and compliance of gender components in a financing proposal. (JC3.3; I-3.3.2, I-3.3.3)
98. The Philippines case also demonstrates a concrete contribution to gender-responsive project preparation. The project supported a Gender Sensitive Value Chain Analysis for selected commodities in the Cagayan de Oro River Basin, which informed the GEF project "Securing Long-Term Sustainability of Multi-functional Landscapes in Critical River Basins of the

¹¹⁵UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

¹¹⁶UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

¹¹⁷UNCCD Global Mechanism, evaluation debrief session, June 2026.

¹¹⁸UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; Stakeholder interviews

¹¹⁹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2024; Stakeholder interviews

¹²⁰UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026; Stakeholder interviews

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026; Stakeholder interviews

- Philippines".¹²³ The analysis examined gender impacts in selected commodities and strategies for promoting women's engagement and access to benefit-sharing, which were incorporated into the project concept note submitted to the GEF.¹²⁴ The project was subsequently approved and is under implementation. (JC3.3; I-3.3.2, I-3.3.3)
99. The Zambezi portfolio provides evidence of gender integration in regional and multi-country project preparation. For the Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Zambezi Watercourse, a gender-responsive pre-feasibility study was conducted to identify priority development measures and actions.¹²⁵ Sectoral reports on socio-economic and gender analysis were prepared for the eight riparian countries as part of the study.¹²⁶ Annual reporting also identifies the PIDACC Zambezi Zone I programme funded by AfDB and the Zambezi Watercourse Regional Programme Nature, People and Climate Investment Plan supported through the Climate Investment Funds.¹²⁷ These are examples of contributions to gender-responsive analysis not only in single-country proposals, but also in large-scale regional programming where gender risks and opportunities cut across sectors, institutions and national contexts. (JC3.3; I-3.3.2, I-3.3.3, I-3.3.4)
100. The project also contributed to gender-responsive LDN target-setting. The LDN Target Setting Programme 2.0 included national gender assessments as a technical input into the review and strengthening of LDN targets in 18 countries.¹²⁸ The evaluation evidence indicates that countries such as Jordan and Türkiye developed gender-focused or gender-responsive LDN targets, which was described as new and innovative in the target-setting process. In Jordan, UNCCD support resulted in the country developing two new LDN targets that are explicitly gender-focused, a result which presents a strong example of how countries can be both creative and dynamic in taking up gender integration.¹²⁹ In Türkiye, the UNCCD-supported gender assessment was the first structured effort to examine gender issues in relation to land degradation and LDN targets in the country.¹³⁰ Country-level interviews confirmed that UNCCD support helped national stakeholders undertake gender analysis in relation to land degradation and LDN, even where gender and environmental institutions had not previously worked closely together.¹³¹ (JC3.3; I-3.3.1, I-3.3.3)
101. The project also supported financing mobilisation for gender-responsive TPPs, resulting in several supported proposals and concept notes reaching approval or financing stages.¹³² The significance of this contribution lies in the linkage between gender-responsive analysis and project documents, financing processes and progression through the project pipeline. The demand for gender-responsive LDN target-setting support has continued to grow beyond the 18 countries supported under LDN TSP 2.0, with 26 countries on a waiting list as of June 2026, pointing to the relevance and uptake of this modality beyond the project period.¹³³ (JC3.3; I-3.3.2, I-3.3.4)
102. UNCCD records report that nearly all LDN target country profiles, projects and national drought plans now incorporate some consideration of gender.¹³⁴ Interviews with UN partners

¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Ibid

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

¹²⁸UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹²⁹ Stakeholder interviews, June 2026

¹³⁰UNCCD Global Mechanism, evaluation debrief session, June 2026; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

¹³¹ Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹³² UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; Stakeholder interviews

¹³³ UNCCD reporting, KIIs with UNCCD teams and external partners

¹³⁴UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

- also indicated that UNCCD support added value by enabling deeper gender and LDN analysis in GEF project preparation than would otherwise have been possible.¹³⁵ (JC3.3; I-3.3.1, I-3.3.3)
103. Progress in TPP development was affected by several constraints. Evidence indicates that development of the project pipeline from ideas to concept notes and full proposals was generally slow because many country Parties had limited capacity to design projects meeting the requirements of financing agencies. Different requirements across GEF, GCF, Adaptation Fund, MDBs and other financing windows further complicated the process and increased transaction costs. The findings also indicate that some partnerships and financing agreements experienced delays linked to UN procedures, disbursement requirements, staff workload and competing priorities. These constraints need to be read in light of the country contexts in which the project operated. In countries such as Jordan and Türkiye, gender is a politically sensitive topic and not easily integrated into national planning processes. In these settings, raising awareness of the need to integrate gender requirements, demonstrating how national processes can accommodate gender standards and building the first formal gender assessments related to land degradation represent substantive progress, even where outputs fall short of full institutionalisation.¹³⁶ These constraints mean that the project's contribution to project preparation was substantial, but not uniformly timely or straightforward. (JC3.3; I-3.3.1, I-3.3.2, I-3.3.3)
104. A further limitation concerns the depth of institutionalisation of gender-responsive project development. The GAP evaluation and annual reporting note that, while consultants can apply gender tools effectively, there is a persistent challenge in encouraging organisations and national institutions to apply tools and checklists internally and autonomously.¹³⁷ Country interviews confirmed that gender analysis often depended on external consultants or partner agencies, with national focal points and ministries still developing their own capacity to integrate gender into LDN and project preparation work.¹³⁸ This shows that the project improved the gender responsiveness of specific TPPs and assessments, but capacity transfer to national systems remains incomplete. (JC3.3; I-3.3.1, I-3.3.3)

EFFICIENCY

EQ4. To what extent were human, financial and technical resources used efficiently and in a timely manner?

Use of human and technical resources

Finding 8. The project used human and technical resources strategically, centering its investment in dedicated gender expertise within the UNCCD secretariat and Global Mechanism while mobilising consultants and partners for specialised technical outputs. Financial records confirm that approximately 45 per cent of the net programme budget was allocated to gender officer posts in the secretariat and the Global Mechanism, while the remaining resources supported GAP implementation activities and gender-responsive project preparation. These investments generated substantive outputs across GAP implementation, Gender Caucus support, WOCAT tool development, land tenure guidance, gender assessments and gender-responsive project preparation. Efficiency was constrained by staffing turnover and continuity gaps, which created delays and workload pressures. The project's reliance on time-bound, voluntary-funded posts,

¹³⁵ Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹³⁷ UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

¹³⁸ Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

combined with consultants and partner agencies for specialised work, enabled broad output delivery but did not consistently build durable institutional capacity.

105. The project's primary human resource investment was the financing of gender officer functions within the UNCCD system. According to UNCCD data, app. 45 per cent of the Canadian contribution went to gender officer posts 15 per cent to secretariat GAP activities, and 40 per cent to GM work on gender-responsive LDN projects.¹³⁹ This allocation indicates that the project was structured primarily as an institutional capacity instrument, which combined staff functions, policy support and operational project preparation grant. This was appropriate given the institutional context, since the UNCCD secretariat and GM had no core budget for gender officer posts, and the Canada grant financed functions that were formally mandated but had no stable resource base. (JC4.1; I-4.1.1)
106. The placement of dedicated gender expertise was efficient and enabled the secretariat and GM to deliver work that had previously been delayed or dependent on ad hoc support. Financial records from the project's financial utilization report show that the Land rights and gender expert budget line (USD 837,516 approved net) covered two successive officers: the P3 Gender Officer from April 2021 to June 2022, and the P4 Gender Policy Officer from July 2023 to December 2025, with a vacancy period of approximately 13 months in between.¹⁴⁰ These records confirm that dedicated staffing was efficient when in place, but that the vacancy periods directly affected implementation pace, creating delays across multiple workstreams and generating recurring costs for recruitment, onboarding and reallocation of responsibilities. (JC4.1; I-4.1.1, I-4.1.2)
107. Financial records show that, following the departure of gender dedicated staff in 2023, part of the remaining budget was disbursed through short-term purchase orders to individual consultants, including for GM gender-responsive project preparation and knowledge products.¹⁴¹ This was appropriate for country-level gender analyses and specialised technical deliverables, which required local and thematic expertise. Interviews indicated that this arrangement maintained delivery but noted that main efficiency issue was the reduced availability of dedicated staff to coordinate, guide and quality-assure these inputs. The arrangement allowed delivery to continue, but placed greater responsibility on remaining staff and weakened the consistency of technical oversight.¹⁴² (JC4.1; I-4.1.1, I-4.1.3)
108. The project also used external technical expertise through consultants and partner agencies. For instance, expenditure records across the TPP and GAP budget lines show payments to individual consultants for gender-sensitive value-chain analysis in the Philippines, gender gap analysis and a Gender Action Plan in Togo, gender-responsive pre-feasibility work in the Zambezi Basin, gender assessments under LDN TSP 2.0, WOCAT tool development, land tenure guidance and technical studies on differentiated impacts of DLDD on women and men.¹⁴³ The use of specialised partners, including GWPSA, AUDA-NEPAD, Landesa, WOCAT/University of Bern and ZAMCOM, allowed the project to work across multiple countries and technical domains without building a large internal project team.¹⁴⁴ This was an appropriate deployment of limited resources, as the specialised nature of the work required expertise that was not available internally and could not be maintained within a small institutional unit. (JC4.1; I-4.1.2)
109. The reliance on consultants and external partners was efficient for producing technical outputs but less effective for building durable institutional capacity. Annual reporting and the

¹³⁹UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

¹⁴⁰Land rights sheet, Financial Utilization Report on the Contribution from the Government of Canada, as at 31 December 2025.

