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Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties – consideration of draft reporting guidelines for reporting entities referred to in decision 8/COP.8

Common framework for the definition and selection of best practices

Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and format of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties: consideration of draft reporting guidelines as referred to in decision 8/COP.8

Note by the secretariat*

Addendum

Common framework for the definition and selection of best practices

Summary

1. By its decision 3/COP.8, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) stipulated that one of the core functions of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) is to collect and disseminate best practices. At the seventh session of the CRIC, Parties asked the secretariat to develop a common framework for the definition and selection of best practices to be considered by Parties at the eighth session of CRIC (CRIC 8).

2. The proposed framework presented in this document provides a possible categorization of future UNCCD best practices that are aligned to the 10-year strategic plan and framework to

* The submission of this document is delayed because of the need to conduct further consultations with specialized international organizations on this matter before its finalization.

enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018). The report identifies the two main purposes for collecting UNCCD best practices, delineates methodologies and procedures for the collection and validation of best practices based on a methodology established by the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies, and outlines possible scenarios for the provision of best practices by a series of UNCCD stakeholders.

3. Parties at CRIC 8 may wish to consider the document and make recommendations to COP on making the proposed framework operational for the forthcoming reporting cycle starting in 2010. It is suggested to initiate a trial phase whereby best practices may be collected on one or two of the seven proposed thematic clusters.

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I. Introduction

1. The determination and dissemination of best practices on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is one of the core functions given to the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) in decision 3/COP.8 and the 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018) (The Strategy). Taking into consideration the importance of this function, Parties requested the secretariat to develop a common framework for the definition and selection of best practices for consideration by Parties at the eighth session of the CRIC (CRIC 8).

2. The present document provides such a framework and furnishes information to Parties on the overall structure required to collect, validate and disseminate UNCCD best practices for the review process conducted by the CRIC.

3. A set of criteria is required to identify UNCCD best practices emerging from national reports and reports received from other reporting entities, using relevant themes and topics. To this end, this document:

(a) Provides a definition and classification of best practices relating to the Convention and its implementation, with particular regard to the strategic and operational objectives of The Strategy, relevant provisions of the Convention and the decisions by the Conference of the Parties (COP);

(b) Identifies the providers and final users of information relating to best practices;

(c) Identifies the sources of and procedures for receiving information on best practices from country Parties and/or through reports from various reporting entities and the Committee on Science and Technology (CST);

(d) Identifies procedures and methodologies for validating good practices according to priorities, including mechanisms to delegate these functions to institutions to be identified by Parties;

(e) Provides a sample format for reporting good practices in line with The Strategy;

(f) Identifies procedures and the means by which best practices would be disseminated, including web-based means;

(g) Makes recommendations on institutional linkages with organizations that could assist in the compilation and analysis of best practices on different themes.

4. The document emphasizes that harmonization is needed to achieve a coherent data set for global review fed by the CST and CRIC processes and aims to identify the sources of information and the ways in which this information is provided to the CRIC. The document provides a general overview of existing data sets on best practices relevant to the UNCCD that are available on the Internet, with a view to eliciting ways to involve relevant institutions in the

exercise. Proposals are also made on how external information not submitted through official reports could be made available to the CRIC.

II. Background

5. The secretariat is currently developing a new reporting system to document and monitor the implementation of the Convention and The Strategy. The drafting of reporting tools is ongoing and dependent on the decisions made by the ninth session of the COP (COP 9) on sets of impact and performance indicators. According to the proposals contained in document ICCD/CRIC(8)/5, the new reporting format will contain a section on best practices, success stories and lessons learned – since these are considered an integral part of an effective knowledge-sharing system to support both policymakers and end-users in the implementation of the Convention. The collection and dissemination of best practices have therefore become essential elements in the review of implementation. This necessitates an assessment of what constitutes best practice under The Strategy, and how examples will be collected, validated, analysed and disseminated to a wide variety of the Convention's stakeholders in the framework of The Strategy.

6. The CRIC will play a central role in reviewing the implementation of The Strategy and in determining and disseminating best practices on the implementation of the UNCCD. Because of the interlinkages with regard to best practices between the CST and the CRIC, the views of the CST and CRIC Bureaux were taken into consideration during the drafting of this document.

III. Proposed themes for the collection of best practices

7. The broad scope of objectives contained in The Strategy naturally provides for a broad range of different themes relevant to the Convention through which best practices can be collected. A categorization of best practices into thematic clusters is needed to structure and facilitate the management of information on this matter. Building on the thematic clusters previously used in the review of implementation (the key thematic topics and priority areas contained in decisions 1/COP.5 and 8/COP.4), the collection of best practices should focus on the four strategic objectives and the five operational objectives of The Strategy. A comparison between the previously used thematic clusters and the objectives of The Strategy shows that congruence is easily achieved:

(a) Decision 8/COP.4, "Declaration on the commitments under the Convention to enhance implementation of the obligations of the UNCCD", lists the strategic areas for action at all levels in the decade 2001–2010 in accordance with national plans and priorities and in conformity with the provisions of the Convention;

(b) Decision 1/COP.5 defines the key thematic topics for review by the CRIC, up to and including the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties.

