

Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes **Operational Guidance for Country Support**





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Lead authors: Habiba Khiari (Global Mechanism of the UNCCD), Sandrine Jauffret (Global Mechanism of the UNCCD)

Contributing authors: Sven Walter (Global Mechanism of the UNCCD), Pedro Lara Almuedo (Global Mechanism of the UNCCD), Aurélie Lhumeau (Global Mechanism of the UNCCD)

Reviewers: Barron J. Orr (UNCCD), Marcelo Inacio da Cunha (UNCCD)

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Global Mechanism of the UNCCD

Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1 D-53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: +49 (0) 228 815 2873 www.unccd.int/about-us/global-mechanism

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List of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CIF	Climate Investment Fund
СОР	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
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ELD	Economics of Land Degradation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FIP	Forest Investment Programme
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDBs	Multilateral development banks
NAP	National Action Programme of the UNCCD
NDA	National Designated Authority
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NFP	National Focal Point
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPP	Net primary productivity
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PPCR	Pilot Program for Climate Resilience
PPG	Project Preparation Grant

REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SFM	Sustainable forest management
SLM	Sustainable land management
SREP	Scaling up Renewable Energy in Low Income Countries Programme
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security

Key Messages

- This guide represents the first effort to gather, in a practical and pragmatic manner, all relevant information related to the development and implementation of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Transformative Projects and Programmes. Countries can use this document for the identification and design of interventions to address land degradation, as well as to guide their dialogue with funding agencies and implementing partners. The guide is intended for stakeholders involved in the design of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, particularly policy-makers, technical experts, international organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector.
- The "neutrality" of land degradation is about keeping healthy and productive land in balance. It is a new dimension not previously tackled in land degradation management policy and land use planning, and is grounded in the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN¹ endorsed by the UNCCD Conference of the Parties (COP) at its thirteenth session.² As an innovative approach to managing land degradation, LDN aims to avoid or reduce land degradation while also reversing past land degradation in order to achieve the goal of no net loss of healthy, productive land at national level. LDN encompasses approaches such as sustainable land management and sustainable forest management for avoiding or reducing the risk of degradation, and restoration and rehabilitation for reversing past degradation.
- Parties to the Convention recognized LDN as a strong vehicle for driving UNCCD implementation (decision 3/COP.12). Achieving LDN requires an enabling environment that also acts as a catalyst for the implementation of the UNCCD, including:
 - Clear LDN targets and strong political commitment;
 - Appropriate LDN policies and strategies;
 - A strong legal and institutional framework governing land management;
 - Integrated land use planning at national and subnational levels; and
 - Use of the three LDN indicators (land cover, land productivity and carbon stocks) that are used to monitor progress, particularly when reporting on

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 15.3, as these same indicators are used for monitoring SDG indicator 15.3.1: "Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area."

- LDN fosters many synergies with the other Rio
 Conventions, SDGs and several ongoing global and regional initiatives. As a land-based approach, LDN has strong potential positive impacts on land-based ecosystems and on several national sectors, generating multiple environmental and socio-economic benefits.
- LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes seek to generate and sustain fundamental and positive changes in the coupled human-environmental system where interventions are targeted. This positive transformation can be pursued through **sustainable**, **inclusive and gender responsive interventions at different scales** (e.g., in **landscapes**) while featuring **innovation** in terms of locally-adapted technologies, practices and financial mechanisms.
- The checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes is a powerful tool prepared to help country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners design effective LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.
- There is a broad range of funding sources that offer strong opportunities and entry points for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes. Nevertheless, public finance dedicated to land is insufficient, and the potential role of the private sector and blended finance should be further explored.
- Through its LDN Programme, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD supports country-level project and programme proponents to develop LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes. The financial and technical support of the Global Mechanism consists of the compliance of LDN transformative project and programme concept notes with the key features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, and ensures that relevant environmental and social safeguards are integrated into the design. The Global Mechanism also facilitates the connection between the different stakeholders involved in the early stages of project and programme development.

¹ Orr *et al.* (2017). Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality. A Report of the Science-Policy Interface. UNCCD, Bonn, Germany. Available at: https://www.unccd.int/publications/scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality-report-science-policy.

² Decision 18/COP.13, paragraph 1 on the endorsement of the *Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN* by Parties, and paragraph 2 calling upon Parties to observe the principles, available at: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf#page=62>.



Executive Summary

In 2015, 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets and some 230 indicators were adopted by the international community to be achieved by 2030. SDG target 15.3 aims to "combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world." In the same year, Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) was identified as a strong vehicle for driving the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). On this basis, the UNCCD developed the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN and endorsed the definition of LDN as "a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems."

The Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN provides a detailed overview of the required processes and elements to deliver LDN. Achieving neutrality means that there is no net loss of the land-based natural capital relative to a given reference state. The concept is based on land use planning while taking into consideration the likely cumulative impacts of land use and land management decisions, which then allows the counterbalancing of anticipated losses with actions to achieve equivalent gains. The counterbalancing exercise can only be performed within the same land type to ensure "like for like" exchanges. Managed at landscape scale to plan interventions and measures that mainly consist of sustainable land management (SLM), LDN follows the following response hierarchy: Avoid > Reduce > Reverse land degradation. Monitoring LDN corresponds to assessing changes in the values of the metrics identified to quantify the indicators of land-based natural capital, from their baseline (t0) values:

- 1. Land cover (metric: land cover change);
- Land productivity (metric: net primary productivity or NPP); and
- 3. Carbon stocks (metric: soil organic carbon stocks).

Achieving LDN will foster the fulfilment of multiple SDGs related to the sustainable use of natural resources, gender equality, climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security, and environmental protection, and will reinforce synergies with the Rio Conventions, among other benefits.

Furthermore, several national sectors such as forestry, agriculture, mining and water, to name a few, have strong potential to integrate LDN measures and generate multiple benefits.

In accordance with decisions 2/COP.12 and 3/COP.12,³ which call for the integration of the SDGs into the implementation process of the UNCCD, particularly on the integration of target 15.3 on LDN, and decisions 2/COP.13 and 14/COP.13⁴ on the mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD has been advancing rapidly in facilitating LDN implementation amongst countries. To that effect, the Global Mechanism, with the support of the UNCCD secretariat, developed the global LDN Programme, structured around two sub-programmes:

- DN Target Setting Programme: in close cooperation with the UNCCD secretariat and with the support of 18 international partners, the Global Mechanism supports 122 countries (as of May 2019) in formulating voluntary targets to achieve LDN. LDN working groups were established in all participating countries to guide the process, which is based on four building blocks:
 - 1. Leveraging LDN, which aims to link LDN to longand medium-term international, national and local development plans, strategies and investment programmes, including the SDGs and other international commitments and initiatives;
 - Assessing LDN, which consists of establishing the LDN baseline, analysing the legal and institutional environments to identify key opportunities and threats to achieving LDN and mapping LDN trends and drivers to identify priority areas for action to achieve LDN;
 - 3. Setting LDN targets and measures, which reflects the country's ambitions to achieve LDN and provides the associated measures to fulfill them the majority of countries expressed their commitments to LDN through governmental high-level notes detailing their national LDN targets and measures; and
 - **4.** Achieving LDN targets; this last stage of the process represents the transitionary phase between the two sub-programmes.

³ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/ICCD_COP12_20_Add.1/20add1eng.pdf

⁴ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf

By this point of the process, countries start working on the integration of LDN targets into national strategies and action plans, which is necessary to provide an enabling environment for LDN implementation. Also, a mapping exercise on LDN transformative projects and/or programmes, and innovative financing opportunities, is conducted, paving the way for the next step: the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.

③ LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes:

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes aim to contribute to the implementation of voluntary LDN targets by delivering multiple benefits, building on high-impact good practices, enhancing national capacities, and leveraging innovative finance from the public and private sectors. According to the checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, developed by the Global Mechanism in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat and reviewed by the UNCCD's Science Policy Interface (SPI), LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes seek to generate and sustain fundamental and sustainable positive changes in the coupled human-environmental system where interventions are targeted. Positive transformation in the frame of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes can be pursued through sustainable, inclusive and gender responsive interventions at scale (e.g., in landscapes) while featuring innovation in terms of locally-adapted technologies, practices and financial mechanisms (e.g., blended finance).

Considering the multiple benefits they could generate and the several interlinkages they have with many national sectors, LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes are eligible for a wide range of funding sources combining public, private and blended financial resources (a mix of public and private financing, where private has the potential to amplify the impacts of public resources).

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes are a new workstream within the LDN Programme of the Global Mechanism. Acknowledging its evolving nature, the Global Mechanism is defining a set of services to facilitate relevant project and programme development activities. In this context, and subject to the extra-budgetary resources made available to date, the Global Mechanism is supporting countries to develop early-stage project/programme concept notes that can be further developed into full-fledged project proposals by LDN implementation partners, especially those that have access to funding entities such as the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund or the Adaptation Fund, among others. The Global Mechanism's support at the early stage of project preparation within the project development cycle is critical for countries, as limited sources of funding are available at this phase and there is a strong need to conceptualize projects and programmes and engage both national and international technical and financial partners who are able to support preparation and implementation. The Global Mechanism's support consists of:

- Providing technical capacity building through:
 - Thorough documentation: the technical guide, the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN and the checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and a manual to support the design of gender-responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.
 - Training workshops on the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and their compliance with LDN features, and on integrating gender equality into the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.
 - Mobilizing sound expertise at national, regional or international levels.
- Supporting the development of LDN transformative project and programme concept notes by providing technical backstopping and follow-up to ensure that they are in line with the key features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, as well as the standards and requirements of the targeted funding source(s).

This guide is part of the framework of facilitating the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, targeting a wide range of stakeholders (policy-makers, technical experts, international organizations, funding entities, implementing agencies, national institutions and private sector representatives).

Introduction

The UNCCD defines land as "the terrestrial bio-productive system that comprises soil, vegetation, other biota, and the ecological and hydrological processes that operate within the system."⁵ Land has the potential to provide a full suite of goods and services: mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change at the global scale, regulating water supply at the landscape scale, and supporting food production at the local scale.

Nevertheless, land is limited, and its goods and services are relatively finite and subject to increasing degradation trends. Global assessments indicate a significant decline in the proportion of managed and natural ecosystems; a loss of approximately 20% of the Earth's vegetated land surface has been recorded between 1998 and 2013. This decline affects 20% of cropland, 16% of forest land and 27% of rangelands. Three broad, inter-related groups of factors drive land degradation: biophysical factors, which determine how land is used; institutional factors, which govern broader land-use policies; and socioeconomic factors, which affect the demand for and management of land. Climate, vegetation, topography and availability of water are usually the first set of factors determining land use, while economic conditions influence management decisions on when and how fast changes occur.

Institutional factors are not only historically determined by long-standing cultural practices, but are also influenced by political and economic decisions. Property rights and tenure are central to understanding the influence of institutional factors. Secure land tenure has the potential to create incentives for investment, economic growth and the good stewardship of natural resources. However, land tenure is complex, with rights established by a wide variety of formal and informal means, including cultural, historical, customary and informal arrangements. Rural and urban areas in the same country often operate under quite distinct forms of legal tenure, bringing further complexity to land rights and governance in peri-urban areas.⁶

Land degradation is also driven by a lack of agreement on the concept of land and its different uses. Land is a broad term with many interpretations – as a landscape, as an administrative or planning unit, and as a social or cultural concept – which could lead, in the absence of appropriate trade-off mechanisms, to increasing pressure on and conflicts over land. Moreover, knowledge and capacity gaps exist in assessing multiple benefits and trade-offs and in managing them for balanced and sustainable land use. This leads most often to land degradation through the implementation of policies and investments that are inappropriate and which cause the loss of land-based natural capital. Where effective policies and incentives for sustainable land management (SLM) do exist, they often lack enforcement.

Land degradation impacts are not confined to national boundaries; they can also be regional and global, and can contribute to the loss of biodiversity and adaptive capacity and to increased environmental risks, as well as to food, water and energy insecurity. These can subsequently lead to human displacement, resulting in even greater impacts from natural and human-induced climate change risks and hazards, such as droughts, flash-floods, heatwaves, and sand and dust storms. Thus, land degradation is considered a global concern for sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Land degradation contributes directly to climate change through the release of soil carbon and the reduction of carbon sequestration potential. Land use changes and degradation account for a significant share of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with emissions reaching even higher shares in some regions such as in Latin America and the Caribbean, where degraded lands account for over a fifth of forest and agricultural lands.⁷

To address the issue of land degradation at the global scale, a clear vision and concerted plan of action are required. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, world leaders recognized the need for healthy and productive ecosystems to guide future sustainable development. Twenty years later, at the Rio+20 Conference, they reiterated these commitments with even greater urgency and agreed to strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As a result, a goal of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) was established in the Rio+20 Outcome Document, "The Future We Want,"

⁷ UNCCD (2017), Op. cit.

⁵ UNCCD (2017), Global Land Outlook, first edition, Bonn, Germany.

⁶ UNCCD (2013), A Stronger UNCCD for a Land-Degradation Neutral World, Issue Brief, Bonn, Germany.

and was subsequently adopted in 2015 by both the United Nations General Assembly as target 15.3 of the SDGs⁸ and by the UNCCD in decision 3/COP.12 during its twelfth session of the COP. With that same decision, and through operative paragraph 10c, UNCCD country Parties requested the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD bodies to provide scientific and technical guidance to support the implementation of LDN at the national level. As a result, the Science-Policy Interface of the UNCCD produced the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN – focusing on the goal of LDN and the supporting processes required to deliver this goal, including the biophysical and socioeconomic aspects and their interactions – which was endorsed by the COP at its thirteenth session in decision 18/COP.13.⁹

LDN aims to maintain and enhance the current area of healthy and productive land for the benefit of current and future generations. This will require stable and predictable investments from all sectors and stakeholders. The return on these investments will be significant in terms of gains in efficiency, socio-ecological resilience, poverty alleviation and inclusive growth. The concrete benefits of a land degradation-neutral world include cost savings for governments and communities, increased productivity and incomes for smallholder farmers, and a more sustainable provision of ecosystem goods and services that contribute to economic growth and sustainably support livelihoods and human wellbeing.¹⁰ According to the Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative,¹¹ the growing concept of LDN represents a paradigm shift in land management policies and practices. It is a unique approach that counterbalances the expected loss of productive land with the recovery of degraded areas, as the measures advocated by LDN to conserve, sustainably manage and restore land are embedded in land use planning.

In this context, the Global Mechanism is contributing to translating the LDN scientific concept into reality at the country level through implementation of the LDN Programme, based on a two-step approach:

- Supporting LDN target setting processes at country level, through the Target Setting Programme, to meet SDG target 15.3 commitments; and
- Facilitating the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes to support countries translating the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN into practical and concrete actions on the ground, to achieve the LDN targets.

While a number of key reference documents developed by the UNCCD over the past three years have provided the foundation for LDN and the LDN target setting process at country level, there are no documents that address the transition from LDN target setting to the concrete actions needed to achieve them through LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.