¹⁴¹ UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025

¹⁴²UNCCD Global Mechanism interview, June 2026; Stakeholder interviews

¹⁴³UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026; WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive SLM Questionnaire, 2022; UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of DLDD on Women and Men, 2022.

¹⁴⁴ UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025

GAP evaluation both noted a persistent challenge in encouraging individuals and institutions to apply gender tools and checklists independently, rather than depending on external consultants.¹⁴⁵ Country-level interviews similarly suggest that gender assessments and target-setting work were valuable but often depended on the availability of national consultants or partner agency expertise rather than on embedded capacity at UNCCD or in national institutions.¹⁴⁶ This points to an efficiency trade-off inherent in the delivery model, whereby consultants and partners enabled output delivery within the available resources, while the project did not consistently convert technical assistance into autonomous national or institutional capacity. (I-4.1.2, I-4.1.3)

110. The GM partnership model mentioned under EQ 3 above helped spread costs, mobilised partner expertise and linked the Canada grant to a broader project preparation framework. The TPP Development budget line, the largest in the project at USD 2,315,624 approved net, was fully utilised at 100 per cent,¹⁴⁷ indicating that the partnership-based delivery model absorbed available resources and generated a substantial volume of project preparation work. (JC4.1; I-4.1.2, I-4.1.3)

Budget utilization and cost-effectiveness

Finding 9. The project used financial resources in a broadly efficient and catalytic manner, especially because a relatively modest institutional grant helped support a large portfolio of gender-responsive project preparation, policy work, tools, Gender Caucus activities and resource mobilization.

111. As shown in Table 6 below, the project achieved an overall budget utilisation rate of 98.4 per cent against the approved net programme budget of USD 3,986,943, with a fund balance of USD 61,891 at project close. These utilisation rates indicate that available resources were substantially absorbed in programme delivery, with no significant underspending. The assessment of cost-effectiveness is constrained by the absence of a complete value-for-money analysis and the difficulty of attributing large financing outcomes within a multi-donor project preparation system; however, the financial data available to the evaluation provides a factual basis for assessing utilisation and budget structure.¹⁴⁸

Table 6. Canada GAP Project: Budget and Financial Utilisation by Budget Line, as at 31 December 2025 (USD)

Budget Line	Approved Budget (Net, USD)	Expenditures (USD)	Unliquidated Obligations (USD)	Total Charged (USD)	Fund Balance (USD)	Utilisation (%)
Land rights and gender expert (secretariat)	837,516	821,393	126	821,519	15,997	98.1%
Gender expert for TPPs (Global Mechanism)	362,750	336,519	26,231	362,750	0	100.0%
TPP development (Global Mechanism)	2,315,624	2,077,984	237,640	2,315,624	0	100.0%

¹⁴⁵UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

¹⁴⁶Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁴⁷ UNCCD. (2025). Canada Grant Annual Report 2025, Financial utilization report

¹⁴⁸UNCCD, Financial Utilization Report on the Contribution from the Government of Canada, Grant No. M1-32UWA-000065, Project SB-015117, as at 31 December 2025.

Budget Line	Approved Budget (Net, USD)	Expenditures (USD)	Unliquidated Obligations (USD)	Total Charged (USD)	Fund Balance (USD)	Utilisation (%)
Support to GAP implementation (secretariat)	471,053	423,700	1,459	425,159	45,894	90.3%
TOTAL	3,986,943	3,659,597	265,455	3,925,052	61,891	98.4%

Source: UNCCD Financial Utilization Report Utilisation is calculated as total charged (expenditures plus unliquidated obligations) as a share of approved net budget.

112. The budget structure reflects the project's dual institutional focus. The original CAD budget allocated approximately 10 per cent to the secretariat land rights and gender expert post, 7 per cent to the GM gender expert for TPPs, 66 per cent to TPP development, and 17 per cent to support to GAP implementation.¹⁴⁹ This allocation was consistent with the project's intended design as both an institutional capacity support instrument and an operational project preparation mechanism. The dominance of the TPP Development line (USD 2,315,624 of the USD 3,986,943 net budget, representing 58 per cent) reflects the resource-intensity of gender-responsive project preparation, which required sustained engagement with national counterparts, partner agencies and financing institutions over multiple years. This budget structure was revised in October 2025 to reflect adjustments to the approved net budget, including reallocations to cover close-out activities and knowledge products.¹⁵⁰ (JC4.2; I-4.2.1)
113. The Support to GAP implementation budget line recorded a utilisation rate of 90.3 per cent, with a fund balance of USD 45,894 at project close.¹⁵¹ This line covered GAP implementation activities including Gender Caucus sessions, capacity-building events, WOCAT Phase 1, land tenure technical support, consultancy contracts and event participation costs. The lower utilisation rate on this line, relative to the GM lines, reflects the uneven pace of GAP activities across the project period and the residual absorptive constraints associated with the staffing vacancy in the secretariat during 2022–2023. The fund balance remaining at project close does not indicate systematic underspending and remained within the margin expected for a complex multi-year programme. (JC4.2; I-4.2.1)
114. The strongest indication of cost-effectiveness lies in the scale of project financing associated with the GM project preparation portfolio relative to the grant budget. Annual reporting indicates that Canada-funded support contributed to 25 approved project proposals or expressions of interest, six submitted concept notes or proposals, and 18 concept notes or proposals under development.¹⁵² Reporting states that 19 projects approved by July 2024 had a combined budget of approximately USD 946 million, and that 10 approved concept notes had a potential total budget of approximately USD 1.85 billion.¹⁵³ These figures suggest a substantial catalytic multiplier relative to the Canada grant, though the efforts reflect multi-donor, multi-partner processes and cannot be attributed solely to the Canada contribution. (JC4.2; I-4.2.2)
115. The project also used financial resources to leverage additional support for gender expertise within the GM workstream. The GM used the Canada grant to help leverage an AfDB-funded project on gender and drought in Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, which

¹⁴⁹UNCCD, Financial Utilization Report on the Contribution from the Government of Canada, Grant No. M1-32UWA-000065, Project SB-015117, as at 31 December 2025.

¹⁵¹UNCCD, Financial Utilization Report on the Contribution from the Government of Canada, Grant No. M1-32UWA-000065, Project SB-015117, as at 31 December 2025.

¹⁵²UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

included a budget line for gender expertise.¹⁵⁴ This allowed remaining Canada grant resources to be redirected toward project activities and close-out products rather than solely staff costs.¹⁵⁵ This financial adaptation extended the utility of the grant. At the same time, the need to secure external co-financing to maintain a core gender function in the GM also illustrates the structural fragility of the delivery model: a dedicated gender post within the GM could only be sustained through successive external grants rather than through any contribution from core or regular resources. (JC4.2; I-4.2.1, I-4.2.2)

116. A complete value-for-money assessment was not possible within the scope of this evaluation. The GAP evaluation identified the absence of gender budget tracking as a primary constraint on financial analysis.¹⁵⁶ While the Canada grant can be linked to a wide range of outputs and a substantial financing pipeline, the evaluation could not assess unit costs, comparative cost-effectiveness across delivery modalities, or the efficiency of specific country-level activities. (JC4.2; I-4.2.1)

117. Budget utilisation was also shaped by the project's dependence on voluntary contributions. The reliance on voluntary funding posed a structural risk because staff positions and activities depended on time-bound donor funds and relevant financing windows.¹⁵⁷ This affected efficiency in practice, as exemplified by the vacant gender officer roles and associated delays in WOCAT Phase 2 as reflected in the uneven spending trajectory across the project period. The no-cost extension approved in September 2024 and the October 2025 budget revision addressed residual delivery gaps, but these adjustments also confirm that the original implementation timeline was not fully compatible with the staffing continuity risks inherent in the voluntary funding model. (JC4.2; I-4.2.1)

Timeliness of implementation

Finding 10. The timeliness of project implementation was mixed. The project delivered many outputs and adapted to disruptions, but several major workstreams were delayed by COVID-19, recruitment and turnover of gender officers, UN administrative procedures, partnership negotiations, funder requirements, country capacity limitations and project preparation timelines. The project responded to these delays through virtual delivery, partnership-based implementation, budget reallocation and a no-cost extension.