8. The themes identified in these two decisions have been compared to the strategic objectives and operational objectives and their respective expected impacts and outcomes as formulated in The Strategy. From this comparison, and based on the premise that

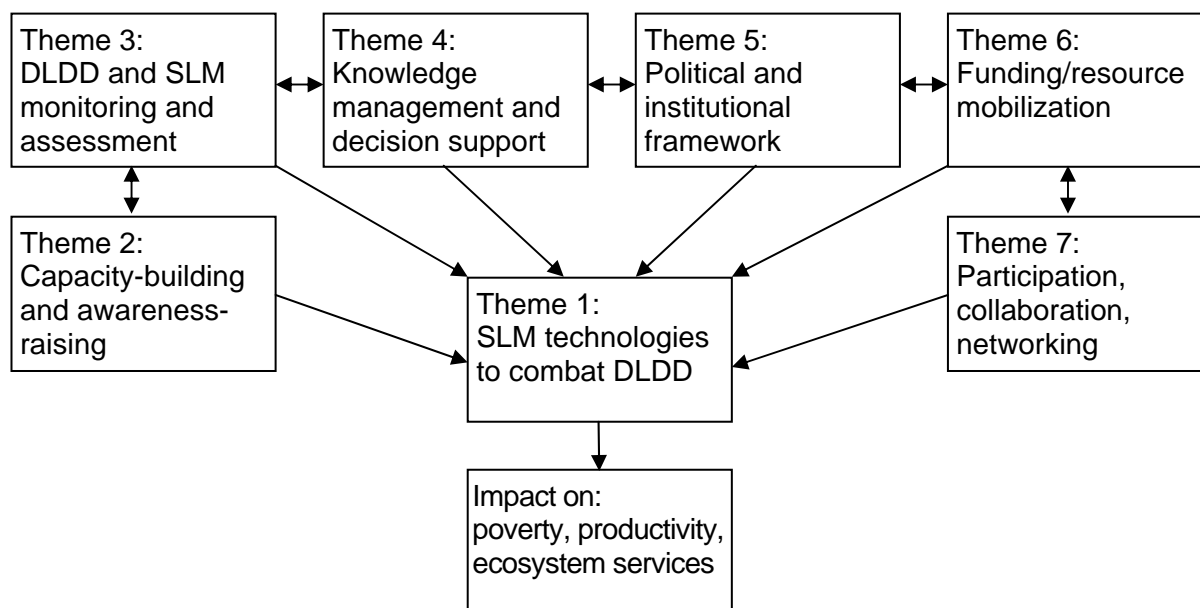
best practices need to be aligned to The Strategy, the following seven themes have been identified along which best practices can be classified for future reporting:

1. SLM technologies, including adaptation
 2. Capacity-building and awareness-raising
 3. DLDD and SLM monitoring and assessment/research
 4. Knowledge management and decision support
 5. Policy, legislative, institutional framework
 6. Funding/resource mobilization
 7. Participation, collaboration and networking
- } An enabling environment for the implementation of SLM technologies (indirect impact)

9. While themes two to seven represent different elements of the enabling environment needed for the implementation and dissemination/up-scaling of sustainable land management (SLM) technologies (indirect impact), these themes affect adoption, adaptation and innovation of SLM technologies (theme 1). In contrast, theme 1 comprises all actions on the ground that have a direct impact on desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) mitigation.

10. The seven themes are linked through interactions and interdependencies, and they might overlap in some cases, that is, certain projects and activities carried out under the Convention might not be clearly classifiable into one of the seven themes.

Figure 1. Interactions between themes and the impact of the themes on the goals of the Convention



11. The seven themes are explained in more detail below and reference is made to the objectives of The Strategy and the relevant COP decisions from which the themes have been derived.

Theme 1: Sustainable land management technologies, including adaptation¹ (decision 1/COP.5, decision 8/COP.4, and strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3)

12. SLM technologies that directly contribute to the prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation of desertification and land degradation on cropland, grazing land and woodland, with the aim of improving the livelihoods of affected populations and conserving ecosystem services. Successful implementation of SLM technologies is the base for achieving strategic objectives 1–3. Furthermore, this theme integrates five of the strategic areas defined by decision 8/COP.4: (a) sustainable land use management, including water, soil and vegetation in affected areas; (b) sustainable use and management of rangelands; (c) development of sustainable agricultural and ranching production systems; (d) development of new and renewable energy sources; and (e) launching of reforestation/afforestation programmes/ intensification of soil conservation programmes.

Theme 2: Capacity-building and awareness-raising (decision 1/COP.5, decision 8/COP.4, operational objective 1 and operational objective 4)

13. This theme comprises: (a) capacity-building to improve planning, alignment and implementation of national action programmes (NAPs) to facilitate processes of data collection, monitoring and evaluation and knowledge exchange, train advisers in technical aspects of SLM measures, and so on; and (b) awareness-raising and education (on environmental issues and the importance of SLM) at different levels (school, youth, general public, decision makers/policymakers).

Theme 3: DLDD and SLM monitoring and assessment / research (decision 8/COP.4, decision 1/COP.5, operational objective 3)

14. This theme comprises: (a) desertification and SLM monitoring (state and trends over time and space), including the setting up of benchmarks; (b) research activities to assess DLDD-relevant factors and processes (biophysical and socio-economic) including interactions between SLM and adaptation to/mitigation of climate change and indirect drivers (policy, institutional, financial and socio-economic) of desertification/land degradation as well as barriers to sustainable land management; and (c) development of early warning systems for drought forecasting based on monitoring of climate data (drought indices).