This guide addresses this knowledge gap and provides practical guidelines to stakeholders involved in the design of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, in particular, policy-makers, technical experts, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. The guide is structured around five chapters:

- An overview of LDN, giving an overview of the political and scientific background of the concept and how it could be achieved through the provision of an enabling environment and the application of appropriate actions according to the LDN response hierarchy.
- Opportunities to leverage LDN, which highlights relevant synergies with existing conventions and initiatives. This includes a discussion on the potential contribution of LDN to various sectors, using concrete examples from several case studies.
- A concise presentation of LDN implementation, through the Global Mechanism's efforts to translate the concept from theory to action. An overview of the LDN Programme, covering the Global Mechanism and its two components (the LDN Target Setting Programme and LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes) is provided. This section also provides an overview of the progress made to date to define LDN targets at national level and to have a clear definition of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and the features that should be fulfilled.
- An overview of funding opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, with a focus on the multiple objectives they target and the benefits they could generate, specifically with regards to climate change mitigation and adaptation and other environmental and social co-benefits. This chapter also provides a brief presentation of some financing mechanisms relevant to LDN.
- Operational guidance for the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, highlighting in particular the supporting role that the Global Mechanism can play in each step of the project development cycle.

- ⁹ Orr et al. (2017), Op. cit.
- ¹⁰ UNCCD (2013), A Stronger UNCCD for a Land-Degradation Neutral World, Issue Brief, Bonn, Germany.
- ¹¹ See Economics of Land Degradation Initiative, available at: <http://www.eld-initiative.org/>

⁸ IUCN (2015), Land Degradation Neutrality: implications and opportunities for conservation, Technical Brief 2nd Edition, Nairobi: IUCN, 19p.

Chapter 1 Land Degradation Neutrality: An Overview

1. LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY: AN OVERVIEW

LDN consists of the simple idea of keeping land in balance through an effective and high-impact approach. It seeks to secure healthy and productive land-based natural resources by avoiding and reducing land degradation whenever possible and restoring land that has already been degraded.

To better understand how LDN helps achieve these objectives, it is essential to understand the political process that led to its emergence and adoption, as well as the key elements of its Scientific Conceptual Framework.

1.1 GLOBAL POLICY CONTEXT

In the aftermath of the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) and the declaration of the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification (2010-2020), the global community agreed in September 2015 on "The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," including 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Goal 15 urges countries to "protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss" by 2030. Target 15.3 aims to "combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world" also by 2030.

Following the adoption of the SDGs by the UN General Assembly, LDN was adopted by the UNCCD at the twelfth session of the COP (COP 12) in Ankara in October 2015, seeing it as a "strong vehicle for driving the implementation of the Convention."¹² COP 12 furthermore defined LDN as a "state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems."¹³

Achieving LDN will also contribute to reaching many other SDGs, particularly those on poverty reduction, food, water, energy and human security, environmental protection, sustainable use of natural resources, economic growth, and gender equality (see Figure 1). To meet the SDGs, it is vital to manage the linkages and harness the synergies between them. Implementing LDN creates multiple direct and indirect co-benefits and will therefore make a direct contribution to achieving these SDGs.¹⁴



Figure 1: Land Degradation Neutrality, an accelerator of the Sustainable Development Goals

¹² UNCCD (2016), Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting – A Technical Guide.

13 Cowie et al. (2018), Land in balance: The scientific conceptual framework for Land Degradation Neutrality, Environmental Science and Policy, Volume 79, Pages 25-35.

¹⁴ The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD (2016), Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality at the country level. Bonn, Germany.

1.2 SCIENTIFIC CONTEXT

The "neutrality" of land degradation is a new dimension not previously addressed in land degradation management and policy. The COP, in its twelfth session, requested the UNCCD Science-Policy Interface (SPI) to develop scientific guidance for the operational implementation of LDN (decision 3/COP.12). The resulting Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality explains the underlying scientific processes and principles that support the achievement of LDN and its intended outcomes. The Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN is based on the **three pillars** detailed below.¹⁵

1.2.1 LDN vision and objectives

The LDN vision for 2030 is to sustain and improve the stocks of land-based natural capital and the associated flows of ecosystem services in order to support the future prosperity and security of humankind. The main objective of LDN is to halt the loss of healthy and productive land caused by land degradation. Securing enough healthy and productive natural resources can be achieved by i) avoiding land degradation whenever possible, ii) reducing land degradation by applying better land management practices and better land use planning, and iii) restoring land that has already been degraded through actively assisting the recovery of productive potential and ecological services. This will in turn lead to improved economic, social and ecological sustainability for present and future generations. More particularly, LDN aims to:

- Maintain or improve the sustainable delivery of ecosystem services;
- Maintain or improve productivity, in order to enhance food security;

- Increase resilience of the land and populations dependent on the land;
- Seek synergies with other social, economic and environmental objectives; and
- Contribute to reinforce responsible and inclusive governance of land tenure.

1.2.2 The frame of reference

One of the innovative aspects that distinguishes the LDN concept from previous efforts and initiatives to combat land degradation and desertification is the adoption of *neutrality* as a specific target. To assess whether the goal of neutrality has been met, a reference, or baseline, must be established, against which performance can be assessed (see Figure 2).

Neutrality implies that there is no net loss of what LDN is intended to maintain. Thus "no net loss" in this context means that land-based natural capital is maintained or enhanced between the time of implementation of the LDN conceptual framework (t0, typically the year 2015 when the decision to pursue LDN was adopted by the UNCCD) and a future date (such as the year 2030, in accordance with the SDGs) when progress is monitored (t1). This frame of reference is important for two reasons:

- It places the focus on the goal of LDN: *ensuring that there is no net loss of land-based natural capital;* and
- Neutrality is monitored through *change* in values of a specific set of consistently measured indicators, which is more readily detected than land degradation status, as degradation does not occur in linear or easily discernible patterns.¹⁶



Figure 2: Alternative trajectories for a hypothetical indicator/metric, showing paths that achieve, exceed or do not achieve LDN

The **minimum target** to achieve LDN equals the **baseline** because the goal of LDN is to achieve **no net loss**.

Nevertheless, countries may elect to set their LDN targets above no net loss and **raise the level of ambition**.

Source: Orr et al., 2017

¹⁵ Orr *et al.* (2017). Op. cit.

¹⁶ Orr *et al.* (2017). Op. cit.

Figure 3: Overview of the counterbalancing mechanism to achieve LDN



Source: Orr et al., 2017

1.2.3 The principle of counterbalancing

The LDN concept aims to assist land use decision-makers to make informed decisions so that losses due to land degradation can be **counterbalanced** by (at least) equivalent gains (see Figure 3). To be effective, LDN should be integrated into existing **land use planning** processes.

The LDN concept applies a counterbalancing mechanism for maintaining (or exceeding) neutrality by **pro-actively** promoting (rather than regulating) land use planning to achieve "no net loss."

Counterbalancing should be managed within the **same land type (like for like)** in order to ensure the conservation of unique ecosystems and to increase the likelihood that there is no net loss of ecosystem services.

LDN-based land use planning should be implemented at the spatial scale of the biophysical or administrative domains at which land use decisions are made, and should be scalable so that the results can be reported nationally.

1.3 LDN IMPLEMENTATION

The fundamental elements that support the practical pursuit of LDN consist of a set of interventions that constitute a prerequisite for the successful operationalization of the LDN concept and the achievement of neutrality.¹⁷ In order to translate LDN into practice, it is required to:

- Create an enabling environment,¹⁸ essentially based on four pillars: i) enhancing land policies, ii) providing tools for good land governance, iii) ensuring the full involvement of stakeholders, and iv) conducting preliminary assessments (providing data, tools, land stratification,¹⁹ capability assessment²⁰ and resilience assessment);²¹
- Apply the LDN response hierarchy "Avoid > Reduce > Reverse land degradation" (see Figure 4) to assess options, plan interventions and track anticipated impacts; and
- Set up a **monitoring and evaluation system** to report progress towards achieving LDN.

1.3.1 Enabling environment

Effective LDN implementation will require a number of conditions to be in place. The enabling environment will need to be carefully assessed, and strengthened if needed, to ensure successful implementation of actions to achieve LDN and mitigate the potential risks that may ensue.

¹⁷ Orr et al. (2017), Op. cit.

¹⁸ A new report has been produced by the SPI on this matter. See: Verburg et al. (2019), Creating an Enabling Environment for Land Degradation Neutrality and its Potential Contribution to Enhancing Well-being, Livelihoods and the Environment, A Report of the Science-Policy Interface, UNCCD, Bonn, Germany.

¹⁹ Map of land types based on land potential, subdivided by vegetative cover

²⁰ Map of potential of land to sustainably generate ecosystem services.

²¹ Assessment of whether the system is heading in a desired trajectory.

Below are the main prerequisites for effective implementation of activities to achieve LDN:

- Adequate policies and strategies related to LDN, including the UNCCD National Action Programmes (NAPs), reflecting the SDGs and the UNCCD 2018-30 Strategic Framework:
 - A sound legal and institutional framework governing land management is of paramount importance for the successful implementation of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes: It is important to identify possible gaps, inconsistencies, weaknesses and opportunities in order to create or enhance the national regulatory environment in view of achieving LDN. In this context, UNCCD NAPs can provide a starting point for this assessment, as they (should) cover most of the technical, legal, policy and financial aspects related to land degradation. In cases where LDN has been streamlined in other key national policy frameworks (i.e., NDCs, National SDG strategies, etc.), these should also be used to support the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, leveraging the benefits that LDN brings.

Sound legal and institutional frameworks governing land management:

- Incentives established and deterrents removed to promote natural resource management at landscape level: The enabling environment should include policies that encourage LDN by i) incentivizing and helping to coordinate SLM practices and activities designed to avoid > reduce > reverse land degradation across concerned sectors (e.g., environment, agriculture, water resources, urban planning), and ii) removing deterrents undermining the implementation of these practices. LDN efforts should be linked to land administration at the appropriate level in a given country. It is critical that governance arrangements facilitate achievement of the vision of LDN while ensuring land tenure security and encouraging stakeholder participation in integrated land use planning decisions. Interactions between local, national and international governance levels should be understood and harnessed.
- Land rights and tenure secured, as per the principles and standards of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGT): To ensure that achieving LDN does not compromise the tenure rights of land holders, or lead to land conflict, the principles and standards of the VGGT should be applied.

Full stakeholder participation in integrated land use planning decisions:

• Stakeholder participation is a key attribute of LDN. It demonstrates good governance while ensuring a gender-sensitive, inclusive and transparent approach to LDN. Regular consultative and feedback processes on the design of the national LDN targets ensure that the concerns of relevant stakeholders are properly addressed, which ultimately promotes stakeholder empowerment and ownership, as well as the sustainability of LDN achievements. Multistakeholder platforms, established at the appropriate local, national or regional scale, can bring together indigenous and local knowledge and ensure that stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. Such platforms also promote shared knowledge and mutual learning and can support the re-alignment of LDN actions and policies.

- Sevidence-based land use planning that considers the environmental and socio-economic implications of decisions taken, the LDN response hierarchy and the principle of counterbalancing anticipated losses with planned gains:
 - Preliminary assessments: Land use decisions should be informed by appropriate assessments (on land degradation, enabling environment, land potential and stratification, socio-economic conditions, etc.) validated at the local level. The preliminary assessments are preparatory activities that will assist in achieving LDN. They are designed to help ensure that public and private decisions that might lead to positive or negative change are guided by assessments that inform decision-makers about the potential of the land, its current condition, use, resilience and socio-economic context, and the relative consequences of alternative options both locally and with respect to the objective of no net loss across the country (counterbalancing) over a defined period of time.
 - Integrated land use planning: The LDN preliminary assessments provide decision-makers with the necessary information and tools to identify and prioritize appropriate options for specific sites and navigate trade-offs within a biophysical or administrative domain. However, determining whether the combined set of planned interventions, designed to lead to an improvement in the landbased natural capital, will be sufficient enough to counterbalance land use and management that is anticipated to lead to a decline in natural capital elsewhere, requires an inventory or accounting process. This holistic analysis can be made operational if the appropriate means for tracking potential gains and anticipated losses are available and linked with land use planning as well as target setting and monitoring at national level frameworks. Ideally, this would occur at the point where land use decisions are made. Although the concept of counterbalancing anticipated losses with gains is relatively straightforward, keeping track of land use decisions with respect to neutrality requires an effective mechanism.

Integrated land use planning²² seeks to balance the economic, social and cultural opportunities provided by land with the need to maintain and enhance ecosystem services provided by land-based natural capital. It also aims to blend or coordinate management strategies and implementation requirements across sectors. These characteristics are necessary to enable holistic land use decision-making that accounts for the cumulative potential changes (positive and negative) on all land units of each land type over a defined period of time, with the ultimate aim of achieving or exceeding LDN.

²² This involves the allocation of land to different uses across a landscape in a way that balances economic, social and environmental values. Its purpose is to identify, in a given landscape, the combination of land uses that is best able to meet the needs of stakeholders while safeguarding resources for the future.

1.3.2 Response hierarchy

The response hierarchy of avoid > reduce > reverse land degradation, based on land use planning, determines which interventions should be prioritized according to their potential to maximize the conservation of land-based natural capital (see Figure 4), while recognizing that avoiding or reducing land degradation is generally more cost-effective than efforts to reverse past degradation.²³

LDN interventions are applied to an individual land unit (a spatial unit defined in LDN planning and monitoring). At landscape level, applying the response hierarchy involves a combination of protective measures and implementation of SLM to avoid or reduce degradation, along with localized restoration and/or rehabilitation interventions to reverse land degradation. Reversing degradation also serves to counterbalance projected (anticipated) losses from new degradation in other land units within the same land type.²⁴

Below are some examples of land use and land management activities applicable at each level of the response hierarchy:

Interventions to avoid and prevent land degradation: This applies to land that is not degraded and intact natural automa later and intact

natural systems. Interventions are mainly SLM, sustainable forest management (SFM) and practices that conserve soil fertility (nutrients, organic matter), minimize disturbance and erosion, and avoid contamination. Practices include: wise chemical inputs, reduced/zero tillage, crop rotations, retaining residues, green manure cropping, organic amendments, sustainable biochar, pasture phase, agroforestry, intercropping, permaculture, modifying logging practices to avoid future degradation, law enforcement, awareness-raising and capacity building.²⁵

- Interventions that reduce land degradation: These can be conducted on partly degraded lands with reduced productivity. Such interventions constitute mainly SLM and SFM practices with a greater intensity than for avoiding and reducing land degradation. Interventions include, *inter alia*, organic matter addition, pasture phase, cattle rotation, fencing management, water conservation, active measures to reduce soil erosion (e.g., contour banks, vegetated hedges, wind breaks, terraces, etc.) and correct degrading processes (such as acidification and salinization through liming and strategic reforestation, respectively).
- Reverse by restoring and rehabilitating: These interventions are to be implemented on degraded and unproductive land. Interventions consist of substantial (possibly transformational) interventions to enhance productivity, such as high rates of organic amendment (compost, manure) to build nutrient levels and biological activity; amendments to address soil limitations, e.g., lime, gypsum, clay (to sandy soils), biochar, water harvesting, etc.; and interventions geared towards restoring vegetative cover through agroforestry, afforestation, reforestation or mine reclamation practices, among others.

Figure 4: The LDN response hierarchy and the measures to achieve neutrality



²³ Orr et al. (2017), Op. cit.

²⁴ Initiatives such as the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies, TERRAFRICA, the World Bank Sourcebook and the Voluntary Guidelines for Sustainable Soil Management (VGSSM) provide comprehensive recommendations and examples of SLM practices. The combined implementation of practices that address both soil and water conservation, the diversification of cropping systems, the integration of crop and livestock systems and agroforestry are highly effective and should be prioritized.

²⁵ FAO (2018), Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Toolbox.