118. UNCCD records show that COVID-19 affected early implementation in 2020 and 2021, but that Parties continued to express interest in advancing the gender agenda and that the project used virtual meetings and online capacity-building to maintain progress. Early land tenure consultations, gender trainings and expert meetings were delayed or adapted rather than cancelled.¹⁵⁸ This mitigation was appropriate and allowed the project to continue despite restrictions on travel and in-person engagement. (JC4.3; I-4.3.1, I-4.3.2)

119. Recruitment delays had a significant effect on timeliness, particularly in the secretariat. The project logic model was finalised only in October 2021, approximately 18 months after the grant was signed in March 2020.¹⁵⁹ The secretariat Gender Officer joined in April 2021 but resigned in June 2022, and the post remained vacant until July 2023 while an upgrade from P3 to P4 was processed. Annual reporting confirms that this vacancy directly delayed WOCAT Phase 2 and several capacity-building activities.¹⁶⁰ Although the P4 upgrade was considered

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

¹⁵⁶UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

¹⁵⁸UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2022 and 2025.

¹⁵⁹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; Stakeholder interviews

¹⁶⁰Ibid.

- justified by stakeholders, the administrative timeline for the reclassification contributed to the delay. Several workstreams that depended on dedicated secretariat gender expertise could not be progressed at the planned pace during this period. (JC4.3; I-4.3.1, I-4.3.2)
120. The WOCAT workstream illustrates both delay and recovery. Phase 1 produced the gender-responsive SLM questionnaire and technology profiles, but Phase 2 began only in May 2024 following a period during which negotiation and planning had stalled due to the secretariat vacancy.¹⁶¹ By the third quarter of 2024, materials had been developed for scaling up the WOCAT–UNCCD gender-responsive SLM tool to at least 30 additional organisations.¹⁶² The no-cost extension allowed completion of WOCAT Phase 2 in 2025 and retention of the Gender Policy Officer to coordinate the work.¹⁶³ Delay in this workstream was effectively mitigated, but only through extension of the project period and renewed staffing. (JC4.3; I-4.3.1, I-4.3.2)
121. The GM project preparation workstream was affected by structural timeline constraints that were partly outside the project's control. Annual reporting states that progress from project ideas to fundable concept notes and full proposals was generally slow because country Parties often had limited capacity to design projects that meet the requirements of GEF, GCF, Adaptation Fund and other financing windows.¹⁶⁴ The GM responded by establishing and using the Partnership for Project Preparation and by diversifying delivery through partner agencies, but project preparation timelines remained long because large-scale financing proposals require specialist studies, partner agreements and funder review processes.¹⁶⁵ These constraints affected the pace at which gender-responsive project preparation could translate into submitted or approved proposals. (JC4.3; I-4.3.1, I-4.3.2)
122. LDN TSP 2.0 gender assessments also experienced delays linked to implementation modality. The original plan to hire national gender specialists in each participating country was changed for management and operational reasons.¹⁶⁶ The GM then attempted to establish an arrangement with UN Women, but negotiations took almost a year without producing an operationally viable agreement.¹⁶⁷ The final approach relied on country-level partner agencies (FAO, UNDP, UNEP and IUCN), which allowed the work to move forward but meant that some gender assessments were completed later than initially planned.¹⁶⁸ This reflects a recurring pattern: delivery was ultimately achieved, but after significant adjustment to the implementation model, with associated delays. (JC4.3; I-4.3.1, I-4.3.2)
123. External financing partnerships also affected timeliness. The AfDB-supported gender and drought project, approved in 2024, experienced delays in agreement signature, disbursement and implementation start-up.¹⁶⁹ Stakeholders reported that delays were linked partly to UN administrative processes and staffing constraints following the first disbursement and that an expedited plan of action was agreed to avoid further delays and demonstrate absorptive capacity.¹⁷⁰ This indicates that while UNCCD's ability to leverage follow-on financing was demonstrated, the timeliness of implementation for leveraged projects depended on partner procedures and dedicated management capacity. Evaluation also found that these issues present a risk for UNCCD, and should be mitigated consistently (JC4.3; I-4.3.1, I-4.3.2)

¹⁶¹Ibid.

¹⁶²Ibid.

¹⁶³UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report, 2026.

¹⁶⁴UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

¹⁶⁵Ibid.

¹⁶⁶Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

¹⁶⁸Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁶⁹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; Stakeholder interviews June 2026.

¹⁷⁰Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

IMPACT PROSPECTS

EQ5. What plausible higher-level changes in gender equality within UNCCD processes, policies and project portfolios can be linked to the project?

Finding 11. The project made a credible early-stage systemic contribution to long-term transformative change. It helped make it more difficult, within UNCCD-related policy and financing spaces, to treat gender equality and women’s land tenure as optional considerations. It also helped insert gender analysis into investment processes with potential scale. The contribution is meaningful because it affects the rules, expectations and tools that shape future programming. It is conditional because those gains depend on three requirements that were not secured by project closure: a permanent gender function within UNCCD and the GM; routine accountability for gender commitments in LDN, drought and land restoration investments; and verification through implementation data and direct evidence from rights-holders.

124. The evaluation found that the project’s transformative potential lies in the change it helped create in the conditions under which gender equality is considered in UNCCD implementation, rather than in the activities delivered or outputs produced. The strongest contribution is a shift in the framing of women’s land tenure. Available evidence indicates that women’s land rights were increasingly positioned as a condition for effective land degradation neutrality, rather than as a separate equity issue. This matters because it changes the standard against which future land restoration and drought resilience programmes can be designed, reviewed and financed. COP16 Decision 25 reflects this direction by linking women’s land tenure rights and women’s active involvement in land management to the achievement of land degradation neutrality. This is a meaningful upstream change in the Convention’s policy environment. However, evaluation did not find consistent evidence of change in women’s tenure security, decision-making power or access to land at community level.¹⁷¹

125. The project also contributed to a change in the design architecture of land restoration investment. The evidence indicates that gender analysis became more visible in LDN target-setting, project preparation and financing documentation across a sizeable GM-supported portfolio, as discussed under EQ 3 and EQ 4 above. The analysis of resulting projects show the scale of the investment pipeline into which gender requirements, assessments, action plans and design elements were introduced. The transformative potential lies in raising the minimum design standard for large-scale LDN and drought resilience investments.¹⁷²

126. A further contribution concerns institutional behaviour. The project helped UNCCD act more credibly as a gender actor in the DLDD space by creating dedicated capacity, a clearer counterpart for Parties and partners, and a stronger link between policy language and technical support. This changed what UNCCD could offer during the project period in terms of its support to negotiations on gender language, advisory on gender-responsive project preparation, convening role around women’s land rights and connecting gender with LDN, SLM technologies, drought resilience and finance. This is a potentially transformative institutional contribution because it moves gender from a periodic advocacy theme to a function that can influence standards, instruments and investment choices. The evidence also shows that this

¹⁷¹ UNCCD, Decision 25/COP.16; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025, pp. 4-7.

¹⁷² UNCCD, Annex I: PMF Worksheet, June 2025, Intermediate Outcome 1200 and Immediate Outcome 1210; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

- change was not fully institutionalised. Evaluation evidence indicates that gender work remained heavily dependent on voluntary contributions and time-bound posts.¹⁷³
127. The WOCAT gender-responsive SLM work, the differentiated impacts study, the tenure guidance and the women-led drought resilience evidence base helped move the analysis beyond technical performance of land restoration measures toward questions of access, control, labour, benefits, tenure security and decision-making. The PMF reports that the WOCAT gender-responsive SLM tool was applied by 36 countries, with 31 partners using the tool to document gender responsiveness and 26 gender-responsive SLM profiles produced. Survey responses also provide examples of stakeholders applying UNCCD gender-related guidance in GEF project design, Great Green Wall planning, national drought and desertification plans, land policy processes and consultation approaches. These are credible signs of uptake. They remain insufficient to establish that the tools have changed institutional practice at scale or improved women’s access to SLM technologies.¹⁷⁴
128. The evaluation does not find sufficient evidence on the extent to which the project has already generated transformative change in the lives of women and girls affected by desertification, land degradation and drought. There is no beneficiary-level evidence showing changes in women’s land tenure security, control over productive resources, livelihoods, resilience, unpaid labour burdens, participation in local land governance or benefit-sharing from restoration investments. This means that its impact is presently located upstream across norms, design standards, institutional capacity, technical evidence and investment preparation. These are necessary conditions for transformative change, but they are not equivalent to transformation itself.¹⁷⁵ (JC5.1; I-5.1.1, I-5.1.2)

SUSTAINABILITY

EQ6. To what extent are project results likely to be sustained after closure?

Finding 12. The sustainability of the Canada GAP Project is mixed and fragile. The project generated several results that are likely to outlast the funding period, including COP decisions, Gender Caucus practices, the GAP roadmap, gender-related reporting experience, WOCAT tools, land tenure guidance, gender-responsive LDN project preparation methods and selected financing partnerships. These results provide a normative and technical foundation for continued gender mainstreaming within UNCCD. Sustainability is undermined by the absence of core-funded gender capacity, reliance on voluntary contributions, staff turnover, limited institutional ownership of some tools, uneven dissemination to Parties, and weak mechanisms for tracking gender-related expenditure and results.