¹ The terms practices, measures and technologies are often used as synonyms in the context of SLM. To avoid confusion between the terms SLM practices and best practices, we use the following terms in this report:

Best practice is a general expression (not restricted to SLM), referring to all themes (including e.g. financial and institutional framework)

An *SLM technology* is defined as an intervention at the field level (on cropland, grazing land, forest land, or other land) which maintains or enhances the productive capacity of the land in areas affected by or prone to degradation (including prevention or reduction of soil erosion, compaction and salinity; conservation or drainage of soil water; maintenance or improvement of soil fertility, etc.). A technology consists of one or more measures belonging to the following categories: agronomic measures (e.g. intercropping, contour cultivation, mulching), vegetative measures (e.g. tree planting, hedge barriers, grass strips), structural measures (e.g. graded banks or bunds, level bench terrace), management measures (e.g. land use change, area closure, rotational grazing).

Theme 4: Knowledge management and decision support (decision 8/COP.4, operational objective 3)

15. This theme comprises: (a) documentation and evaluation of DLDD and SLM knowledge and experience (including traditional and scientific knowledge); (b) dissemination and exchange of knowledge, facilitating access by developing countries to knowledge and technology; and (c) decision support based on improved knowledge on DLDD-relevant factors and processes.

Theme 5: Policy, legislative and institutional framework (decision 1/COP.5, operational objective 2)

16. This theme comprises: (a) elaboration and implementation of NAPs and DLDD strategies and the alignment of NAPs with the UNCCD strategic objectives; and (b) setting up legislative and institutional frameworks / arrangements (e.g. legal regulations, land tenure, financial services), providing an enabling environment for the implementation of The Strategy.

Theme 6: Funding and resource mobilization (decision 8/COP.4, strategic objective 4; operational objective 5)

17. This theme covers all aspects of funding and the provision of financial resources and other forms of support to affected countries for UNCCD activities, including the conclusion of partnership agreements, and the mobilization of new and additional funding from various sources

Theme 7: Participation, cooperation and networking (decision 1/COP.5, strategic objective 4, operational objective 1 (outcome 1.3); operational objective 2 (outcome 2.5))

18. This theme covers all efforts linked to enhanced participation and strengthened cooperation by all relevant UNCCD actors (including civil society organizations (CSOs)) at all levels. It involves building up partnerships between national and international actors, and the promotion of linkages and synergies between the UNCCD and other environmental conventions, multilateral agreements and national development strategies.

IV. Overall rationale for the collection, validation and dissemination of best practices based on partnerships and synergies

19. Best practices are considered a central part of the new reporting system, as is outlined in the introduction above. To structure and facilitate the management of information, best practices have been categorized in the seven thematic clusters (see chapter III).

A. Definition of best practices

20. Good practices and best practices are not synonymous. A common understanding and definition of both is therefore necessary. The following is proposed: practice is any measure, method or activity; good practices are measures, methods or activities that match a specific objective or are suitable for a specific natural and human environment; and

best practices are measures, methods or activities that perform best or achieve the highest impact according to predefined criteria assessed through a validation process.

B. Definition of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification best practices

21. Best practices in the context of the UNCCD are measures, methods or activities that are considered successful in terms of achieving desired outcomes (good performance) and contributing to expected impacts formulated in The Strategy. The success of a practice depends on the previously defined objectives and on the context (natural and human environment).

C. Rationale for collecting United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification best practices

22. The declared overall goal of the UNCCD is to prevent, control and reverse desertification/ land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought in order to support poverty reduction (livelihoods) and environmental sustainability (ecosystem services). The collection of best practices within the seven themes is designed to document how practices, methods or activities have contributed to achieving this overall goal. Such contributions should be expressed in term of performance (or the outcomes of an activity) and impact (on the socio-economic and ecosystem environment).

23. This is also postulated in the general criteria for SLM best practices defined by the Centre for Advanced Training in Rural Development. Best practices should have measurable outputs and impacts, should be replicable and adaptable to local context, and should fulfil general sustainability criteria (environmental friendliness, economic and financial viability, technical appropriateness, social and cultural acceptance, institutional viability)².

D. Proposed frameworks for the collection, validation and dissemination of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification best practices

24. Consultations held with the CRIC and CST bureaux have indicated that the collection and dissemination of UNCCD best practices by the CRIC should serve two purposes:

(a) Establishing an experience-sharing platform that will allow the CRIC to draw on commonly agreed standardized practices and advise on measures, including policy measures, to be taken by the COP;

(b) Developing a knowledge-management system that will assist in the collection, identification and selection of good practices, with a view to up-scaling them.

25. This two-pronged approach has implications for the framework of the collection and dissemination of best practices. While the first component only necessitates changes in the dissemination of UNCCD best practices, the second entails a much more detailed handling of the information obtained by Parties.

² Humboldt University, 'Self-Assessing Good Practices and Scaling-up Strategies in Sustainable Agriculture', available at <<http://edoc.hu-berlin.de/series/sle/211/PDF/211.pdf>>.

1. Considerations regarding the experience-sharing platform

26. Best practices or good practices are by definition site-specific, which means that one cannot assume that the same practice would work in a different situation, country, and so on. In the context of the CRIC, collecting and disseminating best practices would simply mean to collect those best practices, make them available to the wider public (stored on and made accessible from a central server) and allow Parties to decide whether some of the aspects would be suitable for their own purpose. CRIC would need to ensure that there were a mechanism and technical infrastructures in place that enabled focal points to access the information for their own further consideration outside the context of the CRIC review. In that context, the collection and documentation of best practices would be an integral part of the reporting exercise and could be called for every two years. Reporting on and the collection of best practices can be done in a more open format (project reports, publications, handbooks etc.) or using a standard format (questionnaires/database), which would have the benefit of allowing further evaluation, use and analysis of the information collected by the CRIC.