1.3.3 LDN monitoring and evaluation

At the eleventh session of the UNCCD COP, country Parties adopted decision 22/COP.11, establishing a monitoring and evaluation approach for LDN consisting of i) progress indicators, ii) a conceptual framework that allows the integration of indicators, and iii) mechanisms for data sourcing and management at the national/local level. Among the progress indicators used to monitor changes in land-based natural capital, three indicators (and their associated metrics) were considered by the SPI to report on LDN and SDG target 15.3:²⁶

- Land cover (land cover changes);
- Land productivity (net primary productivity), and
- Carbon stocks (soil organic carbon (SOC) stock).

Monitoring LDN corresponds to assessing change in the values of metrics identified for indicators of land-based natural capital from their baseline (t0) values. Trends in land degradation are assessed through the indicator of SDG 15, target 15.3, i.e., proportion of land that is degraded over total land area, which is defined based on the three sub-indicators.²⁷

Together, the three sub-indicators provide good coverage of the condition of land-based natural capital and ecosystem services that are provided from that land base.²⁸ In addition, they address changes in the system in different yet highly relevant ways. Land cover provides a first indication of changing vegetation cover, to some extent as a proxy of the underlying use, and of land conversion and the resulting habitat fragmentation. Land productivity offers an indication of ecosystem functioning and health and sharpens the focus on ecosystem services. Carbon stocks, especially soil organic carbon stocks, denote overall soil quality.

These indicators and associated metrics are suitable proxies for the ecosystem services flowing from landbased natural capital. Gains in one of these indicators cannot compensate for losses in another because all are complementary components of the land-based natural capital, not additive. Therefore, if one of the indicators/metrics shows a negative change, LDN is not achieved and it is considered a loss, even if the others are substantially positive. Conversely, if at least one indicator/metric shows a significant positive change, and none show a significant negative change, it is considered a gain. Therefore, **a one-out, all-out** principle is applied (see the detailed list of the guiding principles of the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN in Annex 4).

A landscape/area-based approach is required to monitor neutrality. It assesses losses as the area affected per land type, in which at least one of the three indicators show a significant negative change. Similarly, it measures gains as the area per land type, over which there is a significant positive change in at least one of the indicators (and none show a negative change). Neutrality is achieved when the area of losses equals the area of gains within each land type and across land types at national scale.

Additional indicators are also needed to monitor progress in the implementation of LDN and the socio-economic outcomes of LDN depending on national/local circumstances. It is highly recommended to identify complementary indicators (on ecosystem services, process indicators, and social and economic outcome indicators) that address national, sub-national or project-scale specificities, and to strengthen the interpretation of the three main LDN biophysical indicators. Progress in implementing actions to achieve LDN should also be monitored through progress indicators that provide an early indication of whether LDN is likely to be achieved by the targeted date and allow corrective actions to be taken if necessary. Such indicators could include, for example, indicators to measure progress with developing/strengthening enabling policies, adoption of the neutrality mechanism, the establishment of monitoring systems, and indicators of action that reduce the risk of land degradation, such as hectares of land under integrated land use plans or under an LDN scheme. The final set of indicators include those that assess the mid- and long-term social and economic impacts of LDN policies and activities.

²⁶ UNCCD (2018), Good Practice Guidance for SDG Indicator 15.3.1. https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/Metadata-15-03-01_20180123_1.pdf

²⁷ Orr *et al*. (2017), Op. cit.

²⁸ UNCCD (2018), Op. cit.

Figure 5: The key elements of the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN and their interrelationships



Source: Orr et al., 2017

Chapter 2 Leveraging Land Degradation Neutrality

2. LEVERAGING LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY

As a land-based approach, LDN has the potential to have a positive impact on several land-based ecosystems and sectors that generate environmental and socio-economic benefits. Growing pressures and conventional land-use practices have long interfered with nature and the numerous processes that maintain its resources, goods and services. It is therefore vital that land-use decisions consider all possible synergies and trade-offs across both spatial and temporal scales, putting into place a pragmatic, integrated framework of complementary rehabilitation, restoration and SLM measures to achieve LDN.

2.1 RIO CONVENTIONS

Following the Earth Summit held in Rio in 1992, three conventions were adopted: The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UNCCD. Although each convention has its own mandate and objectives, they show numerous synergies and the possibility for joint implementation for the achievement of LDN. When considering the links between land, biodiversity and climate change, the UNCCD's land-based approach could be the appropriate anchor to pull together actions under the three Rio Conventions (see Figure 6). This also applies to other relevant intergovernmental and international agendas, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New York Declaration on Forests and the Bonn Challenge (see Chapter 2.2.2).

The Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN can support monitoring and reporting for all of the Rio Conventions and can work synergistically with other global initiatives such as the SDGs. Important opportunities for synergies include linking monitoring and reporting processes related to the LDN indicators, collaborating to leverage existing systems to monitor socio-economic indicators, and monitoring key enabling environment factors such as governance, land rights and security.

The potential for synergies through coordinated monitoring and reporting of the three Rio Conventions and other relevant initiatives has been identified by countries engaged in LDN as very important, and efforts to materialize such synergies are in progress at various levels.

2.1.1 LDN and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

LDN provides significant benefits for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Land-use mitigation approaches target several areas within the Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sectors, such as agriculture, livestock and forestry, through policy, technology and market-based approaches. Policies that encourage the production of biofuels, for example, by supporting the diversified and sustainable cultivation of crops such as corn, palm oil, sugar cane and soybean, and initiatives such as the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) mechanism, which incentivizes reductions in deforestation and forest degradation as well as increases in forest carbon stocks, are good examples of how to mitigate climate change through a land-based approach.²⁹ LDN also has strong potential to support several initiatives and approaches linking climate and agriculture, such as climate-smart agriculture and the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture,³⁰ and to bolster agriculture's role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

In general, climate-smart land management practices can improve the ecosystem services provided by soil, increasing biomass production and resulting in more reliable crop yields, which can subsequently build up resilience of agricultural livelihoods. Promoting ecosystem-based adaptation also increases the resilience of both ecosystems and societies to the negative impacts of climate change and natural hazards. In addition, national adaptation plans and subnational adaptation strategies can further feed into integrated land use planning within the realm of LDN. As such, halting and reversing land degradation can transform land from a source of GHG emissions to a sink, by increasing carbon stocks in soils and vegetation, and can play a key role in strengthening the resilience of rural communities against climate shocks by securing and improving the provision of vital ecosystem services.³¹ These links between land and climate are reflected in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), submitted by countries to the UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris in 2015. As of 2016, more than 165 NDCs representing 192 countries had included specific land-based activities for mitigation and/or adaptation.³²

LDN targets and associated measures contribute to and depend on the implementation of national climate plans. Such synergies are or should be taken into account when developing national plans for LDN and when revising and updating the NDCs under the Paris Agreement.³³

²⁹ Carol Hunsberger *et al.* (2015), Land-based climate change mitigation, land grabbing and conflict: understanding intersections and linkages, exploring actions for change, MOSAIC Research Project.

³⁰ The Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture (KJWA) is a decision that was reached at the twenty-third session of the UNFCCC COP (COP 23) in November 2017, officially acknowledging the significance of the agriculture sector in adapting to and mitigating climate change.

³¹ Anne Woodfine (2009), Using sustainable land management practices to adapt to and mitigate climate change in sub-Saharan Africa, TerrAfrica.

³² UNCCD (2016), Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality at the country level.

³³ Global Mechanism (2016), Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting – A Technical Guide.

2.1.2 LDN and the Convention on Biological Diversity

The global approaches of the CBD, its strategic plan, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and, more recently, the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework³⁴ are strongly connected to the conceptual approaches towards sustainable land use, although there is no explicit mention of this term.³⁵ The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are key elements of land and nature-based solutions, providing multiple sustainable benefits.

When considering how LDN contributes to livelihoods and well-being while simultaneously promoting biodiversity conservation, the sustainable management of biodiversity can be further framed under integrated land use planning to achieve SDG 15 and other multiple benefits. Synergies can also be identified between LDN and the CBD by LDN's contributions to achieving several of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, for example:³⁶

- Target 5 aims to reduce habitat loss close to zero and to significantly reduce habitat degradation;
- Target 7 aims for the sustainable management of areas under agriculture and forestry;
- Target 14 safeguards ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, health, livelihoods and well-being;
- Target 15 aims to strengthen ecosystem resilience, increase carbon stocks and restore degraded ecosystems.

Figure 6: SLM as a holistic vehicle to achieve the objectives of the three Rio Conventions and the SDGs



Adapted from UNCCD, 2017

³⁴ https://www.cbd.int/conferences/post2020

³⁵ Franziska Wolff and Timo Kaphengst (2015), Exploring options for strengthening sustainable land use within the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, GLOBALANDS Discussion Paper.

³⁶ IUCN (2015), Land Degradation Neutrality: implications and opportunities for conservation.

2.2 OTHER FRAMEWORKS AND COMPLEMENTARY INITIATIVES

2.2.1 LDN and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) is a voluntary, non-binding agreement that recognizes that not only do countries have the primary role of reducing disaster risks, but also that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector and other key players. It aims to promote the substantial reduction of disaster risks and losses in lives, livelihoods and health, and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of people, businesses, communities and countries.³⁷

LDN and SFDRR present strong synergies and complementarities, relying strongly on land use planning for their implementation. The post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction encourages the establishment of necessary mechanisms and incentives to ensure high levels of compliance with existing safety-enhancing provisions of sectoral laws and regulations, including those addressing land use and urban planning, building codes, environmental and resource management, and health and safety standards, and to update them, where needed, to ensure an adequate focus on disaster risk management.³⁸

Furthermore, the restoration of degraded lands and ecosystems is an important tool to enhance the quality of life in both urban and rural areas, and to protect people against natural disasters. For instance, the sustainable management of land and watersheds is a key part of resilient ecosystems that reduce the risks of droughts and floods. These and other ecosystem-based adaptation activities for soil and water conservation, implemented in various disaster-prone regions, have demonstrated improvements and benefits in agricultural yields, in some cases exceeding up to 13 times the amount invested.³⁹

2.2.2 Other complementary initiatives

Since 2005, a number of global and regional commitments have been set to halt and reverse land degradation and restore degraded ecosystems (see Table 1). These include the Bonn Challenge on forest and landscape restoration, the New York Declaration on Forests, the 4 per 1000 Initiative, and related regional initiatives such as the Initiative 20x20 in Latin America, the Africa Forest and Landscape Restoration Initiative, the Great Green Wall Initiative of Africa and the Great Green Wall Initiative of China.

Efforts are also being undertaken to assess the status of land degradation and its impacts, including the thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) LDN Initiative, and the ELD Initiative. These land monitoring initiatives are complementary to online platforms that help facilitate environmental information that could be leveraged, such as UNEP-Live.⁴⁰ Although not exhaustive, this list highlights the strong potential for synergistic activities (data sharing, integrated processes, etc.) that should be strongly encouraged.

³⁷ https://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework

³⁸ https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf

³⁹ UNCCD (2016), Reaping the rewards: Financing land degradation neutrality.

⁴⁰ Environment Live provides UN Member States with open access to information and knowledge on the environment at global, regional and national levels. It supports environmental policy through foresight, outlooks and assessments, and provides capacity building for countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Environment Live provides up-to-date information for citizen-science, communities of practice, and impact stories and case-studies on the environment and people: https://environmentlive.unep.org/

Table 1: Overview of different complementary initiatives and commitments with strong potential for synergies with LDN

Initiative/commitment	Secretariat	Starting year	Objective	Targeted area	Description of relation with LDN
Bonn Challenge on forest landscape restoration (http://www. bonnchallenge.org/ content/challenge)	IUCN	2011	Bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.	Global	Landscape restoration rose from 11 participant countries in 2011 to 46 in 2018. In April 2018, the "Billion Tree Tsunami" project in Pakistan's Hindu Kush mountain range became the first to fulfill a pledge towards the Bonn Challenge by restoring nearly 350,000 hectares of deforested and degraded land. It was reported that the project has achieved its restoration target through a combination of protected natural regeneration and planned afforestation, and has established 13,000 private tree nurseries, helping to boost local incomes, generate thousands of green jobs, and empower unemployed youth and women in the province. ⁴¹
New York Declaration on Forests (https:// nydfglobalplatform.org/)	UNDP in partnership with the Meridian Institute and Climate Advisers	2014	Ten global targets to protect and restore forests and end natural forest loss by 2030.	Global	As the declaration calls for restoring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands by 2030, this will contribute to achieving LDN targets related to forests.
4 per 1000 Initiative (https://www.4p1000. org/)	CGIAR System Organization	2015	Demonstrate that agriculture, and in particular agricultural soils, can play a crucial role where food security and climate change are concerned.	Global	As the ambition of the initiative is to encourage stakeholders to transition towards a productive, highly resilient agriculture (based on the appropriate management of lands and soils), as well as creating jobs and incomes which will subsequently ensure sustainable development, the initiative will contribute to achieving LDN in agricultural lands.
The Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative (http://www. eld-initiative.org/)	ELD Secretariat hosted by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)	2012	Integrating awareness of the economics of land degradation and sustainable land management into the scientific, political, public and private spheres. Through research, capacity-building and active knowledge exchange, seek to ensure that the economics of sustainable land management are understood and useful.	Global	This initiative was based on the economic benefits of land and land-based ecosystems. It highlights the value of sustainable land management and provides a global approach for the analysis of the economics of land degradation.
GEO Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative (https://www. earthobservations.org/ activity.php?id=149)	Group on Earth Observations	2017	Support the UNCCD in implementing its objectives by providing space-based information and in-situ measurements.	Global	This initiative will advance the collaborative development, provision and use of Earth observation datasets, quality standards and analytical tools to achieve LDN.

⁴¹ http://climateinitiativesplatform.org/index.php/Bonn_Challenge_-_Landscape_Restoration

Initiative/commitment	Secretariat	Starting year	Objective	Targeted area	Description of relation with LDN
Forest Ecosystem Restoration Initiative (https://www.cbd.int/ restoration/feri/)	Convention on Biological Diversity	2014-2020	Directly support developing country Parties as they operationalize national targets and plans for ecosystem conservation and restoration within the framework of the Strategic Plan and Aichi Biodiversity Targets.	Global	Through a series of regional capacity building workshops, and background information provided, FERI allows countries to identify best practices and exchange experiences, including challenges and opportunities, to contribute to planned activities related with forest ecosystem conservation and restoration objectives. As of today, 2 FERI capacity building workshops have been organized in Ghana for the benefit of West Africa and in Thailand for some selected sub-regions of Asia.
Initiative 20x20 in Latin America (https://initiative20x20. org/)	World Resources Institute	2014	Restore 20 million hectares of land in Latin America and the Caribbean by 2020.	Latin America and the Caribbean	A major monitoring effort is envisioned under the initiative, capable of documenting the restoration process in detail. Key elements in this effort include remote sensing, on-the-ground sampling and modeling.
Africa forest and landscape restoration initiative (AFR100) (https://afr100.org/)	New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)	2015	A country-led effort to bring 100 million hectares of land in Africa into restoration by 2030. It aims to accelerate restoration to enhance food security, increase climate change resilience and mitigation, and combat rural poverty.	Africa	AFR100 brings together political leadership with financial and technical resources to support a large-scale forest and landscape restoration movement across Africa. It provides a platform to more effectively work together to accelerate restoration successes.
Great Green Wall Initiative of Africa (http://www. greatgreenwall.org/ about-great-green-wall/)	African Union	2008	By 2030, the expectation of the new phase of the initiative is to restore 50 million hectares of land; sequester 250 million tons of carbon; support 300 million people in communities across the Sahel; and provide access for 10 million smallholder farmers to climate resilient agricultural technologies.	Africa	To fulfill the vision of the Great Green Wall Initiative of Africa, the UNCCD is proposing this new initiative to help outreach to every Great Green Wall community and make sure that no community or country is left behind. This will require a mass engagement of local communities under the Great Green Wall.
Great Green Wall Initiative of China	Government of China	1978	Raising northern China's forest cover from 5 to 15%, thereby reducing desertification. This implies that a 4,500- kilometer area along the northern part of China's deserts will be covered by 100 billion trees.	China/ Gobi Desert	As of 2016, over 66 billion trees have been planted with methods such as aerial seeding and cash incentives to farmers who plant trees, shrubs and other greenery.