129. Evaluation findings show that project’s most durable results are those embedded in formal UNCCD processes and decisions. Gender equality and women’s land tenure remained visible in COP and CRIC processes during the project period, including through the Gender Caucus, COP15 outputs and COP16 Decision 25. These commitments are reflected in formal intergovernmental processes and provide a normative basis for continued action after project closure. Sustainability of these commitments depends on whether they are followed by resources, institutional responsibilities and practical support to Parties. (JC6.1; I-6.1.1)
130. The GAP roadmap provides a sustainability asset by translating the Gender Action Plan into an accessible reference for Parties, the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and other

¹⁷³ UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025, sections on the Gender Policy Officer and Global Mechanism Gender Project Officer.

¹⁷⁴ UNCCD, Annex I: PMF Worksheet, June 2025, Immediate Outcome 1120 and Output 1121; WOCAT/UNCCD progress reporting on the gender-responsive SLM tool; Survey, 2026.

¹⁷⁵ Document review, stakeholder interviews and survey

stakeholders. The roadmap infographic was rolled out in 2023 and presented at CRIC21 to support wider understanding of roles, commitments and actions related to GAP implementation.¹⁷⁶ This increases the likelihood that gender priorities remain visible beyond the project period, provided that the roadmap is actively used in future planning, reporting and capacity development. Evaluation evidence indicates that the roadmap was not sufficiently co-constructed with Parties and civil society, which may weaken ownership and sustained use. The outstanding sustainability challenge remains linked to the extent to which the roadmap becomes part of routine planning, accountability and follow-up rather than remaining a communication product. (JC6.1; I-6.1.1, I-6.1.3)

131. The Gender Caucus represents a further potential sustainability mechanism, though stakeholders noted that its durability will depend on continued institutional support and strategic direction. The evidence indicates that the Caucus has become a recognised mechanism for stakeholder dialogue within the Convention. Continued sustainability will depend on whether it is linked more systematically to COP and CRIC follow-up, reporting, financing discussions, GM project results and accountability for GAP implementation. Stakeholders noted that the Caucus risks becoming event-based rather than strategic if it is not connected to implementation follow-up, indicators, financing, reporting and decision-making processes. (JC6.1; I-6.1.1, I-6.1.3)

132. The project also produced technical products that can support sustained gender mainstreaming, including the WOCAT gender-responsive SLM questionnaire, SLM technology profiles, land tenure guidance, the technical guide on responsible tenure governance and the differentiated impacts study.¹⁷⁷ These tools and studies give Parties, project developers and partners a practical basis for integrating gender into SLM, LDN, tenure and drought-related work. The WOCAT tool is better positioned for sustained use than stand-alone guidance documents because it is linked to an established platform and network, but its institutionalisation within the UNCCD system remains uncertain because dissemination to Parties was not systematic. Stakeholders noted that the tool was not formally communicated to all UNCCD National Focal Points through official secretariat channels, which limited its reach, noting that the tool also needs stronger institutional ownership, routine promotion and opportunities for users to apply them in planning, reporting and project design. (JC6.1; I-6.1.2, I-6.1.3)

133. The GM project preparation workstream also produced potentially sustainable results. Canada-supported project preparation contributed to approved projects, submitted concept notes and project proposals under development, which may continue beyond the project period through GEF, GCF, AfDB, Adaptation Fund and other financing windows. The gender-responsive drought resilience initiative in Madagascar, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, supported through AfDB funding, provides one example of a follow-on financing stream that may sustain gender and drought work beyond the Canada grant.¹⁷⁸ The Partnership for Project Preparation also created a model for embedding gender analysis into project design, feasibility studies, value-chain analysis, Gender Action Plans and project proposals.¹⁷⁹ Sustained gender integration will depend on whether gender-responsive design is maintained during implementation, whether implementing partners have the capacity to apply gender commitments, and whether UNCCD has sufficient expertise to quality-assure project delivery after closure. Project documents may carry gender commitments forward, but those

¹⁷⁶UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

¹⁷⁷WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive SLM Questionnaire, 2022; WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive SLM Technology Group Profiles, 2022; FAO and UNCCD, Technical Guide on the Integration of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) into the Implementation of the UNCCD and LDN, 2022; UNCCD, Study on the Differentiated Impacts of DLDD on Women and Men, 2022.

¹⁷⁸UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁷⁹UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

- commitments will only remain substantive if they are budgeted, monitored and supported during implementation. (JC6.1; I-6.1.1, I-6.1.2)
134. The absence of core-funded gender capacity constitutes a structural sustainability risk. The staff functions that enabled delivery during implementation were not secured as permanent institutional capacity. At the time of the evaluation, this left UNCCD without a core-funded gender function capable of carrying forward both the secretariat and GM gender workstreams. The 2024 GAP evaluation found that gender activities relied almost entirely on voluntary contributions, creating a substantive risk to the continuity of UNCCD activities associated with the GAP.¹⁸⁰ It also found that the lack of financial tracking for gender-related resources constrained institutional accountability. Stakeholders echoed this concern, noting that UNCCD had historically held a strong gender mandate among the Rio Conventions, but that the absence of a dedicated secretariat person responsible for gender placed the Convention in a vulnerable position.¹⁸¹ The evaluation finds that the project built capacity during implementation but did not secure the financing model needed to sustain that capacity after closure. Without a regular budget line, a defined institutional home and clear accountability for gender results, the achievements supported by the Canada grant remain vulnerable to staff turnover, shifting donor priorities and competing institutional demands. (JC6.1; I-6.1.2, I-6.1.3)
135. Sustainability is also affected by the extent to which Parties and national institutions can use tools and guidance independently of external support. Evaluation evidence indicates that consultants were able to apply gender tools and checklists effectively, but that organisational and national capacity to use them independently remained uneven.¹⁸² Country-level evidence from Jordan, Türkiye and Peru indicates that the project contributed to introducing gender into LDN target-setting and land degradation analysis. It also indicates that national institutions frequently required partner agencies or consultants to conduct assessments and translate findings into targets or project design.¹⁸³ However, stakeholders noted that sustainability at country level requires continued capacity-building, institutional incentives, data systems and follow-up. In the absence of these conditions, there is a risk that gender-responsive approaches remain attached to specific consultants, assessments or project documents rather than becoming routine practice within national LDN and DLDD systems. (JC6.1; I-6.1.2, I-6.1.3)
136. The wider political environment also creates sustainability risks. Several stakeholders noted growing pushback against gender equality language in multilateral environmental processes, including increasing caution around intersectionality, rights-based language and gender-responsive framing.¹⁸⁴ They also noted that, as donor appetite for stand-alone gender work becomes more uncertain, UNCCD will need to maintain the momentum created around women's land tenure by linking it more clearly to land restoration, drought resilience, LDN financing and Rio Convention synergies. Maintaining gender commitments in this context requires sustained technical expertise and political navigation, particularly during COP and CRIC negotiations. Stakeholders noted that gender language is more politically contested than many technical environmental issues and that losing experienced gender staff weakens UNCCD's capacity to manage this.¹⁸⁵ Sustainability of project results is simultaneously a technical, financial and political question. The durability of what the project achieved remains dependant on UNCCD's capacity to maintain the technical expertise and institutional positioning needed to defend and operationalise gender commitments in a changing political environment. (JC6.1; I-6.1.3)

¹⁸⁰UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

¹⁸¹Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁸²UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Independent Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2024.

¹⁸³Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁸⁴Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

¹⁸⁵Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

PARTICIPATORY AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION

EQ7. To what extent was the project implemented in a participatory and gender-responsive manner?

Finding 13. The project was implemented with a clear and substantive commitment to participatory and gender-responsive principles. It supported Gender Caucus engagement, stakeholder consultations, participatory land tenure work, gender-responsive SLM tool development, country-level gender assessments, women-led solutions, communications campaigns and partner-led technical processes. These activities created meaningful spaces for women’s voices, civil society, technical partners, Parties and UN actors to engage with the UNCCD gender agenda. However, participation was stronger in consultations, events, advocacy and technical product development than in shared decision-making, accountability and co-ownership of implementation. The evidence also shows that direct participation of women and communities affected by DLDD was limited and uneven, and that the project’s gender responsiveness depended heavily on expert-driven tools and institutional processes rather than sustained engagement with rights-holders at local level.