27. CRIC could broaden this scenario by determining criteria for a practice to be a good/ best practice (pre-selected conditions, e.g., for SLM technologies such as spread, cost-effectiveness, improved livelihood and ecosystem health), and developing a catalogue of criteria for all seven themes against which reporting entities identify and select the practices they report on.

28. When the reporting and documentation is done in a standardized format that allows evaluation and the use of the information, the CRIC could identify, select and discuss commonalities, and issue policy recommendations or guidelines on best practices for consideration by the COP.³

2. Considerations regarding the knowledge-sharing system

29. Central to this framework for the collection, validation and dissemination of UNCCD best practices would be a global database with a modular structure (see figure 2). The database should be hosted and managed centrally and needs to be accessible to all users and providers of information through the Internet. A central institution should be identified that is responsible for the development of the framework, the coordination of reporting processes, relevant capacity-building measures, data management at the global level, the setting of standards, the definition of principles for module formats and procedures, the clarification of terminology and controlling the quality of inputs.

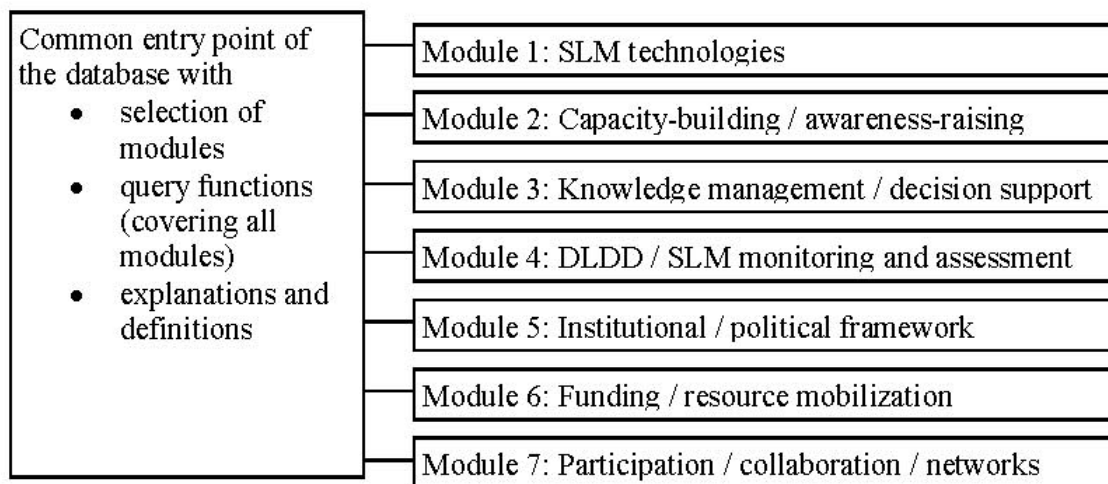
30. The global database would be used for:

- Documentation and/or storage of information on best practices
- Exchange and dissemination of information
- Selection of best practices (by criteria)

³ An example of such a principle would be increased carbon sequestration for climate change mitigation leads to increased soil organic matter and improved soil cover which leads to conservation agriculture. How conservation agriculture can be adopted or implemented will depend on the local natural and human context and the environment

- Validation of practices and decision support systems to identify best practices for up-scaling

Figure 2: Structure of the UNCCD database: Pool of knowledge on best practices



31. The UNCCD monitoring and assessment systems used by affected country Parties at the national, subregional and regional levels and databases maintained by competent centres at the subregional or regional levels will be considered the main sources of information in order to ensure that the global database contains appropriate information and practices. This would mean that affected country Parties would integrate into their national monitoring and assessment systems, established as part of the UNCCD capacity-building initiative for monitoring and assessment, a national database that is compatible with the global database. This would facilitate the transfer of information from the national to the global level.

32. CSOs, and especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which often work and collect experience at the grass-roots level, could be enabled to report on best practices to the UNCCD directly, if Parties deem their input important. They could be enabled to enter their data into the national database. Mechanisms to govern the supply of information to national databases by civil society groups would need to be established in order to ensure quality control.

33. Depending on the cooperation arrangements in a region, a regional database hosted by an organization with access to all affected countries in that region could be envisaged as a cost-effective means of collecting best practices.

34. With regard to other reporting entities such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM), it is proposed that, where appropriate and according to their mandates, these directly report to the global database.

E. The need for task forces or expert groups to partner with the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in the development of theme-specific modules

35. In order to establish the global database, the following issues need to be addressed for each of the seven modules:

- Establish a set of indicators to measure the outcomes and impacts of best practices
- Create module formats for the documentation of best practices
- Define methods and procedures for data collection
- Define mechanisms for the validation of information
- Establish networks with partnering institution that can assist in the documentation and dissemination of best practices

36. Formats and methods for the seven themes should be standardized and approved to ensure comparability. Standardized information is a requirement to allow the CRIC to compare and make recommendations at the global level, and user friendliness, flexibility and capacity-building must also be given due attention to ensure that affected country Parties can report on best practices.

37. Work relating to the issues listed above requires collaboration between the UNCCD secretariat, the GM and theme-specific expert groups and/or institutions.⁴ Partner institutions would need to be identified for each theme, as well as collaboration schemes. Annex I provides a list of institutions with specific knowledge of and/or expertise in the different themes. This will serve as a starting point in the search for partner institutions that will ensure that UNCCD best practices are widely disseminated beyond the reach of the Convention process, and that synergistic approaches to the collection of best practices are promoted.