2.3 LDN CONTRIBUTION TO OTHER NATIONAL SECTORS

Addressing land degradation and its impacts continues to be a challenge, particularly when most economic and political stakeholders are committed to business-as-usual pathways. Despite this, alternative options based on sustainable land-based approaches that promote LDN have been proven to have positive impacts on a number of sectors.

2.3.1 LDN and forests

Representing around 30% of the land surface, forests are a source of different goods and services such as timber, food, fuel, fodder, non-wood products and shelter. They help generate income for 1.6 billion people, particularly in developing countries where the majority of the population depends on non-wood forest products to meet economic, health and nutritional needs. Environmentally-sound use of non-wood forest products can help reconcile biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods while avoiding deforestation and land-degrading practices (e.g., large-scale cattle ranching). In addition to being a vital habitat for 80% of all terrestrial species, forests help mitigate many natural disasters such as floods, landslides, avalanches, droughts, and sand and dust storms.

However, despite their importance, forest ecosystems have experienced a declining trend over the last few decades, both in terms of productivity and land cover, mainly due to climate change and inappropriate management. To address this issue, it is vital to adopt an integrated approach for sustainably managing land and forest resources together, for example, by applying an integrated land-use approach and planting trees for multiple benefits at the landscape level. In fact, many synergies and correlations exist between these two resources, and integrated approaches will help avoid duplication and capitalize efforts for greater efficiency. In addition, Global Forest Goal 1 of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2030 (which is to "[reverse] the loss of forest cover worldwide through SFM, including protection, restoration, afforestation and reforestation, and increase efforts to prevent forest degradation and contribute to the global effort of addressing climate change") supports and contributes to the achievement of SDG target 15.3. Most of the countries supported by the LDN Target Setting Programme have set forest-related LDN targets, such as increasing the area of forests or boosting the productivity of forest lands.^{42, 43, 44}

2.3.2 LDN and agriculture

More than half of agricultural land worldwide is affected by soil degradation. In addition, agricultural production is likely to be severely affected by climate variability and change, resulting in a 50% reduction in yields for some rain-fed agricultural crops by 2020.

Land-based approaches using sustainable, resourceefficient and low external input techniques have been successfully deployed to bring degraded land back into production, improve yields and enhance resilience. For instance, 40 sustainable land management projects implemented in the early 2000s throughout Africa created benefits for 10.4 million farmers and their families. Crop yields more than doubled on average over a period of 3-10 years, resulting in an increase in aggregate food production of 5.79 million tons per year.⁴⁵

In this context, the ELD Initiative has suggested that reaching 95% of the potential maximum crop yields by adopting SLM practices could deliver up to 2.3 billion tons of additional crop produce per year, equivalent to USD1.4 trillion. SLM can also minimize the negative impacts of conventional agriculture. By reducing and better using external inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, water and energy, SLM can reduce the widespread pollution of air, water and soil. The sustainable management of land subsequently leads to improved water and nutrient availability in the soil. On-farm fertility generation, such as nitrogen-fixing trees or leguminous cover crops, reduces the need for mineral fertilizers. The smart use of biodiversity also helps to create a natural barrier against diseases and pests, and lessens the negative health effects caused by pesticides.⁴⁶

2.3.3 LDN and water

The current decrease in water quality and availability, with more prolonged and intense droughts, will continue if land degradation and climate change trends continue. Smart, integrated land and water management provides a costeffective, long-term solution to water scarcity, drought and pollution. In addition, some ecological farming practices help create soils rich in organic matter, with better capacity to conserve water in the root zone and increased water use efficiency. Mulching with crop residues, introducing legumes as cover crops and inter-cropping with trees all build soil organic matter, thus reducing water runoff and improving soil fertility.

⁴² Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2015), Ethiopia – Land Degradation Neutrality National Report. Available at: https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/ethiopialdn-country-report-final.pdf

⁴³ United Nations, General Assembly, Report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its 2017 special session (United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030), E/2017/10 (8 February 2017). Available at: http://undocs.org/en/E/2017/10.

⁴⁴ Republic of Indonesia (2015), Indonesia – Land Degradation Neutrality National Report. Available at: https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/inline-files/indonesia_ldn_country_ report.pdf

⁴⁵ World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (2007), Where the land is greener – case studies and analysis of soil and water conservation initiatives worldwide.

⁴⁶ Sanz et al. (2017), Sustainable Land Management contribution to successful land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation, A Report of the Science-Policy Interface, UNCCD, Bonn, Germany.

In a study of 40 sustainable land and water management technologies documented by the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT), it was found that nearly 88% of the technologies led to an increase in soil moisture. Reduced runoff and increased water infiltration and storage in the soil also led to greater water availability. Additionally, sustainable land and water management technologies enhanced the potential for reducing evaporation in drier environments where up to 70% of rainfall can be lost. Better land management practices will make an important contribution to easing competition for water resources.⁴⁷

Water pollution caused by land degradation and unsustainable practices also affects water quality. Conventional water treatment removes unwanted contaminants such as pesticides and nutrients, but this is costly in terms of energy and financial resources. Implementing SLM measures and reducing land degradation in drinking water catchments can minimize the entry of pollutants into the water supply. This has huge potential to reduce the costs of water treatment. Promoting LDN in headwater catchment areas also contributes to reducing soil erosion, which in turn reduces siltation issues in water dams, reducing maintenance costs and increasing the life of water reservoirs and hydroelectric infrastructure. Planning and implementing LDN at the watershed level would therefore revolutionize integrated natural resource management and build resilience against drought and other climate change impacts.48

2.3.4 LDN and urbanization

LDN can contribute to creating sustainable cities and communities by adopting the positive aspects of urbanization and strengthening rural-urban linkages. With the growing development of built and/or green infrastructure designed with multifunctional land use, urban areas can embrace their peri-urban and rural surroundings to produce "green mosaics," bridging the urban-rural divide with integrated green infrastructure. These mosaic-patterned landscapes offer spaces for recreation and food production and habitats for biodiversity, including elements like urban forests and horticulture. This in turn positively improves the life and health of city inhabitants.

While taking ecosystem services into account, integrated landscape planning can enhance water supply and quality while simultaneously reducing the risks of droughts and floods. Improved land management at the watershed level has the potential to enhance the natural ability of ecosystems to retain water by slowing down and absorbing some of the runoff, while practices like green roofs, permeable pavements and green spaces in urban areas also improve water absorption and retention.⁴⁹

2.3.5 LDN and energy

Access to energy is essential for security, climate change mitigation, food production, and employment and increasing incomes. The growing demand for energy has been mainly met by conventional energy sources like fossil fuels, freshwater and land resources, with considerable social and environmental impacts leaving a "footprint" on the land. In many low- and middle-income countries, particularly in remote communities, fuelwood dominates energy provision for domestic heating and cooking purposes. At the global scale, it accounts for around 10% of the global energy supply. Although fuelwood consumption by rural households is no longer considered a principal cause of forest degradation or deforestation, charcoal production is largely unsustainable, leading to serious losses of tree cover, especially in dryland areas.

Likewise, the development of renewable energies, such as biomass, geothermal, hydro, solar and wind, also has substantial requirements in terms of land resources, which may further increase in the future due to rising shares of variable renewable sources.⁵⁰ For example, plant-based energy sources/biofuels are already triggering competing trends between food, energy and environment, where food and energy compete for land, causing further damage to the environment.⁵¹ Biofuels can nevertheless be an efficient alternative, provided that biofuel crops are grown on degraded land, non-agricultural land or land made available by intensifying livestock production.⁵²

Competing for land resources could also occur when using solar (photovoltaic) systems, which could occupy large areas depending on the level of insolation. Several strategies like co-locating solar systems with agriculture and other renewable energy systems could avoid or minimize the impacts on land resources. By applying integrated land management approaches as well as forest and landscape restoration, LDN offers several possibilities to minimize the trade-offs between these different land uses for sustainable fuelwood and bioenergy sourcing, while also providing energy security (particularly for rural populations) and conserving ecosystems.

Additionally, LDN can help enhance hydropower productivity. By avoiding, minimizing and reversing land degradation, LDN would help reduce soil erosion and dam siltation, which would expand the lifespan of dams and reduce the operating costs of hydropower.

2.3.6 LDN and mining

Mining is a sector that has large land footprints and often negative health implications, and therefore needs to be taken into account in efforts to achieve LDN. Evidence shows that LDN creates good business opportunities in terms of profitability, sustainability and social

⁴⁷ UNCCD (2016), A Natural Fix: A Joined-up Approach to Delivering the Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

⁴⁸ UNCCD (2016), Op. cit.

⁴⁹ UNCCD (2016), Reaping the rewards. Financing Land Degradation Neutrality.

⁵⁰ Sathaye, J., et al. (2011), Renewable Energy in the Context of Sustainable Energy. In IPCC Special Report on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation,

O. Edenhofer et al. eds, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA.

⁵¹ UNCCD (2017), Global Land Outlook, first edition, Bonn, Germany, available at https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2018-06/GLO%20English_Full_Report_rev1.pdf

⁵² UNCCD (2017), Global Land Outlook, working paper: Energy and Land Use, available at http://iinas.org/tl_files/iinas/downloads/land/IINAS_2017_UNCCD-IRENA_Energy-Land_paper.pdf

responsibility. An analysis carried out by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD⁵³ on the mining sector revealed a potentially vast, largely untapped opportunity for engaging mining companies in socially- and environmentally-responsible operations compatible with both SLM and LDN. The interest of this sector to engage with SLM and LDN could be stimulated by setting up a certification system and a legally-binding regulatory framework to create an enabling environment.

2.4 LDN AND GENDER

Women have a key role in land management. In developing countries in particular, they are in charge of land use and management, which includes food production and preparation, and the collection of fuelwood, water provision, fodder, medicinal herbs, fruits and seeds. Nevertheless, women, especially those in rural areas, still lack access to land and are disadvantaged because of entrenched gender-specific rights, roles and responsibilities, which can negatively impact their quality of life. Hence, rural women are at the frontline of marginalized groups affected by land degradation, which makes gender-responsive LDN policies and their implementation an imperative at the local and national levels.⁵⁴

To safeguard their lands from degradation, women need adequate means (regulations, incentives, capacity building). This will eventually contribute to achieving LDN targets. Interventions are needed in four key areas:⁵⁵

Solution: Fostering women's participation:

Several experiences show that women's participation should reach a minimum threshold of 30% to make it efficient, whereas social transformation occurs when participation reaches 50%. These experiences show that although the initial cost of financial investment to foster women's participation is high, the long-term returns are even higher. To achieve this, policies have to:

- Ensure that women's participation and interests are reflected in all land-related government programmes and projects, including those aimed at achieving LDN;
- Identify and build the capacities of social mobilizers to motivate women's participation, mentor them in leadership, and provide a range of information and advisory services on SLM;
- Provide incentives, including funding, to support consultation in large-scale pilot and path-breaking projects that aim for gender parity;
- Recognize and engage women as land managers in various aspects, including as farmers and not just farm helpers; and
- Address perverse laws and policy incentives that hamper the efficiency and development of women in food production activities.

② Land rights:

It is important that men and women have the right to use, access, control, own or sell land without undermining good land stewardship. Having or lacking these rights can mean all the difference in avoiding or reducing land degradation, as land is the asset most commonly used to borrow against investment. This could be made possible through policies and actions that:

- Give authority to local governments to issue land titles to women and for widows to inherit titles;
- Ensure that national legislative acts include mechanisms to address the land needs of special groups, including women;
- Provide time-limited use and ownership of land for multi-purpose gardens where women's groups can cultivate food to meet their household needs;
- Allocate some of the land earmarked for restoration under LDN to women for them to rehabilitate and own; and
- Change legislation, where necessary, to enable women to overcome the obstacles they face in securing land tenure and resource rights.

S Finance and credit:

Access to global financial services is not equitably distributed between men and women. In fact, on average, only about 77% of the services that are accessible to men are also accessible to women. Increasing access could, for instance, generate better agricultural output in developing countries. Efforts should concentrate on:

- Enabling women to access credit from microenterprises, formal banking systems and other innovative sources, including from relevant, speciallydesignated funds from national and international sources, such as migrant remittances and the Adaptation Fund, the LDN Fund or the Green Climate Fund;
- Providing incentives for the private sector to source their raw materials from women or to train them in value addition;
- Ensuring that women earn a substantial amount of the income earmarked for government-supported land rehabilitation and restoration under LDN; and
- Ensuring that women have direct access to resource inputs and financial services, and that these are not mediated through their husbands or male family members.

S Knowledge dissemination:

Women, particularly those from rural areas, hold valuable traditional knowledge on land use due to their historical dependence on natural resources and their traditional role as carers. They should therefore have access to and benefit from the scientific advances developed on the basis of this knowledge. Policies should aim to:

⁵⁴ UNCCD (2017), Op. cit.

⁵³ Quatrini *et al.* (2016), Involving the Mining Sector in Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality.

⁵⁵ UNCCD (2016), Turning the tide: The Gender factor in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality.

- Build the capacities of women's groups and organizations at the national and regional levels, including through exchange programmes;
- Increase the number of women in the extension service system to support women land users to gain relevant knowledge and skills in land management;
- Build the capacities of women in new crop and SLM techniques that can protect their lands from degradation;
- Ensure that every initiative undertaken in pursuing LDN helps women to access knowledge, extension and technological services; and
- Increase female participation in agricultural research and development.

Most of the elements to mainstream gender mentioned above are taken into consideration in the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN, which highlights the importance of women's land rights and tenure security for achieving LDN and encourages the integration of a gender perspective throughout the LDN process (design, planning, implementation and monitoring).

Furthermore, the framework sets out a number of principles in order to guarantee a gender-responsive approach during assessments on land use decisions, based around participatory process applications, access to information and the examination of power.⁵⁶

Chapter 3

Land Degradation Neutrality Implementation: From Target Setting to Transformative Projects and Programmes



3. LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY IMPLEMENTATION: FROM TARGET SETTING TO TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

3.1 LDN TARGET SETTING

At its twelfth session of the COP, further to endorsing the LDN concept, a number of decisions to translate the LDN concept into action were formulated (Annex 1). These include:

- Inviting all country Parties to "formulate national voluntary targets to achieve LDN" and to incorporate them in their UNCCD NAPs (decision 15/COP.12);
- Requesting UNCCD bodies to i) provide "guidance for formulating national LDN targets and initiatives" and ii) facilitate "the use of UNCCD indicator frameworks as a contribution to the monitoring, evaluation and communication of progress towards the national LDN targets" (decision 3/COP.12);
- Deciding that "affected country Parties should provide timely feedback where possible on the default data and the proposed methodology to formulate national voluntary LDN targets using the monitoring and assessment indicators framework, and complete the reporting and target setting exercise for examination by the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) at its intercessional session that will take place after January 2018 [...] provided that countries have sufficient national official data/information to report or validate national estimates derived from global data sources and that reporting should be provided primarily from official national data" (decision 15/COP.12);
- Inviting affected country Parties to include voluntary national LDN targets in their national reports, as appropriate (decision 2/COP.12); and
- Deciding, "as a means to understanding the status of land degradation and the potential for land restoration, that reporting is required for the following three UNCCD progress indicators," which correspond to the SDG subindicators for target 15.3: trends in land cover (metric: vegetative land cover), trends in land productivity or functioning of the land (metric: land productivity dynamics); and trends in carbon stocks above and below ground (metric: soil organic carbon stock)⁵⁷ (decision 15/COP.12).