137. The project supported several formal participatory mechanisms, with the Gender Caucus as the most visible example. The Caucus brought together Party delegates, civil society organizations, UN agencies, youth organizations, media and other stakeholders in COP and CRIC processes.¹⁸⁶ It created a structured space within UNCCD intergovernmental processes where actors beyond the secretariat and formal Party negotiations could raise gender-related priorities, discuss land tenure and sustainable finance, and connect civil society and partner perspectives to Convention processes. Its revitalization in 2023 broadened participation through standing members and planning meetings involving CSOs, Parties and UN agencies.¹⁸⁷ However, evidence indicates that the Caucus needs to become more strategic and accountability-oriented if it is to move beyond event-based participation and become more closely connected to implementation follow-up, indicators, financing, reporting and GM project results. (JC7.1; I-7.1.1, I-7.1.2)
138. The project’s land tenure work also used participatory processes. Early work on the technical guide for integrating the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure into UNCCD implementation included online consultations with Parties, experts and partners.¹⁸⁸ The guide itself emphasises people-centred, participatory and gender-responsive approaches to tenure security in LDN implementation.¹⁸⁹ At COP15, UNCCD, FAO and Landesa organised a gender and land tenure workshop involving 70 participants, 52 per cent of whom were women.¹⁹⁰ These processes show that the project’s land tenure work was consultative and aligned with principles of participation and gender responsiveness. They also show that land tenure provided a practical entry point for discussing gender equality in relation to rights, access to resources, participation in land management and the conditions under which women can benefit from land restoration and LDN processes. (JC7.1; I-7.1.1, I-7.1.2)
139. The WOCAT tool development process also reflected participatory and gender-responsive implementation. The gender-responsive SLM questionnaire was developed in collaboration with WOCAT, UNCCD, specialists and participating countries, and was tested through country

¹⁸⁶ UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; Stakeholder interviews

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ UNCCD, Canada Interim Reports 2020 and 2021.

¹⁸⁹ FAO and UNCCD, Technical Guide on the Integration of the VGGT into the Implementation of the UNCCD and LDN, 2022.

¹⁹⁰ UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

- and partner networks.¹⁹¹ Stakeholders described the first phase as a collaborative process involving partners such as UN Women, CGIAR and other technical actors.¹⁹² The tool development process brought together technical expertise, country testing and partner feedback, and it helped make gender responsiveness a practical question within SLM assessment rather than a separate or abstract commitment. (JC7.1; I-7.1.1, I-7.1.2)
140. The GM workstream also included participatory elements through gender assessments, stakeholder consultations and project preparation processes. Canada-supported TPP work included gender gap analyses, gender-sensitive value-chain analysis, socio-economic and gender analysis, feasibility studies and consultations in countries and regions such as Togo, the Philippines and the Zambezi Basin.¹⁹³ LDN TSP 2.0 gender assessments were designed to support countries to revise or strengthen their LDN targets with attention to gender equality.¹⁹⁴ Interviews from Jordan, Türkiye and Peru indicate that national consultants, ministries, UN agencies and other stakeholders participated in assessment processes and helped adapt global gender concepts to national contexts.¹⁹⁵ This indicates that participatory implementation was also present in country-facing technical assistance and project preparation. However, the depth of participation varied by country, partner agency and implementation modality. (JC7.1; I-7.1.1, I-7.1.2)
141. The project also used communications and advocacy to amplify women’s voice and agency. The Her Land Her Rights campaign and the Women-Led Solutions for Drought Resilience work sought to position women as leaders and innovators in land restoration and drought resilience.¹⁹⁶ These activities contributed to a gender-responsive narrative that moved beyond portraying women only as vulnerable to DLDD or ‘victims’ as one stakeholder noted, but instead highlighted women’s agency, knowledge and leadership in land restoration and drought resilience.¹⁹⁷ This was one of the project’s clearer contributions to participatory visibility, although it should still be distinguished from sustained participation in project governance or accountability systems.
142. Despite these strengths, the project’s participatory approach had limitations. Evaluation found that participation in events, consultations and tool development was mostly good, but shared ownership, accountability and follow-up was not so consistent.¹⁹⁸ Some stakeholders noted that the GAP implementation roadmap was not built sufficiently with Parties or civil society, which limited the extent to which stakeholders could claim ownership over the implementation structure.¹⁹⁹ (JC7.1; I-7.1.1, I-7.1.2)
143. The evaluation also finds that direct participation of rights-holders was limited compared with participation by institutional stakeholders and experts, as also noted under EQ1 above. The project worked primarily through global policy processes, UNCCD bodies, technical partners, National Focal Points, UN agencies, consultants and financing institutions.²⁰⁰ Women farmers, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, local community representatives and other land users were included in selected communications and knowledge products but mainly as part of the broad audience and not direct actors. They were not also consistently represented across the project’s design, monitoring and evaluation evidence base.²⁰¹ (JC7.1; I-7.1.1, I-7.1.2)

191 WOCAT and UNCCD, Gender-Responsive SLM Questionnaire, 2022; UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025.

192 Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

193 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Reports 2024 and 2025; UNCCD, Draft Canada Final Report 2026.

194 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

195 Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

196 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025; UNCCD, Women-Led Solutions for Drought Resilience report, 2024.

197 UNCCD, Canada Grant Annual Report 2025.

198 Document review, stakeholder interviews and survey.

199 Stakeholder interviews, June 2026.

200 Document review, stakeholder interviews and survey.

201 Document review, stakeholder interviews and survey

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. The project was a sound investment in the institutional conditions needed for gender-responsive UNCCD implementation, and helped strengthen the credibility of UNCCD’s gender mandate.

144. The project addressed a recognised gap in the UNCCD system by giving practical form to a gender mandate that had previously lacked sufficient capacity, tools and financing pathways. This made the investment relevant and strategically justified since it responded to institutional demand from UNCCD entities, Parties and technical partners.

145. The project’s significance lies in the way it made gender equality more visible and actionable within UNCCD processes. It gave the Convention a clearer gender function, a more active Gender Caucus, stronger reporting visibility, practical tools and a more gender-responsive project preparation portfolio. These gains increased UNCCD’s credibility as a gender actor in the DLDD space. The main task going forward is to ensure that this credibility rests on institutional core capacity and a stable institutional mandate with sufficient authority, resources and accountability. Thus far, the project advanced the gender agenda, but left unresolved the institutional conditions required to protect it from staff turnover, funding gaps and political contestation.

Conclusion 2. The project improved the framework for gender mainstreaming, but did not yet establish an integrated system linking policy, tools, financing and country learning.

146. The project’s dual structure was appropriate for the UNCCD context. Gender-responsive implementation requires both Convention-level policy work and project preparation support that can influence financing pipelines, but these elements existed, but were not sufficiently integrated. Policy dialogue, Gender Caucus recommendations, WOCAT tools, land tenure guidance, GM project preparation and country-level experience did not consistently operate as one learning and implementation system. Going forward, this gender mainstreaming framework requires more developed connections between those parts to ensure that the momentum is kept.

Conclusion 3. The project’s most credible contribution was to raise the standard for gender-responsive LDN design, not to demonstrate gender-transformative change.

147. The project helped move gender analysis into LDN target-setting, project preparation, feasibility studies, value-chain analysis and financing documentation. This represents a meaningful upstream contribution, as it influenced the way future land restoration and drought-related investments are framed and designed. The evidence does not show whether these design improvements have translated into stronger land rights, improved access to resources, more equitable benefit-sharing, greater resilience or increased decision-making power for women. This remains important lens to build on going forward.

Conclusion 4. The project had catalytic value, but its delivery model exposed the limits of voluntary-funded gender work, leaving sustainability conditional.

148. The grant achieved reach beyond its size by supporting policy engagement, technical products and gender-responsive inputs into a large project preparation pipeline. The project produced tools, guidance, processes and partnerships that can support continued gender mainstreaming. This indicates a credible catalytic role. However, a structural limitation for catalytic results lays with the fact that delivery depended on voluntary-funded posts, temporary expertise, partner arrangements and consultancy support. These arrangements enabled progress during the project period, but weakened continuity, institutional memory

and follow-up. The project was effective as a catalytic intervention, but the current delivery model is not adequate for a sustained gender function within the Convention.

Conclusion 5. The project expanded participation in UNCCD gender work, but did not sufficiently shift participation into influence.

149. The project created meaningful spaces for engagement through the Gender Caucus, land tenure consultations, WOCAT tool development, country assessments and women-led solutions. These spaces helped bring civil society, women’s perspectives and technical partners into UNCCD gender work. The limitation is that participation remained concentrated in consultation, visibility and technical input. Rights-holders were not consistently positioned to shape priorities, assess implementation or hold institutions accountable for gender commitments. The project broadened participation, but did not yet establish participation as a governance function.

Lessons learned

Lesson 1: A strong mandate is necessary but not sufficient. UNCCD decisions, the GAP and the Strategic Framework created an enabling normative foundation, but implementation advanced most in periods when the mandate was matched with dedicated staff, clear tools, a budget and follow-up mechanisms.

Lesson 2: Gender-responsive tools have greater value when they are embedded in routine workflows. The WOCAT questionnaire, tenure guidance, gender-responsive LDN manual and gender assessments were useful because they translated gender commitments into practical questions for technologies, tenure, project design and financing.

Lesson 3: Small catalytic funding can influence large portfolios when it is positioned inside project preparation systems. The Canada grant helped support analyses, consultations and technical inputs that informed GEF, AfDB, LDN and other financing pipelines. This shows that relatively small funding can have high leverage when connected to project preparation platforms, but attribution must remain cautious in multi-donor and multi-partner financing environments.