F. A set of indicators to measure the outcomes and impacts of best practices

38. For each of the seven themes a common set of appropriate performance indicators must be defined in consultation with the expert groups and/or institutions to measure the results or outcomes generated or achieved by a best practice. These indicators should be measurable, simple and robust.⁵

39. While the performance of a project or activity should be measured with respect to a specific theme or a specific operational objective, the impact of a practice should be assessed with respect to the strategic objectives of The Strategy.

⁴ E.g. the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technology (WOCAT) has developed tools, methods and formats for the documentation, evaluation and dissemination of knowledge on SLM technologies and can thus be considered a potential partner for theme 1.

⁵ The CST is responsible for developing a minimum set of indicators for the strategic objectives of The Strategy, taking into account existing relevant indicators at the country level. This process is still ongoing. The GM and the secretariat will compile impact indicators to measure strategic objective 4.

G. Module formats for documentation of best practices

40. Considering the diversities of the proposed themes it is impossible to develop a single common format for Convention-related best practices. Instead, module formats for best practices under the UNCCD would need to be established for each theme.

41. These module formats for documentation of best practices should be developed according to the following principles:

- Clear and logical structure
- Mix of qualitative descriptions, semi-quantitative (categorized) and quantitative information
- Comprehensive information on all aspects of the theme
- Concise format
- Visualization, where appropriate, and localization

42. While acknowledging the diversity of the information required, it is possible to propose a basic common structure for the module formats applicable for all themes, containing the following main sections:

Box 1. A proposed general structure for module formats (not theme-specific)

1. Description

- Context of the best practice: frame conditions (natural and human environment)
- Problems addressed (direct and indirect causes) and objectives of the best practice
- Activities (implementation steps, methods used, etc.)
- Inputs and costs
- Institutions / actors involved (collaboration, participation, role of participants)

2. Analysis

- Outcomes (performance indicators)
- Contribution to impact (impact indicators)
- Connection to or dependency on other themes
- Adoption / acceptance – spread, replicability, adaptability to local context
- Lessons learned

43. Based on the above outline, detailed formats need to be defined for each module. These formats can contain core information, which is mandatory, and an additional section where individual circumstances can be reflected. This approach allows some flexibility in the provision of information while ensuring that simple core parameters used for comparison will be provided for each submitted best practice.

44. Taking theme 1, “SLM technologies”, as an example, a standardized format for best practices was developed by the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) in 2007.⁶

Box 2. WOCAT standardized format for best practices

Description:	concise narrative description of the technology, including information on overall purpose, establishment and maintenance procedures, costs and natural and human environment, land use and land degradation problems
Photographs:	two photographs (overview and details of the technology)
Technical drawing:	technical specifications (spacing/dimensions of structures, etc.)
Map:	including the information on area of application
Land use:	land use type and land use-related problems
Conservation measure:	category, technical functions and degradation addressed
Natural environment:	climate, soils and terrain
Human environment:	land tenure, land use rights, market orientation, technical knowledge and off-farm income
Establishment:	activities, inputs and costs (per ha)
Maintenance:	activities, inputs and costs (per ha)
Adoption/Acceptance:	rate of adoption, incentives used, adoption trend
Cost-benefits analysis:	short and long term
On-site impacts:	production and socio-economic / socio-cultural / ecological and other benefits and disadvantages
Off-site impacts:	off-site advantages and disadvantages
Concluding statements:	strengths and how to sustain them, weaknesses and how to overcome them

45. This module format can be used as guidance for the development of subsequent modules, which should be framed using a similar approach, but one that is geared to the specificity of the proposed themes listed above.

H. Methods and procedures for data collection

46. Based on the contents defined for each thematic module, standardized tools need be developed for the documentation of best practices at the national, subregional or regional levels which are geared to assisting focal points in the provision of information. Documentation tools should be specific to the theme and used by all partnering institutions.

47. For the documentation of SLM technologies, comprehensive questionnaires can be used that cover all aspects of the format and which are linked to the electronic databases at the national and global levels.⁷ The website design correlates to the structure of the questionnaires.

48. The questionnaire requires qualitative descriptions, on the one hand, and semi-quantitative (pre-defined answer categories) and quantitative data, on the other hand. This is

⁶ For an example of an elaborated example on theme 1 see <<http://www.wocat.net/templ.asp>>, Technology example China.

⁷ The WOCAT questionnaire on SLM Technologies is available at <<http://www.wocat.net/quest.asp>>.

crucial for achieving comparable results. Semi-quantitative and quantitative questions mostly comprise a comment section for additional explanations.

49. To ensure high data quality, capacity-building will be needed to train focal points and other users in using the questionnaires. The first step of the documentation process is to identify the practices to be assessed. Resource persons (key informants) and relevant documents are then identified and consulted in order to complete the questionnaire either on paper or using direct recording in the database.

50. The costs of a questionnaire-based information collection system should be evaluated in terms of efficiency and compared to alternative systems.

51. Once documented, data on best practices will have to go through a quality assurance process. Quality control should be carried out by a central, mandated, theme-specific institution. Reviewers must be identified and given the tasks of revising data, suggesting improvements and identifying gaps.

52. Methods of measurement must be clearly defined for each theme and jointly agreed to guarantee comparable results. A joint effort is also needed between different institutions and programmes with respect to impact assessments. An agreement between relevant international initiatives or institutions in the fields of DLDD and SLM on a common set of indicators, associated with a common set of measuring methods, would allow comparison of results on a broad basis and lead to an unprecedentedly comprehensive assessment.