In response to the above decisions, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD established the LDN Target Setting Programme, in cooperation with the UNCCD secretariat and with the support of 18 international partners.⁵⁸ The Programme assists countries in setting realistic voluntary LDN targets. It means defining broad yet clear, time-bound and measurable objectives on what a country wants to achieve in terms of halting and reversing land degradation and restoring degraded lands through a wide range of possible measures.

The LDN Target Setting Programme revolves around four building blocks to support country Parties:

- Leveraging LDN, by catalyzing its multiple benefits and bringing it to the forefront of national agendas on, inter-alia, climate change, forest and landscape restoration, biodiversity conservation, green growth and poverty eradication. The LDN Target Setting Programme supports countries to leverage LDN by preparing a "National LDN Target Setting Leverage Plan," which helps to identify and tap into mainstreaming opportunities, including synergies with LDN-related national, regional and global processes. Furthermore, the LDN Target Setting Programme facilitates multistakeholder engagement, ensuring the active participation of a variety of relevant stakeholders in the LDN target setting exercise.
- Assessing LDN, by establishing a baseline and identifying land degradation drivers and trends. This stage is a key requirement in the LDN target setting process in order to define the baseline scenario for LDN that is coherent with the SDG process. In synergy with the UNCCD reporting process, the LDN Target Setting Programme provides countries with the best-available default data from global data providers (in line with decision 22/COP.11), helps countries to identify relevant LDN-related national datasets, and supports the establishment of the LDN baseline. The baseline equals the status and condition of land-based natural capital, and the ecosystem services that flow from that land base, using the initial numerical value of the three LDN biophysical indicators as proxies of the land-based natural capital. The LDN Target Setting Programme also supports the analysis of the legal and institutional environment relevant for LDN, as well as the land degradation trends, and identifies the main direct and indirect drivers behind these trends.

Setting voluntary LDN targets and associated

measures, by defining the country's ambitions in terms of combating land degradation. This consists of supporting a consultative process among stakeholders to discuss and agree on measurable, verifiable and time-bound voluntary LDN targets, as well as to identify specific measures to achieve these targets while addressing the main land degradation trends and drivers. Countries are invited to adopt these targets at the highest appropriate governmental level through the "National LDN High-Level Note." The final national LDN target setting reports are available online.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ LDN-related COP 12 decisions (the complete list of LDN-related decisions can be found in Annex 1).

⁵⁸ The European Space Agency, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Global Environment Facility, Government of France, Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, Government of the Republic of Korea, Government of Luxembourg, Government of Spain, Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Government of the Republic of Turkey, Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, International Soil Reference and Information Centre, International Union for Conservation of Nature, Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, Soil Leadership Academy, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, World Resources Institute.
⁵⁹ https://knowledge.unccd.int/home/country-information/countries-with-voluntary-Idn-targets

Box 1: Achievements of the LDN Target Setting Programme

As of 31 May 2019, 122 countries expressed their interest in participating in the LDN Target Setting Programme and have engaged in setting voluntary LDN targets. Of these, 92 countries (75%) have set LDN baselines, 77 countries (63%) have established LDN targets and associated measures, and 51 countries (41%) have had these targets adopted by their governments. Governmental adoption varies from inner-ministerial to inter-ministerial mechanisms. LDN leverage plans were developed in 110 countries (90%).

LDN national working groups were established in 101 countries (82%), often capitalizing on existing coordination mechanisms, such as ones related to UNCCD, UNFCCC, CBD, SLM, the SDG national agendas, or forest and landscape restoration. And finally, 46 countries (38%) identified opportunities to develop LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, including through possible financing options.⁶⁰

Main lessons learned

- Adoption of LDN targets by inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral mechanisms evokes wider responses and builds greater momentum for LDN leverage.
- There is a need to provide expertise, tools and training to enhance national capacities to undertake quantitative assessments and corresponding mapping of degraded lands. Such training would ideally target not only the main entity responsible for LDN implementation and reporting to the UNCCD, but also national statistical offices responsible for SDG implementation as well as other specialized agencies.
- Despite positive efforts, the integration of LDN indicators in the national SDG framework is still weak globally. Lack of comparable national data and limited expertise at country level are among the contributing factors to the limited number of successes.
- National data, especially on land productivity and soil organic carbon, are mostly unavailable. In addition, harmonized/standardized national methods for quantitative mapping of land cover, land productivity and soil carbon content need to be developed to enable objective assessment and monitoring of land degradation and to capture key drivers of change at country level.
- Achieving LDN, by ensuring an enabling environment that facilitates the implementation of LDN actions and by the identification of new investment opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, which can contribute to achieving multiple SDGs and embedding LDN into national development priorities. In addition, the LDN Target Setting Programme supports all participating countries in mainstreaming LDN in selected national policies and commitments, and identifying possible projects and programmes, promoting transformational shifts as well as LDN and innovative financing opportunities in support of LDN implementation.

Since its launch in 2016, the LDN Target Setting Programme has effectively supported participating countries to:

- Shape voluntary commitments to achieve LDN;
- Unlock the potential of land in achieving other SDGs;
- Reflect on policy coherence among national policies and commitments;
- Engage key stakeholders across sectors;
- Enhance national capacities to manage land-related data;
- Set baselines using the best available data to provide a systematic approach to monitor progress towards LDN;

- Provide an avenue for identifying key measures to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation; and
- Facilitate peer learning and strengthen coordination among relevant stakeholders at national, regional and global levels.

3.2 LDN TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

Following decision 3/COP.13 and decision 14/COP.13, the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, in close cooperation with implementing/accredited agencies, has been advancing in facilitating LDN implementation by supporting countries to develop a portfolio of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes that contribute to achieving their voluntary LDN targets, deliver multiple benefits, build on high-impact good practices, enhance national capacities, and leverage innovative finance, including from the private sector (see Annex 2). In this context, and counting on limited resources, the Global Mechanism is focusing its efforts on assisting country Parties that have requested support to develop early-stage project/programme concept notes that can be further developed into full-fledged project proposals, with the support of implementation entities, targeting a wide range of funding sources such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF) or the Adaptation Fund, among others.

⁶⁰ AICCD/CRIC(17)/3), available at https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cric17-georgetown-guyana-2019/iccdcric173

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"Transformational change is the process whereby positive development results are achieved and sustained over time by institutionalizing policies, programmes and projects within national strategies. It should be noted that this embodies the concept of institutionally sustained results - consistency of achievement over time. This is in order to exclude short-term, transitory impact."

UNDP (2011). Supporting Transformational Change

"Transformational engagements have the potential to fundamentally change the lives of poor people, are ambitious in scope, involve multiple instruments, develop over longer periods of time and have a lasting effect."

World Bank Group (2016). Supporting Transformational Change for Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity

3.2.1 Definition of "transformation"

In accordance with the definition adopted by the IPCC,⁶¹ transformation is perceived as a change in the fundamental attributes of natural and human systems. They are shifts that fundamentally alter system functions, interactions and feedbacks. LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes seek to generate and sustain fundamental and sustainable positive change in the coupled human-environmental system where interventions are targeted.

In the framework of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, positive transformation can be pursued through sustainable and inclusive interventions at scale (e.g., in landscapes) featuring innovation in locally-adapted technologies, practices and financial mechanisms (e.g., blended finance).62

3.2.2 Features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes are characterized by a number of features that are provided in a checklist,⁶³ developed by the Global Mechanism in collaboration with the UNCCD secretariat and reviewed by the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) of the UNCCD:

- Features that are fundamental to LDN;
- Features that deliver multiple benefits;
- Features that promote responsible and inclusive governance;
- Features that promote the scale out and up of what works:
- Features that enhance (sub)national ownership and capacities; and
- Features that leverage innovative finance (especially private sector).

The checklist will help country-level project developers and technical and financial partners to design projects and programmes that are not only aligned with the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN, but which would also lead to transformative changes. The six features cited above can be classified under the following three categories.

3.2.2.1 Features ensuring transformation and innovation

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Among the six features, three are explicitly about transformation and innovation. These are: the features that are fundamental to LDN (translating the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN into concrete actions); that promote the scale out and scale up of what works (good practices, success stories, pilot projects, etc.); and that leverage innovative finance (especially from the private sector).

③ Features that are fundamental to LDN:

The proposed project should contribute to achieving the defined LDN (sub)national targets and/or country priorities specified in its national development plans and/or its land use planning policy. It should use a landscape approach by covering an area large enough to involve multiple land units (a variety of land types, sectors and jurisdictions). Another particular aspect to take into consideration is the application of the fundamental elements of the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN:

- Promoting neutrality by applying the counterbalancing mechanism;
- Adopting the LDN response hierarchy: Avoid > Reduce > Reverse land degradation; and
- Presenting the interventions according to land type for each level of the response hierarchy.

These fundamental elements for LDN should be taken into account when elaborating land use plans or integrated into existing ones, both at national and landscape levels (see Box 2).

③ Features that promote the scale out and scale up of what works:

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes are implemented at scale – for example, through a landscape approach that transforms a landscape unit, region or watershed into sustainably used territories. They rely on the scale up and scale out of existing experiences, based on indigenous and local knowledge as well as best practices and traditional practices, in order to maximize their positive impacts.

⁶¹ IPCC (2014), Summary for policymakers, Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability, Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, C.B. Field, *et al.* eds., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 1-32. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/02/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf

⁶² UNCCD (2018), Checklist for Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes (LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes). Available at: https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2018-09/LDN%20TPP%20checklist%20final%20draft%20040918.pdf

⁶³ The Checklist is in Annex 3 and is also available online at: https://www.unccd.int/news-events/draft-checklist-ldn-transformative-projects-and-programmes-prepared-field-testing
Box 2: Integrated land use planning: A key element for successful LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

Integrated land use planning is the allocation of land to different uses across a landscape, allowing a balance in economic, social and environmental values. The process implies the identification, at the landscape level, of the best combination of land uses to meet the needs of stakeholders, while safeguarding resources for the future. Land use planning guides the location of land use activities and the manner to implement them, as well as encourages synergies among them.

Land use planning is very useful in a context involving multiple stakeholders and where decisions on land use allocation could be a source of conflict. It helps achieve sustainable land management through the identification of the most profitable trade-offs between land-use alternatives and associated social and economic developments and environmental protections.

Land use planning is possible at different scales: local, landscape, sub-national, national or regional. While it tends to be more strategic at larger scales, land use planning is more operational at the local or landscape scale.

Land use planning involves multiple stakeholders, allowing for agreement on decisions regarding land allocation. This consultative process should also involve women, especially with regards to natural resources and products through which income is generated but is not recognized as essential by male landowners or planners.

Some of the common activities of land-use planning exercises are:

- The assessment of the present and future needs of stakeholders and the systematic evaluation of the capacity of the land to meet them;
- The identification and resolution of conflicts between competing uses, including the needs of individuals and those of the community, without compromising those of future generations;
- The search for sustainable options that best meet the identified needs; and
- The allocation of land to a range of uses to bring about desired changes.

The process of land use planning is iterative and continuous. Any land use plan should be renegotiable and should take into account new information and changing circumstances and goals.⁶⁴

③ Features that leverage innovative finance (especially from the private sector)

Transformation and innovation should also be reflected at the project finance level by ensuring adequate investment in activities designed to scale-up and scaleout best practices. LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes should tap into a broad range of financing (e.g., climate finance, development finance, domestic finance, national forest funds, special taxation schemes) while promoting innovative mechanisms (e.g., blended finance, green bonds) and creating incentives and rewards for land stewardship. In addition, they should foster activities that incentivize income generation and job creation for communities in the project intervention areas and should also involve components that leverage private sector mobilization.

3.2.2.2 Features promoting responsible and inclusive governance

This category includes features that guarantee the compliance of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes with the standards of the different funds and financing entities. During the development phase of the project, attention must be given to environmental and social safeguards, as well as to gender-related issues. The objective is to avoid or reduce any possible environmental, economic, social and cultural damage, and to adopt a gender-sensitive approach. Translating this into concrete action means that LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes should be based on some preliminary studies, such as an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment and a gender action plan. Relative to the latter, the Global Mechanism has been working in collaboration with UN Women, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and UNDP to develop a standalone manual to support the design of gender-responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes. The gender-specific manual will complement this operational guide to ensure that gender is taken into consideration in different themes and in all aspects of the project/programme.

Furthermore, LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes should envisage these considerations in the monitoring and evaluation system by putting in place a mechanism for reporting and addressing grievances.

3.2.2.3 Features ensuring sustainability

Long-term impacts and sustainable outcomes are a primary concern for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes. To meet this challenge, projects should present a number of features that:

64 Land-use Planning Module, FAO, available at: http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/modules/land-use-planning/basic-knowledge/en/?type=111

Foster a policy environment for LDN at national and local scales, supporting the monitoring of land and land-based ecosystems, as well as encouraging institutional and technical capacity building.

③ Deliver multiple benefits by emphasizing the synergies of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes with the SDGs and some national sectors.

The LDN transformative project or programme should have the potential to generate multiple environmental benefits, especially in terms of climate change adaptation and mitigation and biodiversity conservation. The project should also generate economic and social benefits that enhance livelihoods and quality of life.

Enhance (sub)national ownership and capacities, through the provision of tailored education and capacity-building activities and the identification and leveraging of financing vehicles from both public and private sources. It is essential for project activities to be in alignment with national strategies in order to ensure their sustainability.

Box 3: Examples of how to ensure project compliance

Most leading financing and technical institutions offering potential funding for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes have specific environmental and social safeguard policies to improve sustainable development benefits and to prevent risks and potential damages to the environment and targeted communities. Throughout the project development cycle, environmental, social and gender studies must be undertaken, and a risk assessment conducted to design the expected LDN transformative project/programme.

Compliance with relevant environmental and social safeguards

These safeguards are very similar among the different institutions and are more or less in alignment with those adopted by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), as below.

The IFC Performance Standards:

- One overarching performance standard:
 - PS1: Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts
- Seven standards, covering specific environmental and social issues:
 - PS2: Labor and Working Conditions Performance
 - PS3: Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention
 - PS4: Community Health, Safety, and Security
 - PS5: Land Acquisition and Involuntary Resettlement
 - PS6: Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources
 - PS7: Indigenous Peoples Performance Standard
 - PS8: Cultural Heritage.

Gender mainstreaming:

For most funding entities, the integration of gender considerations within a project proposal is usually a key prerequisite for its endorsement. It is recommended that proposals include:

- Gender assessments and analysis: A number of resources for best practices in gender assessments and analysis is widely available. Recommended practices include:
 - Collecting information about both men and women;
 - Asking questions about specific individuals or groups and identifying them by gender;
 - Ensuring that those collecting and analyzing the data understand gender roles and social dynamics, with questions adapted to national/local contexts;
 - Budgeting and planning for collecting gender-disaggregated data;
 - Working with a gender expert early in the process to define the research questions and methodology; and
 - Making use of the FAO's Gender and Land Rights Database (available at: http://www.fao.org/genderlandrights-database/en), which highlights the major political, legal and cultural factors that influence the realization of women's land rights throughout the world.
- Integration of qualitative and quantitative gender indicators in the project monitoring and evaluation framework: relevant indicators should be aligned with national policies and priorities on gender.
- A gender action plan (GAP): this provides an overview of how gender equality will be promoted within the project in terms of access to and impact of funding, with proposals for programmes and projects that include well-designed gender elements potentially being given preference.