Lesson 4: Partnerships need governance, not only good relationships. The project benefited from partnerships with WOCAT, FAO, Landesa, UN Women, IUCN, UNDP, TMG, AfDB and others, but several workstreams also showed the limits of partner-dependent delivery without clear ownership, timelines, dissemination plans and institutional handover. Partnerships are most effective when they are managed as a portfolio with defined responsibilities and learning loops.

Lesson 5: Gender-responsive implementation requires direct rights-holder engagement and political navigation. Global policy processes and expert-led tools are important, but they do not substitute for structured engagement with women land users, farmers, pastoralists, Indigenous Peoples, youth and civil society organizations affected by DLDD. In a context of political sensitivity around gender language, sustained gender expertise is also needed to protect commitments and translate them into operational practice.

Recommendations

The recommendations below are based on the evaluation findings, conclusions and lessons learned. They focus on actions needed to consolidate institutional gains, reduce dependence on voluntary-funded capacity, strengthen operational coherence between the secretariat and GM, and translate gender-responsive tools and project design into sustained practice.

Table 6. Recommendations

Recommendations	Responsibility	Other contributing entities	Priority	By when
Strategic recommendations				
SR 1. Secure core-funded gender capacity across the UNCCD secretariat and Global Mechanism. UNCCD should establish a sustainable institutional gender function that is not dependent on short-term voluntary contributions. At minimum, this should include a senior secretariat gender policy/adviser role and a GM gender and	UNCCD Executive Secretary and senior management; GM Managing Director	COP Bureau, Parties, Canada and other donors, UNCCD Human	Very high	Immediate; before COP17

project preparation specialist, with clear mandates for policy support, technical quality assurance, partner coordination, COP/CRIC engagement, and support to Parties.		Resources and Finance		
SR 2. Develop a next-generation GAP implementation framework or gender strategy aligned with the next UNCCD strategic cycle. The next framework should move beyond broad commitments and include a clear theory of change, responsibilities, timelines, indicators, means of implementation, budget assumptions, reporting requirements and accountability mechanisms. It should address gender equality in LDN, drought, tenure, SLM technologies, finance, data, participation and Rio Convention synergies.	UNCCD secretariat gender function	GM, Parties, Gender Caucus, CSO Panel, UN Women, FAO, Landesa, WOCAT, Indigenous Peoples and youth representatives	High	Q2 2027
SR 3. Establish a joint secretariat-GM gender coordination mechanism. UNCCD should create a standing coordination arrangement with a joint annual workplan, quarterly review meetings, a shared results dashboard and systematic feedback loops between COP/CRIC policy work, Gender Caucus recommendations, GM project preparation and country-level lessons. This mechanism should prevent the policy and project preparation streams from operating in parallel.	UNCCD secretariat and GM senior management	Gender Policy Officer, GM project teams, monitoring/reporting staff, resource mobilization team	High	Q4 2026
SR 4. Reposition the Gender Caucus from an event platform to a strategic accountability and learning mechanism. The Gender Caucus should retain its advocacy and convening role, but be more explicitly connected to decision follow-up, implementation monitoring, finance discussions, GM project results, reporting data and recommendations to COP and CRIC. It should include opportunities to organise structured engagement with women's organizations, Indigenous Peoples, youth, farmers, pastoralists and local land users.	UNCCD secretariat gender function and Gender Caucus co-leads	Parties, CSO Panel, UN Women, Landesa, TMG, Huairou Commission, Indigenous Peoples Forum, Youth Caucus, GM	High	By next CRIC/COP cycle
SR 5. Develop a gender-responsive resource mobilization strategy for UNCCD implementation. The GM and secretariat should prepare a resource mobilization strategy that links	Global Mechanism, with secretariat support	Canada and other donors, GEF, GCF, AfDB,	High	Q2 2027

women's land rights, drought resilience, SLM technologies, LDN, Business4Land, GEF/GCF/AfDB/MDB pipelines and Rio Convention synergies. The strategy should identify funding windows, private-sector opportunities, minimum gender quality standards, and mechanisms for tracking gender-related expenditure.		MDBs, UNDP, FAO, UN Women, private-sector partners		
Operational recommendations				
OR 1. Proactively promote, disseminate and institutionalize the main gender tools and guidance products. UNCCD should issue official communications to National Focal Points and partners on the WOCAT gender-responsive SLM tool, tenure guidance, GAP roadmap and relevant GM gender-responsive project preparation tools. Dissemination should be accompanied by dedicated training modules, webinars, user guidance and documented examples of application.	UNCCD secretariat gender function	WOCAT, FAO, Landesa, GM, NFPs, regional coordination mechanisms, CSO partners	High	Q4 2026
OR 2. Continue to integrate gender requirements into GM project preparation templates and quality assurance. The GM should continue ensuring that gender analysis, sex-disaggregated data, gender-responsive indicators, budgets, risk analysis, stakeholder engagement and Gender Action Plans are integrated in its support to all relevant TPPs, drought projects and LDN project preparation support. Existing manuals and checklists should be updated and aligned with the requirements of relevant financing sources and used systematically within GM quality assurance processes.	Global Mechanism	Project preparation partners, GEF/GCF/Adaptation Fund focal points, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, IUCN, AfDB, national implementing partners	High	Q1 2027
OR 3. Establish a gender results and expenditure tracking system. UNCCD should introduce a practical gender marker or budget tagging system for gender-related activities and project preparation support, linked to a dashboard that tracks outputs, country uptake, use of tools, Gender Caucus follow-up, project pipeline results and available sex-disaggregated data.	UNCCD monitoring /reporting and finance functions	Secretariat gender function, GM, PRAIS/reporting team, resource mobilization team, Canada and other donors	High	Q2 2027

OR 4. Prepare a knowledge management and handover package before the close-out of Canada-funded support. UNCCD should consolidate all gender tools, guidance products, training materials, TORs, partner contacts, lessons learned, examples of country application, project design examples and handover notes in a managed internal repository. This should reduce dependence on individual staff memory and protect continuity during staffing transitions.	UNCCD secretariat and GM gender focal points	Knowledge management team, communications team, WOCAT, FAO, UNDP, Landesa, consultants and partners	Medium-high	Q4 2026
OR 5. Create targeted country capacity packages for gender-responsive LDN and DLDD implementation. UNCCD should offer modular support packages for Parties, including training on gender and DLDD, gender-responsive LDN target-setting, tenure analysis, use of WOCAT tools, sex-disaggregated data, gender-responsive drought planning and project preparation. The packages should prioritize countries with active LDN, drought or TPP processes.	UNCCD secretariat and GM	Regional partners, NFPs, UNDP, FAO, IUCN, UN Women, WOCAT, national gender machineries and CSOs	Medium-high	2027
OR 6. Clarify the roles for rights-holders engagement in future gender-responsive implementation. UNCCD should clarify how rights-holder engagement can be strengthened within the respective mandates of the secretariat, the GM, Country Parties and implementation partners. The secretariat can support this by providing guidance, convening spaces and knowledge-sharing mechanisms, including through the Gender Caucus and relevant tools. The GM can promote stronger attention to rights-holder engagement in project preparation support, quality assurance and validation of gender assessments, in line with the requirements of relevant financing sources.	UNCCD secretariat gender function and GM	Gender Caucus, CSO Panel, Indigenous Peoples Forum, Youth Caucus, NFPs, implementing partners, local organizations	High	Ongoing; start Q4 2026
OR 7. Agree a transition plan for the Canada GAP Project results. UNCCD should prepare a transition plan identifying which outputs will continue, who owns each product or process, what resources are needed, which partners will remain engaged, and what immediate donor dialogue is required. The plan should cover WOCAT Phase 2, Gender Caucus follow-up, GM gender-responsive	UNCCD senior management, secretariat gender function and GM	Canada, donors, WOCAT, FAO, Landesa, UN Women, UNDP, AfDB, Gender	Very high	Immediate; Q4 2026

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project preparation, the tenure toolbox, Women-Led Solutions, and gender reporting support.		Caucus members		
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Annex 1 Evaluation matrix

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
Relevance					
EQ1. To what extent was the project aligned with UNCCD priorities (including GAP), Canada's gender priorities, and stakeholder needs?	JC1.1 Alignment with UNCCD and GAP priorities	1.1.1. Evidence of linkages between the GAP Project outputs/outcomes with UNCCD Strategic Framework and GAP priorities (women's land rights, gender-responsive SLM, gender-responsive TPPs). 1.1.2. Evidence of project-supported gender elements reflected in COP/CRIC decisions, UNCCD strategies and reporting frameworks.	Project document and grant arrangement; approved logic model and PMF; UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework; UNCCD Gender Action Plan and GAP Roadmap; interim and final project reports; Annex I PMF worksheet; communications annex; COP and CRIC decisions and reports; PRAIS reporting guidance and national reporting materials; WOCAT reports and tools; GM/PPP/TPP documentation; budget and expenditure records; Canada policy and donor guidance on gender equality; stakeholder survey; interviews with UNCCD Secretariat, Global	Document review Semi-structured interviews Survey	• Thematic Analysis • Content Analysis • Comparative Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types
	JC1.2 Alignment with Canada priorities and stakeholder needs	1.2.1. Consistency of project design and implementation with Canada's gender equality objectives. 1.2.2. Evidence that Canada funding filled critical gaps (e.g. gender studies, consultations, gap analyses). 1.2.3. Stakeholder perceptions (Parties, partners, staff) on relevance and usefulness of support.			