53. Box 3 summarizes the steps in data collection using standardized documentation tools.

Box 3. Summary of the steps in data collection using standardized documentation tools

- Development of comprehensive theme-specific questionnaires covering all aspects of the developed module format
- Establishment of an electronic database with a website design that correlates with the structure of the questionnaires and the module format. Setting up of a coordination team for data management and quality control
- Training data collectors to use the questionnaires
- Identification of practices to be documented and evaluated
- Identification and consultation of resource persons (key informants) and relevant documents
- Recording data: completing the hard copy questionnaire or directly entering data into the web-based database
- Quality assurance through management team or external reviewers

V. Overview of existing information on desertification/land degradation and drought-related best practices on the Internet and proposals for creating synergies with ongoing initiatives

A. Data sources of best practices regarding sustainable land management

54. In principle, all stakeholders engaged in the implementation of SLM projects at the planning and operational levels can or should be considered sources of information on best practices, such as international organizations and programmes (GEF, FAO, UNEP, etc.), national institutions (ministries of agriculture, water, environment, forestry, etc.) and bilateral programmes, NGOs, CSOs and so on.

55. Among others, the following organizations or programmes have already documented and made available good practices in SLM:

(a) United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) – success stories in land degradation;

(b) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations – Good Agricultural Practices (GAP);

(c) WOCAT;

(d) TerrAfrica knowledge base Partnership on Regional Sustainable Land Management;

(e) Sustainet – Sustainable Agriculture Information Network;

(f) Devecol;

(g) International Water Management Institute (IWMI) – Bright Spots;

(h) USAID – Frame;

(i) Drynet – Sustainable dryland initiatives;

(j) OASIS – dryland success stories;

(k) The World Bank's World Development Report (WDR) – Best practices.

56. The list is not exhaustive but demonstrates the challenges posed by the huge variety of different forms and formats (databases, books, collection of case studies, guides and handbooks) at the different levels. Special efforts would need to be made in order to make data comparable.

57. Given the diversity of the documentary output generated so far, there are two options for integrating the different pools of knowledge:

(a) Develop a platform with links to different existing databases on good and best practices:

- (i) Advantage: Easy and low cost;
- (ii) Challenge: information is not comparable, search options are limited and decision support integrating all data is not possible;

(b) Agree a common standardized format for each theme to be adopted by reporting entities and transfer existing relevant information into this new format:

- (i) Advantages: information from different sources is comparable and can be integrated into a common pool. Queries will allow a search of the whole pool of options generated from different sources. In the long-term, convergences in approaches to capture information related to DLDD/SLM may enhance the profile of the Convention and raise awareness at the global (decision-making) level;
- (ii) Challenges: a lot of existing relevant information is not available in the new format and will have to be transferred first. Transferring existing information on SLM practices into a new format will be time-consuming and complex, and thus expensive. Data gaps are unavoidable.

B. Proposals for creating synergies with ongoing initiatives

58. For practical purposes, the first solution should be pursued in order to make the maximum amount of information available to the CRIC in the short term. However, the Convention should also ensure that synergies with other ongoing processes are continued with the aim of synergizing efforts and financial costs in collecting and disseminating best practices. These coordination and cooperation frameworks should happen at various levels:

(a) At the national level, where focal points should engage in coordination activities to maximize the input to the database making use of relevant information from civil society and line ministries;

(b) At the regional level, where subregional or regional action programmes and also independent subregional or regional institutions could be co-opted for the purpose of promoting the collection and dissemination of best practices;

(c) At the global level, where the UNCCD secretariat should pursue synergies between the Rio conventions, using the Joint Liaison Group;

(d) At the stakeholder level, where the GM should pursue the promotion of best practices within the donor community.

VI. Stakeholders and procedures to collect best practices

A. Providers of information on best practices

59. Decision 8/COP.8 identifies affected country Parties, developed country Parties; United Nations agencies and IGOs, the GEF, the GM, the UNCCD secretariat, subregional action programmes and regional action programmes as reporting entities. It is assumed that all these stakeholders will contribute to the collection of best practices, taking into consideration their differing mandates and scopes of intervention.

B. Integration of information on best practices delivered by civil society organizations

60. The Convention does not foresee reporting procedures for CSOs within the UNCCD. Non-governmental organizations do not report directly to the COP, but instead provide input to the focal point for integration into the national report. This situation could lead to a significant loss of valuable information if exchange of information does not take place. The opportunity to evaluate and use good or best practices for knowledge sharing and up-scaling provides an entry point for NGOs and civil society at large to contribute to the pool of best practices.

61. A possible way to make use of the potential of CSOs to contribute to UNCCD best practices would be the creation of national or regional networks or competence centres that are linked to the UNCCD and function as a platform for knowledge exchange, service the pool of good practices, undertake quality control at the national or regional level and assist in evaluating and using this knowledge for decision-making and up-scaling of best practices. UNCCD focal points and the focal points of other international organizations, institutions (e.g. universities), national governmental and NGOs, as well as any CSOs that are active in the field of SLM in the country or region, could use this institution and regularly provide information to the central knowledge pool.

62. This system would enable more frequent submissions of best practices to the knowledge pool and detach the submission of best practices to the CRIC from the reporting process.

63. As a compromise, a mix of the two proposed procedures could be envisaged whereby best practices would still remain an integral part of reporting to the COP, while additional submissions could be made by other stakeholders using the online facilities.