For each LDN transformative project or programme, project proponents will need to carefully review and take into account the applicable gender requirements of the targeted funding entity(ies).

Chapter 4 Funding Opportunities and Partnerships to Achieve Land Degradation Neutrality

4. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY

4.1 THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

The GEF⁶⁵ was established on the eve of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit to help tackle the world's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, the GEF has provided over USD14 billion in grants and has mobilized more than USD70 billion in additional financing for over 4,000 projects and programmes. The GEF has a unique mandate across multiple Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including for the CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC, the Minamata Convention, the Stockholm Convention and the Montreal Protocol.

GEF funds are available for developing countries and countries with economies in transition to meet the objectives of the international environmental conventions and agreements. Its support is provided to government agencies, CSOs, private sector companies and research institutions, among a broad diversity of potential partners, to implement projects and programmes in recipient countries.

To deliver its 2020 vision, the GEF is pursuing five strategic priorities:

- 1. addressing the drivers of environmental degradation;
- 2. delivering integrated solutions;
- 3. enhancing resilience and adaptation;
- 4. ensuring complementarity and synergies, especially in climate finance; and
- 5. focusing on choosing the right influencing model.

The GEF has a mandate to invest in global environmental benefits from production landscapes, a mandate related directly to its role as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD. The land degradation focal area provides the opportunity for eligible countries to utilize GEF resources for implementing the UNCCD and its 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

The GEF is well-placed to help countries implement UNCCD guidance and facilitate coordinated investment in SLM as a means to achieve LDN. Since land degradation has global environmental and poverty dimensions, integrated solutions are required to support interventions that address both. Building synergies across the GEF delivery model will pave the way for improvements in the cost effectiveness of interventions and will deliver multiple outcomes toward environmental, social and economic sustainability (see Figure 7).

Funding offer

The main focus of the GEF is to grant funding through four modalities:

- 1. full-sized projects (over USD2 million);
- 2. medium-sized projects (up to USD2 million);
- 3. enabling activities; and
- 4. programmatic approaches, now called Impact Programmes, at USD4 million each (topped up by the GEF with an additional USD2 million).

Non-grant instruments are also available for specific initiatives.

In addition, the GEF Small Grants Programme, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), provides financial and technical support to communities and CSOs in meeting the overall objective of "global environmental benefits secured through community-based initiatives and actions." It provides "small grants" up to a maximum of USD50,000 and funds "strategic projects" up to a maximum of USD150,000.

Figure 7: GEF-7 Programming Structure



Source: GEF Secretariat, 2017

65 https://www.thegef.org/

The GEF-7 programming strategy was designed along two major axes:

- Three Impact Programmes designed according to country priorities, addressing major drivers of environmental degradation and/or delivering multiple environmental benefits across different focal areas of the GEF:
 - Food systems, land use and restoration;
 - Sustainable cities; and
 - Sustainable forest management.
- Five focal area-specific investments that respond to specific guidance from different Multilateral Environmental Agreements:
 - Biodiversity;
 - Land degradation;
 - Climate change;
 - International waters; and
 - Chemicals and waste.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

As the financing mechanism of the UNCCD, the GEF has responded to the invitation from the UNCCD COP 12 to provide technical and financial support for initiatives that promote LDN and address the SDGs. In the past two years, the GEF has approved 16 projects, investing approximately USD60 million into projects that directly address LDN in 13 countries and support LDN-enabling activities globally. The GEF is also contributing to the LDN Target Setting Programme.

In the framework of its new four-year investment cycle (2018-21), known as GEF-7, and with an overall increase of 10% of its globally-programmed STAR allocations⁶⁶ under the land degradation focal area (compared to GEF-6), the GEF will continue to base its interventions on the drivers of land degradation, the robust assessment of experience and existing knowledge, and on lessons learned through ongoing implementation of projects and programmes related to land degradation. Its approach will focus on good practices that can be scaled up to maximize global benefits for the environment and to address issues of food security and climate change.

Under GEF-7, there are three key entry points to support LDN projects:

- 1. The land degradation focal area, which supports on-the-ground implementation of LDN, particularly through four specific topics:
 - Sustainable land management (SLM);
 - Sustainable forest management (SFM);
 - Forest and landscape restoration; and
 - Integrated Natural Resource Management for resilient agro-ecosystems.

The GEF-7 land degradation focal area finances enabling environments to support LDN implementation globally (i.e., related to improving regulatory and institutional frameworks).

- The Chemicals and Waste Focal Area addresses soil contamination issues and mine reclamation activities. It also finances enabling activities related to the different conventions and each country's obligations.
- 3. The Impact Programmes, in particular those on:
 - "Food systems, land use and restoration" focus on improving land productivity, land use planning and the restoration of degraded land; and
 - "Sustainable forest management," with a specific focus on key transboundary biomes of global importance: the Amazon, the Congo Basin, and important dryland landscapes.

How to access?

Projects can be developed and submitted through 18 GEF agencies,⁶⁷ including UNEP, UNDP, the World Bank, FAO, World Wildlife Fund, IUCN, Conservation International and several regional development banks. Funding proposals are largely "mainstreamed" in the project preparation cycle of these organizations.

Funding proposals are coordinated and need to be officially endorsed by the GEF National Operational Focal Points. In addition, the funding proposals need to demonstrate expected global environmental benefits.

A Project Preparation Grant (PPG) is provided to support the preparation of full and medium-sized projects. Where feasible, PPGs should complement other sources of finance for project preparation. Recourse to PPG funds is optional. More information is provided in the GEF-7 programming directions.⁶⁸

The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (2010) states that all projects and programmes should include a concrete and fully-budgeted monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan with CEO endorsement for full-sized projects and CEO approval for medium-sized projects. Therefore, understanding what activities constitute an M&E plan is required for the preparation and planning of projects and programmes.

The GEF has made available all of its policies and guidelines on the Project and Program Cycle Policy.⁶⁹

The GEF also provides funding for private entities as a means to leverage the private sector within public-private partnerships.

⁶ The System for Transparent Allocation of Resources (STAR) determines the amount of GEF resources that a given country can access in a replenishment period. The initial STAR country allocations for GEF-7, reflecting a total replenishment level for programming of USD 4,068 million, are available here: https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF-C.55-Inf.03-GEF-7-STAR.pdf

⁵⁷ https://www.thegef.org/partners/gef-agencies

⁶⁸ https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/publications/GEF-7%20Programming%20Directions%20-%20GEF_R.7_19.pdf

⁶⁹ http://www.thegef.org/documents/policies-guidelines

4.2 CLIMATE FINANCE OPPORTUNITIES

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes have multiple objectives and benefits, particularly with regards to climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation, as well as other environmental and social benefits. Funding proposals for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes can take advantage of relevant climate financing opportunities, such as those of the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund. LDN transformative project and programme proposals would therefore benefit from providing a clear narrative and linkages with land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation (see Figure 8), and having well-defined and measurable climate indicators, such as reduced GHG emissions and number of beneficiaries with improved adaptation capacity. A linkage to NDC targets should also be demonstrated.

Practices such as SLM have clear, mostly overlapping contributions to LDN and climate change mitigation and adaptation, as illustrated in Figure 8. The climate narrative of many LDN projects would in many cases make reference to climate-smart agriculture (CSA), which can be defined as *"agriculture that sustainably increases productivity, enhances resilience (adaptation), reduces/removes GHGs (mitigation) where possible, and enhances achievement of national food security and development goals"* (FAO, 2013).

4.2.1 Green Climate Fund

The GCF was established by 194 UNFCCC country Parties in 2010 to respond to the challenges of climate change. In 2015, the GCF was given an important role in implementing the Paris Agreement and supporting the goal of keeping annual global temperature rises to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to further limit the increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The GCF's investments are aimed at achieving maximum impact in developing countries, supporting paradigm shifts

in both spheres of mitigation and adaptation. The Fund aims for a 50:50 balance between mitigation and adaptation investments over time. It also aims for a floor of 50% of the adaptation allocation for particularly vulnerable countries, including Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and African States.⁷⁰

Funding offer

Funding exists for low-emissions (mitigation) and climate-resilient (adaptation) projects and programmes developed by the public and private sectors, including:

- Risk-based, depending on funding size, for projects and programmes that are micro (up to USD10 million), small (USD10–50 million), medium (USD50–250 million) or large (over USD250 million). The GCF provides grants with and without repayment contingency, as well as loans and equity.
- Readiness and Preparatory Support Programmes, which make up to USD1 million available per country to strengthen the capacity to identify, prepare and implement funding proposals, and achieve direct access.
- Support in establishing or strengthening a National Designated Authority or focal point, which makes up to USD300,000 available per year to deliver on the Fund's requirements.
- Technical assistance and grants of up to USD3 million for National Adaptation Plans.
- Flexible financial instruments, such as debt, equity and guarantees, for dedicated Private Sector Facility. This can be combined with instruments (such as concessional funding) to promote private sector investments.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes could focus on either adaptation or the delivery of both mitigation and adaptation. This could be a unique opportunity for SIDS in particular.⁷¹ The LDN transformative project or programme could focus on addressing the following issues:



Figure 8: SLM practices addressing land degradation, adaptation and mitigation⁷²

⁷⁰ GCF (2016). An introduction to the Green Climate Fund.

⁷¹ Based on its investment criteria, the GCF has developed a cross-cutting matrix to guide its funding decisions. This matrix identifies five investment priorities including enhancing resilience in SIDS.

⁷² Specific variables or qualities are selected (and grouped with colours) to indicate the degree to which the SLM technology can contribute to addressing desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD), climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as its impacts on biodiversity.

- Avoiding deforestation: National efforts to reduce deforestation, provide alternative incomes to forest users and support forest rehabilitation by redirecting land use expansion away from forested areas.
- Sustainable climate-smart agriculture: Adaptation measures in agriculture, including adjusting agricultural practices to increase the resilience of food systems and strengthen food security while improving livelihoods, safeguarding access to food and water, strengthening ecosystem resilience, protecting soil organic matter and limiting emissions from livestock.
- Food security: Adoption of more resilient crops and innovative farming techniques, reducing food waste and improving efficiency of food supply chains.
- Ecosystems services and livelihoods: Strengthening the adaptive capacity of ecosystems by protecting and rehabilitating wetlands, mangroves and green zones in urban areas that provide resources for buffering coastal erosion and storms.
- Sustainable livelihoods: Strengthening livelihood strategies through the diversification of production and income sources (e.g., through SLM/agroforestry systems that include products for subsistence and markets), enabling market access on a sustainable basis while reducing poverty and increasing livelihood assets.
- Watershed management: Redesigning water, flood and drainage management systems, as well as promoting early warning systems.
- Private sector opportunities: Land-related projects and programmes financed by the GCF's Private Sector Facility can include:
 - Diversification of crop and seed varieties;
 - Forest farming and combating deforestation;
 - Irrigation extension and increased efficiency; and
 - Rainwater harvesting and other options to diversify water sources.

How to access?73

GCF funds can be accessed directly through accredited subnational, national or regional implementing Accredited Entities,⁷⁴ and through International Accredited Entities, including UN agencies, development banks and NGOs. Funding proposals are coordinated by the National Designated Authority (NDA) and require approval from the NDA before submission to the GCF.

4.2.2 Climate Investment Funds

Since 2008, the Climate Investment Funds (CIF) has been leading efforts to empower transformations in the energy, climate resilience, transport and forestry sectors. CIF concessional financing⁷⁵ offers flexibility to test new business models and approaches, build track records in unproven markets, and boost investor confidence to unlock additional finance from other sources, particularly from the private sector and the multilateral development banks that implement CIF funding.

Funding offer

The CIF provides 72 developing and middle-income countries with urgently-needed resources totaling USD8.3 billion to manage the challenges of climate change and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. CIF pledges are also expected to attract an additional USD58 billion of co-financing for a growing portfolio of over 300 projects and programmes. The CIF is comprised of four programmes:

- The USD5.6 billion **Clean Technology Fund** provides middle-income countries with highly concessional resources to scale up low-carbon technologies in renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport.
- The USD1.2 billion Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR) is supporting developing countries to integrate climate resilience into development planning.
- The USD780 million Scaling Up Renewable Energy in Low Income Countries Programme (SREP) is supporting the deployment of renewable energy solutions for increased energy access and economic growth in the world's poorest countries.
- The USD775 million Forest Investment Program (FIP) supports the efforts of developing countries in implementing REDD+-related actions.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

The PPCR and the FIP are of particular importance for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes:

 The FIP focuses on REDD+ and SFM, including i) landscape approaches, ii) institutional reforms and policy dialogue, iii) sustainable forest management, and iv) forest monitoring. The FIP also provides support to the national REDD+ process, which includes policy dialogue and capacity building, and has a dedicated grant mechanism for indigenous peoples and local communities designed with and managed by indigenous peoples.

 $^{^{73}\} https://www.greenclimate.fund/news/gcf-101-new-guide-on-how-to-access-the-green-climate-fund$

⁷⁴ https://www.greenclimate.fund/how-we-work/tools/entity-directory

⁷⁵ These are loans that are extended on terms substantially more generous than market loans. Concessionality is achieved either through interest rates below those available on the market or by grace periods, or a combination of these. Concessional loans typically have long grace periods.

- The PPCR supports a number of land-based interventions which aim to strengthen climate resilience, including:
 - Landscape approaches;
 - Integrated water resources management;
 - Climate information systems and disaster management;
 - Infrastructure;
 - Capacity building and policy dialogue; and
 - Coastal zone management.

In partnership with the implementing development banks, trainings are organized to strengthen the capacity to monitor and report results, as well as on knowledge exchange, south-south exchange and the promotion of good practices for climate change adaptation. The PPCR has set dedicated resources aside to involve the private sector in innovative funding proposals.

How to access?

The CIF is the only multilateral climate fund to work exclusively with multilateral development banks (MDBs) as implementing agencies. The Fund's resources are held in trust by the World Bank and disbursed as grants, highly concessional loans and risk mitigation instruments to recipient countries through five MDBs: the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Access to CIF funds is possible through these MDBs by elaborating investment plans⁷⁶ under the leadership of the country. The investment plan is agreed between, and owned by, the government and the MDB (see Figure 9).⁷⁷

Figure 9: Summary of the Climate Investment Fund's programming process

PHASE 1: PRE-INVESTMENT

Expression of interest	Expressions of interest from eligible governments are invited via the Executive Director's/Country Director's office of the MDB.			
Selection of pilots	A group of independent experts recommends a group of pilots, based on approved selection criteria, which are then approved by the governing body.			
Joint mission	Once the selected countries confirm their interest in participating in the program, the governments invite the MDBs to a joint mission or series of missions designed to develop the investment plans. Preparation grants are available to countries upon request.			
Development of investment plan	Countries continue to develop and finalize investment plans in consultation with stakeholders.			
Endorsement of investment plan	The committee or sub-committee reviews and may endorse the plan, which allows countries to move forward with developing the investments indicated in the plan.			
Development of projects/programs	Once the plan is endorsed, the country and the MDB further develop projects to be submitted for approval by the governing body.			
Approval of projects/programs	Prior to MDB board approval, the country and the MDB submit the project to the committee or sub-committee for approval of CIF funding.			
PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION				
Project/program implementation	Once approved by the CIF governing body and the MDB board, the projects enter the implementation stage.			