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
			Mechanism, Government of Canada, Parties/National Focal Points, implementing partners, technical partners and financing partners.		
Coherence					
EQ2. To what extent was the project coherent with other UNCCD work and partner/donor initiatives?	JC2.1 Internal coherence (Secretariat-GM)	2.1.1 Evidence of joint planning, coordination mechanisms, or shared workstreams between policy and PPP/TPP components. 2.1.2. Staff perceptions on complementarities, overlaps or duplication.	Project document and grant arrangement; approved logic model and PMF; interim and final project reports; Annex I PMF worksheet; communications annex; UNCCD Secretariat and Global Mechanism workplans; internal coordination records, where available; PPP/TPP documentation; gender-related policy and reporting documents; partner agreements, reports and outputs with FAO, WOCAT, UN Women, Landesa, AfDB, GEF/GCF and other	Document review Semi-structured interviews Survey	• Thematic Analysis • Content Analysis • Comparative Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types
	JC2.2 External coherence and complementarity	2.2.1. Number and quality of collaborations with key partners (FAO, WOCAT, UN Women, AfDB, GEF/GCF, etc.). 2.2.2. Partner and donor perceptions of added value and complementarity.			

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
			relevant partners; donor reporting and correspondence, where available; budget and cost-sharing records; stakeholder survey; interviews with UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism, Government of Canada, partner organisations, financing partners, consultants and selected Parties/National Focal Points.		
Effectiveness					
EQ3. To what extent did the project contribute to (a) changes in UNCCD gender policy/institutional work and (b) development and use of gender-responsive SLM tools and TPPs?	JC3.1 UNCCD gender policy and institutional change	3.1.1. Increase in references to gender equality and women’s land rights in COP/CRIC outputs (baseline vs later sessions). 3.1.2. Evidence and examples of strengthened policies or reporting. 3.1.3. Staff perception on systematic integration of gender in Secretariat/GM work processes. 3.1.4. Evidence and examples of strengthened GAP	Project document and grant arrangement; approved logic model and PMF; interim and final project reports; Annex I PMF worksheet; communications annex; COP and CRIC decisions, reports and Gender Caucus documentation; GAP Roadmap and GAP evaluation materials; UNCCD gender policy and related internal	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews Survey	• Thematic Analysis • Content Analysis • Comparative Analysis • Limited contribution analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
		workstreams (e.g. Gender Caucus, GAP roadmap, land tenure agenda). 3.1.5. Secretariat, GM and Party perceptions that the project strengthened UNCCD’s gender mandate.	guidance; PRAIS reporting guidance, implementation framework and national reporting data; WOCAT progress/final reports, gender-responsive SLM questionnaire, database/module analytics, case studies and technology profiles; GM/PPP/TPP pipeline records, concept notes, project documents, gender assessments, gender gap analyses, gender action plans and LDN target-setting materials; financing partner documentation and approval records where available; budget and resource mobilisation data; stakeholder survey; interviews with UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism, Government of Canada, Parties/National Focal Points, WOCAT, FAO,		techniques, and data types
	JC3.2 Gender-responsive SLM tools	3.2.1. Number of SLM technologies assessed/refined and documented for gender-responsiveness. 3.2.2. Number of users and participants engaging with gender-responsive SLM tools (sex-disaggregated where possible). 3.2.3. Stakeholder perceptions of usefulness of application in practice.			
	JC3.3 Gender-responsive TPPs and GM practice	3.3.1. Number, type and coverage of requests from Parties/partners (policy, reporting, TPPs) versus those supported. 3.3.2. Number of gender-responsive TPPs supported and number reaching financing stage (vs PMF targets). 3.3.3. Number of gender			

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
		assessments/gap analyses conducted for TPPs and LDN target setting. 3.3.4. Volume of financial resources targeted/mobilised for gender-responsive TPPs.	financing partners, implementing partners, consultants and selected project preparation partners.		
Efficiency					
EQ4. To what extent were human, financial and technical resources used efficiently and in timely manner?	JC4.1 Use of human and technical resources	4.1.1. Adequacy, continuity and timing of key posts (gender officers, PPP staff). 4.1.2. Strategic use of internal and external expertise (consultants, partners). 4.1.3. Staff perceptions of workload, coordination burden and reporting requirements.	Project document and grant arrangement; approved logic model and PMF; interim and final project reports; Annex I PMF worksheet; financial reports and budget revision records; no-cost extension documentation; staffing records, ToRs and recruitment timelines for gender officers and relevant GM/PPP staff; consultancy ToRs, contracts and deliverables; WOCAT and partner progress/final reports; GM/PPP/TPP pipeline records and financing data; workplans and implementation	- Document review - Semi-structured interviews Survey	- Thematic Analysis - Content Analysis - Comparative Analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types
	JC4.2 Budget utilisation and cost-effectiveness	4.2.1. Budget execution rate and major reallocations. 4.2.2. Approximate ratio between Canada investment and total TPP financing mobilised (value-for-money proxy).			
	JC4.3 Timeliness	4.3.1. Comparison of planned vs actual delivery timelines for key outputs 4.3.2. Examples of delay factors (COVID-19, recruitment, partner			

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
		processes) and effectiveness of mitigation/adaptation measures.	timelines; donor reporting correspondence, where available; stakeholder survey; interviews with UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism, Government of Canada, WOCAT, technical partners, consultants and selected project preparation partners.		
Impact prospects					
EQ5. What plausible higher-level changes in gender equality within UNCCD processes, policies and project portfolios can be linked to the project?	JC5.1 Influence on UNCCD discourse and positioning	5.1.1. Qualitative change in framing of gender and women’s land rights in UNCCD decisions and discourse. 5.1.2. Stakeholder perception of UNCCD as a stronger actor on gender in the DLDD agenda.	COP and CRIC decisions, reports, declarations and Gender Caucus documentation; UNCCD Gender Action Plan, GAP Roadmap and GAP evaluation materials; interim and final project reports; Annex I PMF worksheet; communications annex and campaign analytics; PRAIS reporting data and national reporting materials; UNCCD gender policy and internal guidance;	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews Survey	• Thematic Analysis • Content Analysis • Comparative Analysis • Limited contribution analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
			GM/PPP/TPP portfolio records, project concept notes, project documents and gender action plans; selected country or TPP case examples; partner reports and outputs; stakeholder survey; interviews with UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism, Government of Canada, Parties/National Focal Points, CSOs, technical partners, financing partners and gender experts.		
Sustainability					
EQ6. To what extent are project results likely to be sustained after closure?	JC6.1 Institutionalisation within UNCCD	6.1.1. Status and funding continuity of gender-related posts/functions post-project. 6.1.2. Continued use of gender instruments (policies, tools, reporting systems, PPP processes). 6.1.3. Existence of follow-on or scaled initiatives (e.g. AfDB, integrated programmes).	Final project report; Annex I PMF worksheet; financial reports and post-project budget information; staffing records, ToRs and funding status of gender-related posts/functions; UNCCD gender policy and internal guidance; GAP	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews Survey	• Thematic Analysis • Content Analysis • Comparative Analysis • Limited contribution analysis Triangulation between data

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
		6.1.4. Identified risks to sustainability (funding, staffing, political priorities) and mitigation measures.	Roadmap and GAP evaluation materials; PRAIS reporting system and guidance; WOCAT tool/module documentation and user analytics; GM/PPP/TPP procedures, checklists, project pipeline records and gender action plans; documentation on follow-on or scaled initiatives, including AfDB and other partner-supported programmes; donor correspondence and resource mobilisation records, where available; stakeholder survey; interviews with UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism, Government of Canada, WOCAT, FAO, financing partners, selected Parties/National Focal Points and technical partners.		sources, data collection techniques, and data types

Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
Cross-cutting issues					
EQ7. To what extent was the project implemented in a participatory and gender-responsive manner?	JC7.1 Inclusive participation	7.1.1. Participation levels in key activities (gender balance, regional coverage, stakeholder types). 7.1. 2. Evidence of meaningful engagement of women’s organisations, CSOs, IPLCs and youth. 7.1.3 % of female respondents to survey/interviews	Interim and final project reports; Annex I PMF worksheet; communications annex; workshop, training, webinar and consultation reports; participant lists and attendance records, disaggregated by sex, region and stakeholder type where available; Gender Caucus reports and participant data; COP/CRIC side-event documentation; WOCAT field-testing and consultation records; land tenure consultation records; TPP stakeholder consultation reports and gender assessments; survey respondent data; interview sample records; stakeholder survey; interviews with UNCCD Secretariat, Global Mechanism, Parties/National Focal	• Document review • Semi-structured interviews Survey	• Thematic Analysis • Content Analysis • Comparative Analysis • Limited contribution analysis Triangulation between data sources, data collection techniques, and data types

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Evaluation Question	Judgement Criteria (JC)	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection techniques	Data analysis methods
			Points, women’s organisations, CSOs, IPLC representatives, youth representatives, WOCAT, FAO, Landesa, UN Women and other relevant partners.		