64. The proposed procedure would entail the following steps:

(a) Build up a network of contributing partner institutions, including NGOs, CSOs, and so on, at the national, regional or global levels;

(b) Provide capacity-building or training;

(c) Provide standardized tools and methods for the documentation, evaluation and dissemination of information;

(d) Document relevant practices using the standardized tools;

(e) Quality assurance through the secretariat or a mandated institution with major theme-specific competences;

(f) Dissemination.

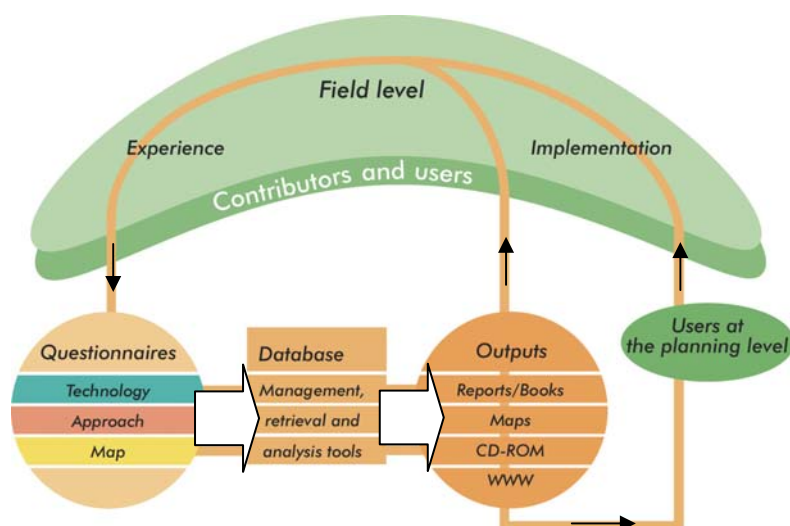
C. Users of good practices

65. The contributors and the users of good or best practices are often very close or even the same actors. In the field of SLM technologies the following providers and users of good practices have been identified:

(a) Providers – advisory services (field technicians, SLM specialists) and project staff in collaboration with land users;

(b) Users – land user, advisory services, planners and decision makers, donors.

Figure 3: Contributors and users of SLM information according to WOCAT



66. At the level of the CRIC, the collection of best practices and resulting COP guidance would be used by decision-makers at the international level and provide additional information to be used as part of the UNCCD communication strategy for raising the profile of the Convention as the highest decision-making organ the COP.

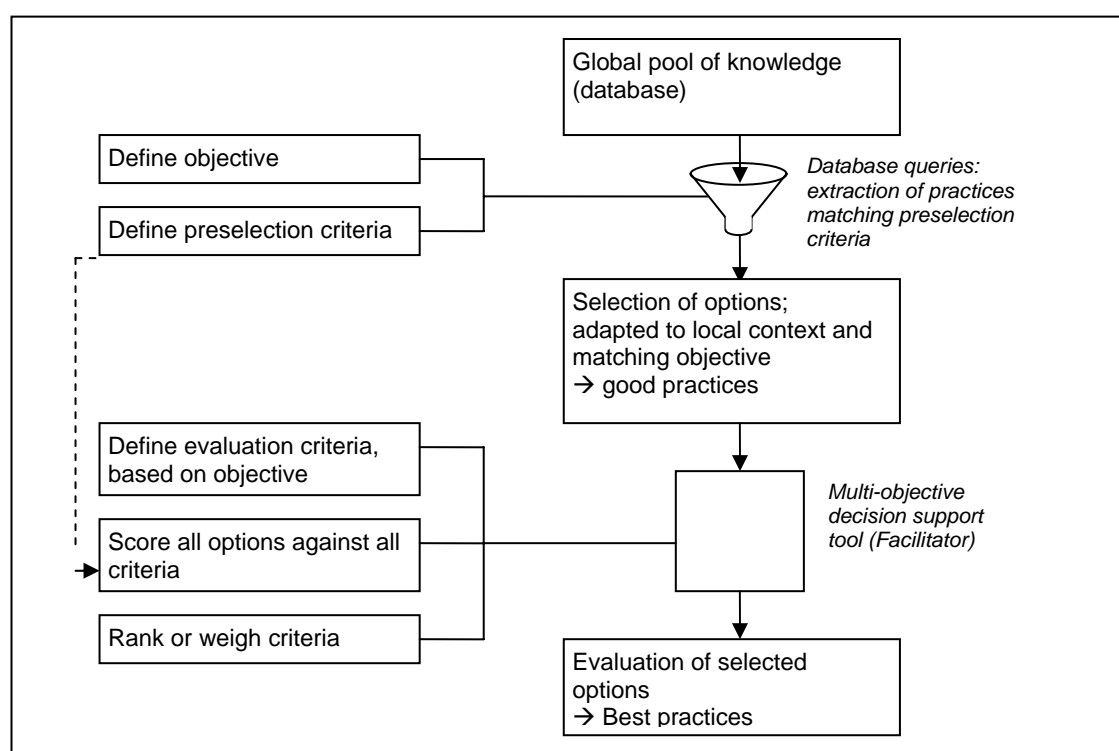
VII. Validation and dissemination of best practices at the national, subregional and regional levels

67. Best practices are not blueprint solutions. Their applicability very much depends on the objectives of the practice set out by the user in a given socio-economic and ecological setting. In order to make the collection of best practices by the CRIC a worthwhile effort, a flexible

decision support tool is needed that enables Parties to validate and select practices from a pool of options according to a set of criteria.