Adapted from World Bank, 2015

Monitoring and

evaluation

⁷⁶ The Clean Technology Fund investment plan is the "business plan" of the MDBs, developed under the leadership of the government, to assist a country with Clean Technology Fund co-financing in implementing its national development strategies or programmes that include low carbon objectives.

results, outcomes, and lessons learned.

Projects and investments are monitored and evaluated, with appropriate sharing of

⁷⁷ https://www.climateinvestmentfunds.org/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/cif_orientation_booklet_web_final_0_0.pdf

4.2.3 The Adaptation Fund

The Adaptation Fund has committed USD438 million to support 66 developing countries with concrete adaptation projects, technical assistance and project formulation grants, as well as south-south support to adapt to climate change. Initiatives are based on country needs, views and priorities.

Funding offer

The Adaptation Fund has piloted direct and regional access and provides grants of up to USD10 million for concrete adaptation projects in nine thematic focus areas. The projects need to result in outputs that are visible and tangible, which always entails concrete on-the-ground investment (i.e., pure capacity building or research projects are not eligible) and include:

- Technical Assistance for policy development and capacity building on issues related to climate change adaptation; and
- Project Formulation Grants (up to USD30,000) and Project Formulation Assistance Grants (up to USD20,000), which are available to accredited national implementing entities (NIEs) of the Adaption Fund to build the capacity of NIEs in project preparation and design.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

The following topics are of particular importance for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes:

- Forestry: National efforts to reduce deforestation, increase resilience through the maintenance of ecosystem services, provide alternative incomes to forest users and support forest rehabilitation.
- Climate-smart agriculture: Adaptation measures that protect soil organic matter and the development of production systems that can adapt to future climate impacts.
- Ecosystem services: Implementation of projects that contribute to food security, climate change adaptation and SLM, mainly through community-based interventions. Projects can also be structured as small grant programmes in a community-based manner.
- Coastal zone management: Coastal zone protection, including the management and rehabilitation of salinized areas, as well as the prevention of sea water intrusion and protection of coastal zones from storm surges through mangrove reforestation or revegetation.
- Water resources management: Adaptation of water, flood and drainage management systems to climate change, support in water harvesting, water conservation, erosion control, and watershed management.

How to access?

The Adaptation Fund can be accessed through national, multilateral and regional implementing entities, including UN agencies, development banks, NGOs or directly through national implementing entities.⁷⁸ Proposals are accepted three times a year for review at annual board meetings and in-between sessions either as a full proposal or as a concept note.

Funding proposals are coordinated by the Designated Authority and require their "no objection" before submission.

4.3 OTHER FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

4.3.1 Multilateral Development Banks and Organizations

Multilateral development banks (MDBs) commonly refer to six institutions:

- The World Bank Group;
- The African Development Bank Group (AfDB);
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB);
- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD);
- The European Investment Bank (EIB); and
- The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB).

In 2015, the MDBs collectively financed and managed the operations and external resources of approximately USD130.6 billion. The AfDB, ADB, EBRD and IDB have regionally-focused mandates on Africa, Asia, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America, respectively. The World Bank Group is the oldest of these development banks, with a mandate to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity. The EIB has a strong focus on financing infrastructure within the European Union as well as providing sustainable development financing in Eastern Europe and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States.⁷⁹

Funding offer

MDBs provide technical and financial support in the form of credits, concessional loans and grants, as well as technical assistance for low and middle-income countries. Resources are allocated for a range of sectors, including agricultural, environmental and natural resource management and climate action. Thus, MDBs play an important role in financing LDN. MDBs are also among the implementing agencies for large climate and environmental funds:

⁷⁸ https://www.adaptation-fund.org/apply-funding/implementing-entities/

79 More information is provided in the guide to multilateral development banks: https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12274.pdf

- The Green Climate Fund and the GEF can be implemented by the World Bank, AfDB, ADB, EBRD and IDB;
- The Adaptation Fund can be implemented by the World Bank, ADB, AfDB, EBRD and IDB; and
- The Climate Investment Funds can be implemented directly through the World Bank, AfDB, ADB, EBRD and IDB.

This creates several opportunities to leverage additional loans and grants.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

MDBs provide substantial resources to facilitate LDN through agricultural development, forest conservation, sustainable land management, livestock management and watershed rehabilitation through grants, concessional and non-concessional loans, risk-sharing instruments, guarantees and equity investments.

MDBs are committed to the SDGs. In a joint statement, the development banks highlighted their specific role in contributing to finance and policy dialogue and called for a paradigm shift to unlock, leverage and catalyze more public and private resources.

MDB support for climate finance has substantially increased in recent years. From 2011 to 2015, MDBs collectively pledged more than USD131 billion in climate finance. In 2015 alone about USD25 billion were earmarked for climate finance. A substantial part of these resources is dedicated to key LDN-relevant sectors: 27% (USD1.3 billion) of adaptation finance for water resources, 18% (USD0.9 billion) for sustainable crop agriculture, 4% (USD0.2 billion) for other agricultural activities and natural resources, and 12% for coastal adaptation.

Of the resources allocated to mitigation finance, 6% (USD1.2 billion) were allocated to agriculture and forestryrelated issues, including REDD+. In a joint statement at the UNFCCC COP 21, MDBs made major commitments to scale up climate finance; for example, the AfDB made a commitment to triple its share of climate finance by 2020, and the EIB aims to spend 35% of its total financing on climate action outside the European Union by 2020. MDBs have provided substantial co-financing commitments to their climate financing in 2015 that amounted to USD55 billion, substantially scaling up climate-related sustainable development financing to USD80 billion for that year alone.

MDBs have dedicated private sector branches that facilitate private sector investments and public-private partnerships, for example, for agriculture or forestry investments. Notable among these outlets are the World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the IDB's Inter-American Investment Corporation (IIC), which have mobilized financing from the private sector to support sustainable forest management, conservation agriculture and other projects. In the fiscal year 2016, the IFC invested USD3.4 billion in agribusiness.

How to access?

Accessing MDB funds varies substantially by region and sub-region. On average, a country can receive assistance from six MDBs, but that number falls as the borrowing country becomes richer. Central Asia (including the Caucasus) and North, West and East Africa are the regions with the largest number of operating banks, while the Pacific stands out as having very few.⁸⁰

Resources are allocated to recipient countries at their request, according to their income level, as well as the efficiency with which they manage their economy and execute projects. Loan conditions are determined by the risk of over-indebtedness, gross national income (GNI) per capita and the country's ability to reimburse.

4.3.2 Bilateral development cooperation

Bilateral development cooperation funds are international public sources representing bilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA). According to the global analysis of financial data report submitted at the 17th session of the UNCCD CRIC,⁸¹ net total ODA from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries related to combating desertification, land degradation and drought amounted to USD2.4 billion (average from 2014–2016). This figure includes bilateral ODA activities targeting desertification as a principal or significant objective.

Funding offer

Bilateral cooperation provides a large number of different opportunities for supporting transformative LDN projects and programmes through grants, loans and guarantees, as well as technical assistance and private-sector finance leverage.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

Bilateral desertification-related ODA represents 2.4% of total bilateral ODA by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) members. This share constitutes a small reduction with respect to previous periods, 2011– 2013 and 2008-2010, when the percentage of bilateral desertification-related ODA was 2.5% and 2.8% of total ODA, respectively. Bilateral ODA related to desertification is the lowest among the three Rio Conventions, whereas the majority of financing goes to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This suggests that ODA allocation to desertification-related activities has been losing its relative importance vis-à-vis other sectors and environmental objectives.

The most financed sectors by ODA are agriculture, environmental protection, food aid, water supply and sanitation and other multi-sectoral areas.⁸²

⁸⁰ Lars Engen and Annalisa Prizzon (2018), A guide to Multilateral Development Banks.

⁸¹ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-01/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_INF.3-1900624E.pdf

⁸² https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-01/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_INF.3-1900624E.pdf

How to access?

Bilateral development agencies finance projects that contribute to the economic and social development of recipient countries. Unlike international financial institutions, bilateral agencies belong, in general, to only one government and are part of one of its ministries.⁸³

There are several ways to access bilateral funding, but the most common are:

- The bottom-up approach, where the project proponent represents the country (e.g., an application for a call for tenders); and
- The top-down approach, where the cooperation is a result of high levels of political engagement and strategic planning (e.g., a bilateral agreement).

4.3.3 National budgets and financial mechanisms

Following the orientations of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,⁸⁴ countries recognized that "the mobilization and effective use of domestic resources, underscored by the principle of national ownership, [are] central to the common pursuit of sustainable development, including achieving the SDGs."⁸⁵

Funding offer

Countries spend substantial resources directly related to LDN through their national budgets, from agriculture to forestry and climate action. Public expenditure reviews (PERs) for land-use sectors are not yet sufficiently used, so it is difficult to track actual public spending on LDN. Going forward, more effort is required to implement integrated financing strategies and to integrate investment frameworks, as well as to assess the financial flows reaching land use sectors at the country level, including flows for achieving LDN.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

Environmental fiscal reforms are necessary for increased public financing to achieve LDN. Fiscal policies could inhibit successful LDN implementation due to factors such as harmful subsidies. The Overseas Development Institute has identified 48 different domestic subsidies worldwide that currently support the leading causes of deforestation.

National environmental financing mechanisms can channel funds from various sources to LDN-relevant projects and programmes. National forest funds, for example, can be used to make direct investments into land-based projects and programmes. A significant body of literature on national forestry funds is available and includes over 60 examples of how these funds could be used, which could be further adapted and broadened to include dedicated LDN financing mechanisms.

Other national financing vehicles offer a broader scope, in particular national climate funds, which can be used to invest in land-based climate action related to LDN. Below are some examples of these types of funds:

- The Environment and Climate Change Fund (FONERWA) in Rwanda is the financing facility for the implementation of the national Green Growth and Climate Resilience Strategy. FONERWA allocates resources in the agriculture, energy and forestry sectors, among others. This inter-sectoral approach is particularly well adapted to LDN financing. Among its key contributions to LDN, FONERWA has invested in afforestation in flood-prone zones and ecosystem rehabilitation for climate change resilience.
- The National Forestry Financing Fund (FONAFIFO) in Costa Rica is the governmental institution where the REDD+ secretariat is hosted. The general objective of FONAFIFO is to finance small and medium producers for the handling of afforestation and reforestation processes; greenhouses and agroforestry systems; the recovery of deforested areas; and the necessary technological changes in the use and industrialization of forest resources. FONAFIFO also has the responsibility to raise funds to finance the "Payment for Environmental Services" (PES) provided by forests and forest plantations, and other necessary activities that strengthen the development of the natural resources sector. These services are defined in the Forest Act. The REDD+ strategy in Costa Rica is based on the PES programme and, therefore, its strategic objectives and activities are linked to REDD+ measures.⁸⁶
- The National Environment and Climate Fund (FNEC) in Benin is a financial instrument under the supervision of the Ministry of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development. Its creation responds to the need to support and finance initiatives related to environmental protection and climate change. Its main mission is to mobilize green resources (from eco-taxes/fines, the national budget, external resources, etc.) to finance environmental and climate initiatives.⁸⁷ The FNEC is accredited by the Green Climate Fund.
- National forest funds (NFFs) are dedicated financing mechanisms managed by public institutions designed to support the conservation and sustainable use of forest resources. They may be funded by earmarked taxes, other domestic forestry incomes and/or through bilateral or multilateral development assistance mechanisms, including donations. NFFs are dedicated financing mechanisms for SFM, often also encompassing climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation and the restoration of degraded lands.⁸⁸

 $^{^{\}texttt{83}} \texttt{https://www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/development-developpement/bilateral-agencies-organismes-bilateraux.aspx?lang=eng\#ifi_1_lfd$

⁸⁴ https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/

⁸⁵ Ringborg, Mats (2017). The 2030 Agenda – How do we reach the Goals?

⁸⁶ http://www.fonafifo.go.cr/es/

⁸⁷ http://fnec-benin.org/presentation/#_vision-mission

⁸⁸ FAO (2015), Towards effective national forest funds, by Matta, R., FAO Forestry Paper No. 174, Rome, Italy.

Further exploration of national financing mechanisms for LDN would reinforce national ownership and command over LDN financing and enable its sustainability. Such self-sustaining funding instruments are thus very relevant in the framework of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes to ensure impacts beyond project completion. These national funding instruments can also be used for investments with potential returns and require support to design private sector facilities.

4.3.4 Private finance

The global finance landscape for the environment is evolving rapidly beyond official development assistance with the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. In particular, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda calls for greater effort to engage the private sector, to move "from billions to a trillion" in order to achieve the SDGs.

According to the OECD-DAC survey on resources mobilized from the private sector by official development finance intervention, a total of USD81.1 billion was mobilized from the private sector between 2012 and 2015. The survey revealed an increase in private sector financial flows from USD15 billion in 2012 to USD26.8 billion in 2015. The largest share of this private finance was channeled into the banking sector (33%). This was followed by the energy sector (25%) and the industry sector (14%). Agriculture and water and sanitation received 3% and 2%, respectively. The survey also highlighted that 26% of private investment contributed to climate change actions. According to the Global Mechanism's analysis of global financial data, guarantees remained a major mobilization financial instrument for these sectors. The largest share of the private investment was channeled to Africa (30%), followed by Asia (26%).

Despite the upward trend in private finance and an increase in public financial commitment, there is still a significant gap in financing key SDG sectors, which is estimated to be around USD2.5 trillion for the period 2015-2030.⁸⁹

4.3.5 Blended finance

Blended finance has the potential to amplify the positive impacts of public resources by sharing the risks for the private investor, therefore increasing the number of private finance mechanisms to achieve the SDGs. However, this method of financing is contextual and depends on the size and scope of the blended-finance market, as well as the country's priorities, economic condition and the targeted SDG. To have a long-term, sustainable impact, blended finance should take into consideration the local development priorities and needs. It should be in alignment with the strategic priorities of the country, including national and local strategies and action plans, and should be based on discussions between public and private stakeholders.⁹⁰

The latest OECD-DAC report on blended finance highlights a stronger alignment of blended finance towards profitmaking sectors.⁹¹ The report also found that 167 facilities were set up by 2016 with the aim of pooling public financing to upscale blended finance.

There has been notable growth in blended finance instruments in support of addressing land degradation and achieving other SDGs. A group of new impact investment funds, such as the LDN Fund and the eco.business Fund, for example, were created by taking a blended finance approach. Such funds are based on business models that promote business and consumption practices that contribute to land restoration and ecosystem balance while also generating financial returns.⁹²

Further details on the LDN Fund, as well as on examples of impact investors that take the blended finance approach, which could also present funding opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, are as follows:

The LDN Fund is managed by Mirova,⁹³ the responsible investment division of Natixis, the LDN Fund invests in revenue-generating SLM and land rehabilitation projects worldwide, contributing to achieving SDG target 15.3. The LDN Fund brings together public and private investors (i.e., blended finance) to fund bankable projects with environmental, social and economic benefits that contribute to LDN.

Funding offer

The LDN Fund is focused on direct investment into large-scale land restoration, rehabilitation and land degradation avoidance programmes that will integrate smallholders and local communities and has a dedicated window for small-scale projects and Small and Mediumsized Enterprises. It provides long-term financing (debt/equity) to sustainable land use projects that combat land degradation while producing a financial return.