Annex 2. Online survey questionnaire

Dear colleague,

This survey is part of the independent evaluation of the project “Long-term institutional support for integrating gender equality in the UNCCD”, funded by the Government of Canada and implemented by the UNCCD secretariat and the Global Mechanism. The survey aims to collect short, structured feedback from stakeholders who have directly engaged with project-supported activities on gender equality, land tenure, sustainable land management and project preparation.

Answering the survey is voluntary and should take you between **10 minutes**. Survey responses will remain completely **anonymous**. If you have any questions or comments regarding this evaluation in general, or this online survey, your contact persons are: _____

The survey is submitted by clicking the “submit” button. All information provided will be held securely and kept confidential, no IP address will be kept or tracked, so please feel free to express your views. Please kindly fill the questionnaire by ___, 2026.

The final page of the Survey contains a “Submit” button. By clicking the ‘Submit’ button of the survey you will agree to participate in this survey.

Please, contact for any further details with regards to this Evaluation.

Thank you very much in advance for your time and support!

1. Type of organisation

- National government ministry
- National government agency
- Regional organisation
- International organisation / UN agency
- International financial institution / development bank
- Civil society organisation / NGO
- Other (please specify)

2. Your role in relation to UNCCD

- UNCCD National Focal Point or alternate
- Technical official working on land, environment, agriculture or climate
- Technical official working on gender/women’s affairs
- Staff of partner organisation or accredited entity (e.g. UNDP, UNEP, AfDB, etc.)
- Other (please specify)

3. Type(s) of engagement with UNCCD gender-related work under this project (Select all that apply.)

- Support on project or programme preparation (e.g. TPPs, GEF/GCF proposals, gender assessments, gender gap analyses)

- Participation in gender-related policy or land tenure activities (e.g. consultations on land tenure guidance, GAP Roadmap, Gender Caucus, Her Land campaign)
- Participation in capacity-building / training / webinars on gender, land tenure or gender-responsive SLM technologies
- Use of UNCCD/WOCAT tools or guidance on gender-responsive SLM technologies
- Other (please specify)

4. Overall, how useful was UNCCD’s support on gender-related issues for your work?

- Very useful
- Quite useful
- Somewhat useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all
- Not applicable / do not know

5. For those who worked on project/programme preparation: To what extent did UNCCD’s gender-related support (e.g. gender assessments, studies, advice) influence the design of the project(s) you worked on?

- A great deal
- To some extent
- Only slightly
- Not at all
- Not applicable / I did not work on project preparation

6. For those involved in policy / land tenure / reporting activities: To what extent did UNCCD’s gender-related guidance or activities (e.g. land tenure technical guide, GAP Roadmap, reporting guidance, gender events) influence national policies, plans or reporting in your context?

- A great deal
- To some extent
- Only slightly
- Not at all
- Not applicable / I did not work on project preparation

7. Please briefly describe one concrete way in which UNCCD’s gender-related support or tools influenced your work (for example, a change in a project design, a policy document, a consultation process or a way of working).

[Open text]

8. From your perspective, what were the most valuable aspects of UNCCD’s support on gender equality? (Select up to two.)

- Availability of gender expertise and advice
- Support for gender assessments / studies (e.g. gap analysis, value chain, socio-economic and gender analysis)
- Practical tools or guidance (e.g. manuals, technical guides, checklists, templates)
- Convening of stakeholders (e.g. workshops, caucuses, consultations, webinars)
- Visibility and advocacy (e.g. campaigns, high-level events, communications)

- Other (please specify)

9. In your view, what were the main limitations or gaps in UNCCD’s gender-related support? (Select up to two.)

- Limited duration or follow-up
- Limited resources (e.g. funding, staff time)
- Timing did not align with national or partner processes
- Tools/guidance were not sufficiently adapted to the national context
- Limited engagement with certain stakeholder groups (e.g. local organisations, women’s groups)
- Other (please specify)

10. Looking ahead, which type of support on gender equality and land issues would be most useful for your work?(Select up to three.)

- Further technical assistance on integrating gender into project design and funding proposals
- Additional guidance and tools on gender-responsive land tenure and women’s land rights
- Capacity-building and training for national and sub-national actors
- Support for data, monitoring and reporting on gender in DLDD/LDN
- Support for South-South learning and exchange on gender and DLDD
- Other (please specify)

11. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with UNCCD’s collaboration with you/your organisation on gender-related issues?

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Not applicable / Do not know

12. Is there anything else you would like the evaluation to know about your experience with UNCCD’s gender-related work under this project?

[Open text]

Thank you for completing this survey. Your feedback is invaluable in shaping the future of UNCCD’s efforts to integrate gender in its initiatives.

Annex 3. Interview guide

Introduction for all stakeholders

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. The purpose of this discussion is to gather insights on the **Project “Long-term institutional support for integrating gender equality into UNCCD”** as part of its formative evaluation. Your responses will help assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of the initiative. All information will be kept confidential and used solely for evaluation purposes.

Do you agree to participate (Yes/No) - verbal confirmation

Interview Guide 1: UNCCD Secretariat and Global Mechanism Staff

Questions	Responses
Relevance	
In your view, how well was the project aligned with UNCCD priorities and the GAP?	
Which gender-related workstreams benefited most from the Canada grant?	
Were there important stakeholder needs that the project addressed particularly well or insufficiently?	
Coherence	
How effectively were activities coordinated between the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism?	
To what extent did the project complement other UNCCD or partner initiatives?	
Effectiveness	
What would you consider the project’s most significant achievements? To what extent has the project contributed to more systematic integration of gender within UNCCD processes or project preparation?	
How useful were the land tenure, WOCAT/SLM and TPP-related activities and tools?	
Can you provide examples where project-supported gender analysis or guidance influenced decisions or project design?	
Has the project changed how UNCCD deals with and is perceived when it comes to gender issues?	
Efficiency	

Were staffing, technical expertise and financial resources adequate? What were the main challenges?	
What were the main implementation bottlenecks or delays, and how were they addressed?	
Sustainability and impact	
Which results are most likely to continue after project closure?	
What are the main risks to sustaining progress on gender within UNCCD?	
Lessons and recommendations	
What lessons should inform future support to gender equality within UNCCD?	
What would you recommend for future institutional support or follow-on funding?	

Interview Guide 2: Parties/National Focal Points/Government Representatives

Questions	Responses
Relevance	
How relevant were the project-supported activities to your country's priorities and needs?	
Which areas were most useful (e.g. land tenure, reporting, GAP implementation, TPP preparation, gender assessments)?	
Effectiveness	
Did the project contribute to strengthening awareness, policies, reporting or institutional attention to gender issues?	
Were the guidance materials, consultations or tools useful in practice?	
Did the project influence the design or preparation of LDN projects or programmes in your country?	
Participation and partnerships	
Were relevant stakeholders adequately consulted and involved?	
Were women's organisations, CSOs or local stakeholders meaningfully engaged?	
Efficiency	
Were the support modalities and coordination arrangements effective and timely?	
What challenges affected implementation or participation?	
Sustainability and impact	
Are the approaches, tools or processes introduced through the project likely to continue?	

Have you observed any broader changes in attention to gender equality or women’s land rights linked to this work?	
Lessons and recommendations	
What should UNCCD strengthen or improve in future support?	
What additional support would be most useful going forward?	

Interview Guide 3: Technical and other partners and experts

Questions	Responses
Relevance and coherence	
How relevant was the project to broader work on gender equality, land tenure, SLM or LDN?	
How well did the project complement the work of your organisation or other initiatives?	
Did the Canada grant fill important technical or financing gaps?	
Effectiveness	
What do you consider the project’s main contributions or achievements?	
Did the project strengthen UNCCD’s institutional capacity or visibility on gender issues?	
How useful were the project-supported tools, studies, assessments or guidance materials?	
In your experience, did gender analysis meaningfully influence TPP preparation or implementation?	
Efficiency	
How effective was collaboration with UNCCD and/or the GM?	
Were technical inputs, coordination mechanisms and timelines adequate?	
Sustainability and impact	
Are the approaches and partnerships established through the project likely to continue?	
Has the project contributed to broader changes in discourse, policy or practice on gender and DLDD?	
Lessons and recommendations	
What lessons should inform future UNCCD gender-related work?	
What improvements would strengthen future partnerships or support modalities?	