68. The selection and decision support tool presented below has been developed by EU-DESIRE and WOCAT for the implementation of good practices in the field of SLM in a given natural and human environment. The methodology is based on the WOCAT database pool of options and on Facilitator software – open-source computer software for multi-objective decision support (MODSS). This decision support tool is very flexible. The mechanism can be used for any topic to select and validate best practices according to context, objectives and selected indicators. The validation process is schematically illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Validation of SLM technologies: Decision support tool developed by EU-DESIRE and WOCAT



A. Selection and validation of best practices

69. The following are the proposed steps in the decision-support tool for the selection and validation of best practices:

Selection of good practices

(a) Define an objective, that is, a specific desired effect according to the needs of stakeholders, of the SLM practice to be implemented. This objective should refer to the mitigation of a cause or impact of degradation processes (e.g. improve soil water availability);

(b) Search the database (basket of options, global pool of SLM practices) for potential good practices. Specify preselection criteria describing the local conditions, such as type of degradation, land use type or climate, to narrow down the selection of potentially suitable practices to four from seven. Search is facilitated by data query tools where a number of key questions or criteria must be specified;

(c) Identify those options that fit the selected objective by verifying the impact section of each option. If necessary, translate or further adapt the options to the local context. Enter the selected options into the system.

Validation of good practices: Identify and rank criteria, and score options

(a) Identify a limited set of criteria or indicators, for example, soil cover, yield increase, and so on, and enter these into the system. The criteria should focus on the initially defined objective and reflect the most important qualities the practice should have, be relevant to the local context, take account of ecological, economic and socio-cultural factors, and include on- and off-site effects;

(b) Score all options against all criteria and enter the results into system;

(c) Rank the criteria in the system. Group the criteria into three categories (environmental, economic, socio-cultural) and rank them according to their importance. This assigns weights to the criteria;

(d) Analyse the results entered into the system and visualize the relative merits of the options. Options which receive good evaluations in each category are likely to be sustainable (ecologically effective, socially acceptable and financially viable) and thus can be considered best practices.

70. Negotiation of best practices among stakeholder groups, including trade-offs between human well-being and livelihood and ecosystem health, will lead to a final agreement on which options should be selected for implementation.

71. The whole process can be iterative, leading to revisions of options, criteria, scores and rankings. The tool illustrated above can be adapted to any topic for which comprehensive data on relevant indicators have been collected.

B. Dissemination / up-scaling of best practices

72. Dissemination of best practices can take place at different levels. It offers a platform for knowledge sharing and exchange in database and printed summary formats (overview books, fact sheets, etc.) that make best practices accessible to a wide audience, and provides policy recommendations or guidelines on best practices from the CRIC.

73. Dissemination can also be understood as an up-scaling process of best practices, which, as is noted above, will involve a whole system of knowledge management, decision-making and

implementation which, in case of SLM technologies, will involve capacity-building and extension.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

74. This report presents a framework for the collection, validation and dissemination of UNCCD best practices. It does not put forward a comprehensive system ready to be used by Parties. Guidance on the proposed framework is needed from Parties in order to implement the proposed actions. The Parties at CRIC 8 may wish to:

(a) Consider the proposed categorization of best practices in the seven thematic clusters proposed in this document and recommend their adoption by COP 9;

(b) Consider endorsing the proposed dual purpose of collecting UNCCD best practices through CRIC, which will enable it to issue policy recommendations on best practices for adoption by the COP while also enabling individual Parties to access and make use of the database outside the CRIC context;

(c) Select one or two topics from the seven thematic clusters for an initial submission of best practices to the CRIC performance review to be conducted in 2010;

(d) Consider proposals made with regard to the submission of best practices by CSOs outside the reporting cycle in order to increase the submission of best practices and maximize input to the CRIC;

(e) Request the secretariat to make technical and financial proposals for establishing a comprehensive knowledge-management system on best practices, based on a global database and using the methodologies and procedures described above,

(f) Request the secretariat to engage in partnership building with centres of excellence with the aim of building up an infrastructure for the effective collection and dissemination of UNCCD best practices that synergizes, to the extent possible, with existing initiatives capturing best practices relating to DLDD/SLM;

(g) Request the secretariat to assess the financial and technical input needed in order to operationalize the system proposed in this document and include related capacity-building at the national, subregional and regional levels into the UNCCD capacity-building initiative spearheaded by UNEP/GEF or any other capacity building measure initiated by Parties;

(h) Request the Global Mechanism to contribute to the establishment of the global database on best practices according to its mandate and function.

Annex

Experts and Centres of Competence for themes relevant to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Theme 1: Sustainable Land Management technologies

GEF

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)/WOCAT

FAO

IWMI (and other Consultative Groups on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) centres)

Theme 2: Capacity-building and awareness-raising

FRAME (USAID) → Awareness-raising

Theme 3: Knowledge management and decision support

CDE/WOCAT

Sustainet/Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation, GTZ)

Drynet

EU-DESIRE

Convention for Biological Diversity / United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change

Theme 4: Land degradation/Desertification and SLM monitoring and assessment (research)

Multilateral Environmental Agreement

CDE/WOCAT

FAO/ Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands

CGIAR Centres

DeSurvey (Surveillance System for Assessment and Monitoring of Desertification)

Theme 5: Policy, legislative, institutional framework (enabling environment)

National Development Agencies

World Bank

Theme 6: Funding / resource mobilization

GEF

Global Mechanism (UNCCD)

World Bank

Theme 7: Participation, collaboration and networking (national and international level)

Drynet

FRAME (USAID)

EU-DESIRE