Provided that the investment opportunity demonstrates suitable bankability, the LDN Fund is designed to offer financing solutions that are not readily available on the market, providing finance and strategic benefits in ways other investors or banks might not (e.g., longer tenors, longer grace periods and more flexible repayment schedules). The LDN Fund also has a dedicated technical assistance facility that supports project proponents in strengthening project preparedness through the provision of technical and financial assistance.

⁸⁹ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-01/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_INF.3-1900624E.pdf

⁹⁰ OECD (2018), Making Blended Finance Work for the Sustainable Development Goals, OECD Publishing, Paris. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/development/making-blendedfinance-work-for-the-sustainable-development-goals_9789264288768-en

⁹¹ SDGs focusing on economic growth (SDG 8), infrastructure (SDGs 6, 7, 9 and 11), climate change (SDG 13), poverty (SDG 1) and clean energy (SDG 7) are the focus of this finance category. SDGs related to biodiversity and natural resources (SDGs 14 and 15, respectively) are of the least concern for these funds.

⁹² https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2018-12/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_7-1819188E.pdf

⁹³ An affiliate of Natixis Investment Managers, offering a global responsible investing approach with a single offer revolving around five pillars: equities, bonds, infrastructure, Impact investing, voting and engagement. Through a conviction-driven investment approach, Mirova's goal is to combine value creation over the long term with sustainable development and has been a pioneer in many areas of sustainable finance.

Opportunities for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

The LDN Fund invests in profitable private sector projects worldwide that deliver competitive returns for investors, with a targeted capital allocation of at least 80% in developing countries in the following key sectors:

- Sustainable agriculture;
- Sustainable forestry; and
- Other LDN-related sectors such as green infrastructure and ecotourism.

How to access?

The LDN Fund will only consider projects that can make a significant contribution to LDN while producing appropriate risk-adjusted returns and complying with robust environmental and social standards. Projects should have already successfully completed pilot project/feasibility studies and should be looking for further investment to support scale-up.

A technical assistance facility supports LDN project developers and facilitates project preparation. It complements the LDN Fund in supporting the development of a large portfolio of attractive LDN projects.

- The eco.business Fund⁹⁴ is a joint initiative of investors dedicated to supporting the promotion of business and consumption practices that contribute to biodiversity conservation, the sustainable use of natural resources, and climate change mitigation and adaptation. By financing activities that conserve nature and foster biodiversity, the eco.business Fund seeks investments that yield both financial and environmental returns. The Fund concentrates on the following four types of sustainable activities:
 - Agriculture and agri-processing;
 - Fishery and aquaculture;
 - Forestry; and
 - Tourism.

Financing can be provided directly or through local financial institutions with the capacity to reach the eco.business Fund's target group (i.e., local enterprises engaged in or intending to engage in business activities related to the Fund's environmental goals).

- The Moringa Fund is an investment fund (composed of Moringa SCA SICAR and Moringa Mauritius Africa) which targets profitable large-scale agroforestry projects with high environmental and social impacts located in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa. The Fund uses the fact that agroforestry is an inherently/fundamentally sustainable practice to distinguish itself from other land-based investment approaches and to ensure that its projects are genuinely sustainable. The Moringa Fund offers financing solutions to companies operating or developing agroforestry for sustainable, high-yield agriculture and forestry.⁹⁵
- The Althelia Fund,⁹⁶ part of Mirova Responsible Investing, takes an impact-driven approach to investment, aligning strong financial returns with measurable environmental and social impacts. The Fund manages investments that deliver financial returns that are fully aligned with the conservation of nature and sustainable social development.

Its investment portfolio comprises real assets, debt and growth equity, and is focused on the nexus between sustainable production and environmental protection in order to catalyze a range of positive impacts, including positively-transformed land use models delivering social, economic and environmental outcomes; economic and livelihood benefits realized by a wide spectrum of local stakeholders; reduced greenhouse gas emissions; sustained or enhanced biodiversity and ecosystem functions; and competitive financial returns. The Althelia Fund partners with public and private organizations, NGOs and international and national entities to promote knowledge sharing and capacity building.

An overview of funding opportunities for LDN at the regional scale, and for selected country groupings such as LDCs and SIDS, is provided in Table 2.

⁹⁴ https://www.ecobusiness.fund/about-the-fund/

⁹⁵ https://www.moringapartnership.com/moringa/

⁹⁶ https://althelia.com/

Table 2: Overview of funding opportunities for LDN at the regional scale

Primary objective: financing LDN

Co-objective	Africa	Asia	Middle East and North Africa	Europe and Central Asia	Latin America and the Caribbean		
Largely government-driven and coordinated (applications mostly coordinated by respective lead sector ministries and/or ministries of finance)							
Climate finance adaptation	Adaptation Fund: the NIE; ⁹⁷ the Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS); the West African Development Bank (BOAD); the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); the AfDB; UNDP; the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the World Bank; UN-Habitat; the World Meteorological Organization (WMO); the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); Green Climate Fund: Direct national; Direct regional (BOAD; OSS; the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC); the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA); International; CIF-PPCR: ⁹⁸ World Bank; AfDB	Adaptation Fund: the NIE; the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); IFAD; ADB; UNDP; UNEP; the World Bank; WMO; UN-HABITAT; UNESCO; Green Climate Fund: Direct national; Direct regional (SPREP, Micronesia Conservation Trust (MCT); International; CIF-PPCR: World Bank; ADB	Adaptation Fund: the NIE; OSS; IFAD; AfDB; UNDP; UNEP; the World Bank; WMO; UN-HABITAT; UNESCO; Green Climate Fund: Direct regional (OSS); International; CIF-PPCR: World Bank; AfDB	Adaptation Fund: the NIE; EBRD; IFAD; ADB; UNDP; UNEP; the World Bank; WMO; UN-HABITAT; UNESCO; Green Climate Fund: ⁹⁹ Direct national, Direct regional, International; CIF-PPCR: World Bank; EBRD	Adaptation Fund: the NIE; the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF); the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI); the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB); IDB; IFAD; UNDP; UNEP; the World Bank; WMO; UN-HABITAT; UNESCO; Green Climate Fund: Direct national; Direct regional (CAF; the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC); CABEI; CDB; Fundación Avina); International; CIF-PPCR: World Bank; IDB		
Climate finance mitigation	Green Climate Fund: see above CIF SCF and SREP: ¹⁰⁰ World	Green Climate Fund: see above CIF SCF and SREP:	Green Climate Fund: see above CIF SCF and SREP:	Green Climate Fund: see above CIF SCF and SREP:	Green Climate Fund: see above CIF SCF and SREP:		
	Bank; AfDB	World Bank; ADB	World Bank; AfDB	World Bank; EBRD	World Bank; IDB		
Forestry and REDD+	CIF Forest Investment Program (FIP): World Bank; AfDB	CIF FIP: World Bank; ADB	CIF FIP: World Bank; AfDB	CIF FIP: World Bank; EBRD	CIF FIP: World Bank; IDB		
Global environmental objectives	GEF: AfDB; FAO; DBSA; BOAD; World Bank; IFAD; UNEP; UNDP; UNIDO; Conservation International (CI); Foreign Economic Cooperation Office (FECO); World Wildlife Fund (WWF); International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)); French Facility for Global Environment (FFEM)	GEF: ADB; FAO; World Bank; IFAD; UNEP; UNDP; UNIDO; CI; FECO; WWF; IUCN; FFEM	GEF: AfDB; FAO; World Bank; IFAD; UNEP; UNDP; UNIDO; CI; FECO; WWF; IUCN; FFEM	GEF: EBRD; FAO; World Bank; IFAD; UNEP; UNDP; UNIDO; CI; FECO; WWF; IUCN; FFEM	GEF: IDB; FAO; CAF; FUNBIO; World Bank; IFAD; UNEP; UNDP; UNIDO; CI; FECO; WWF; IUCN; FFEM		
Infrastructure and policy finance	World Bank, AfDB, ADF, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), IFAD, BOAD, DBSA, Bilateral partners	World Bank, ADB, IsDB, Arab African International Bank (AIIB), Bilateral partners	World Bank, ADB, IsDB, AfDB, Bilateral partners	World Bank, EIB, EBRD, Bilateral partners	World Bank, IDB, CDB, CEIBA, Bilateral partners		
Mostly not govern and NGOs)	ment-driven and coordinated (ap	oplications mostly man	aged by respective bu	sinesses, private secto	or entities, communities		
Business development	International Finance Corporation (IFC), LDN FUND, Impact Funds, Bilateral partners (such as PROPARCO, KfW)	International Finance Corporation, LDN FUND, Impact Funds, Bilateral partners (such as PROPARCO, KfW)	International Finance Corporation, LDN FUND, Impact Funds, Bilateral partners (such as PROPARCO, KfW)	International Finance Corporation, LDN FUND, Impact Funds, Bilateral partners (such as PROPARCO, KfW)	International Finance Corporation, LDN FUND, Impact Funds, bilateral partners (such as PROPARCO, KfW)		
Community- driven development	Impact Funds, Bilateral partners, IFRC, major international NGOs	Impact Funds, bilateral partners, IFRC, major international NGOs	Impact Funds, bilateral partners, IFRC, major international NGOs	Impact Funds, bilateral partners, IFRC, major international NGOs	Impact Funds, bilateral partners, IFRC, major international NGOs		

97 NIE: National Implementing Entity.

⁹⁸ Climate Investment Fund – Pilot Program for Climate Resilience.
 ⁹⁹ Not all countries in Europe are eligible for GCF funding (see Annex II).

¹⁰⁰ Climate Investment Fund – Strategic Climate Fund, Strategic Renewable Energy program.

Chapter 5 Preparing Transformative Projects and Programmes



5. PREPARING TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

This section of the guide considers the operational steps required to develop LDN transformative project or programme proposals targeting public sources from the country perspective, as well as how the Global Mechanism and other development partners can support this process. The project development cycle is a standard procedure that requires the development and implementation of projects and programmes to be submitted to various donors/funds. However, the level of involvement of the different stakeholders in the project development can change. The executing agency based in the beneficiary country can have:

Direct access to the funding sources (national, bilateral or private funds). In this case, a national designated authority or national implementing agency endorsed by the national government coordinates and supports the submission of project proposals, facilitates project selection and negotiates the implementation agreement with the fund. Furthermore, the national implementing agency administers and distributes the received grants among the different executing agencies and provides financial and progress reports to the fund (see Figure 10);

Indirect access to the funding sources (for example, the GEF or multilateral climate funds) through an intermediary entity, such as a multilateral development bank, a UN agency, or a regional or national implementing

Figure 10: Direct access to funding sources¹⁰¹

entity, which should be officially accredited as an implementing agency by the targeted fund (see Figure 11).

The following sections present the operational steps required when developing LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes targeting multilateral public investment funds (such as the GEF, the GCF and the Adaptation Fund).

For the purposes of consistency, the below terms are used to designate the various stakeholders during the project development cycle:

- The Funding Entity (FE).
- The Implementing Entity (IE).
- National stakeholders: representatives of the different national public and private institutions, as well as local communities and CSOs.
- The Executing Entity (EE): the project/programme proponent(s), usually a national institution.
- The National Focal Point of the UNCCD (UNCCD NFP).
- The National representative(s) of the targeted fund(s): Fund Representative(s). This terminology refers to the National Designated Authority for the GCF, the Operational Focal Point for the GEF and the Designated Authority for the Adaptation Fund.



Source: Rüther and Jara, 2015

Figure 11: Indirect/multilateral access to funding sources



Source: Op. cit.

101 Lena Lázaro Rüther, Melani Peláez Jara (2015), Exploring International Development Cooperation Funds – International Experiences on Governance and Design of Funds.

Figure 12: The project development cycle



5.1 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT: KEY STEPS

The key steps for project development are widely available, as most funding entities provide clear documentation on the operational steps needed to develop a project proposal according to their specific requirements.¹⁰² The steps or phases for the development of a project or programme to be undertaken are:

- Identification of the potential project concept;
- Preparation and analysis stage through feasibility studies;
- Appraisal;
- Approval;
- Implementation; and
- Monitoring and evaluation (see Figure 12).

The inputs/outputs and stakeholders for each step of the project development cycle include:

Step 1 – Concept note: Identification of potential project ideas

The first step aims to define the scope of the project, including the objectives and the appropriate solutions and actions. An analysis of the current situation should be undertaken, including the main issue(s) and group(s) targeted by the proposed project, the planned activities and the expected outcomes. All concepts and proposals should be country-owned and country-driven and should be prepared under the leadership of the responsible national entity. An overall estimation of the project budget should be provided at this stage. The results of the analysis are compiled in a concept note that provides information on the overall proposal, allowing early feedback on alignment with objectives and policies of the targeted funding source. In addition, the project objectives and activities need to be aligned with, and contribute to, national strategies and action plans, such as the UNCCD National Action Plan, the GCF country programme and the NDCs, and be relevant to the LDN targets adopted by the country. Early discussions among the UNCCD NFP, the Fund representative and the national stakeholders should be conducted to facilitate coherence of the proposed project with national strategies and plans. This would also ensure that the project is part of the country portfolio agreed at national level.

In parallel to the development of the concept note, the project proponent needs to:

- Identify the Funding Entity(ies). Once identified, funding criteria and priorities, as well as applicable environmental and social safeguards of the entity, need to be included in the concept note. Each funding entity provides a project proposal template, application form, project design outlines and grant application guidelines, which are available on their website.
- Identify the Implementing Entity. This would be a National Implementing Entity (NIE), a Regional Implementing Entity (RIE) or a Multilateral Implementing Entity (MIE). These implementing entities are accredited by the different international funds. Governance (fiduciary risk) and implementation capacities are assessed at this level.
- Submit the concept note to the national representative of the targeted fund to get the necessary support.
 Typically, the national representative should provide the Implementing Entity with a "no objection" letter to be annexed to the concept note when submitting to the funding entity.

102 See for example the GCF toolkit on developing a project proposal, available at: https://cdkn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GCF-project-development-manual.pdf

The concept note is submitted by the identified Implementing Entity to the targeted fund. After reviewing the concept note, the Funding Entity can endorse the concept note (as initially presented or requesting some amendments) or reject it. In the case of endorsement, the Implementing Entity can proceed to the second step (see Annex 5 for examples of how to integrate the key features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes into the concept notes of the GCF, the Adaptation Fund and the GEF).

Step 2 – Project document: Preparation and feasibility analysis

Once the project concept note has been endorsed by the funding entity, the process of developing a more detailed project document can be initiated. This level requires extensive research, consultation and analysis for the project design and budgeting. Most of the funding entities provide a grant at this stage to support the completion of several preparatory/assessment studies, including:

- Preliminary assessments that are conducted to ensure better compliance of the project components with the physical and social environment, and to allow for detailed planning of activities while ensuring their efficiency and ease of implementation.
- A logical framework, which outlines the project's outputs, activities, outcomes and timeframe for each activity (using a Gantt chart, for example).
- A detailed project budget prepared by estimating the costs related to the different project activities, required equipment and other material costs (grants and loan financing often require the preparation of a procurement plan).
- A risk management plan to identify all foreseeable risks, including any potential fiduciary and governance risks, and those related to necessary management/mitigation mechanisms depending on the capacity of the implementing entity and related institutional arrangements.
- Environmental and social risk assessments and project impact evaluations, to reduce the probability of potential issues or negative impacts on project activities occurring. These assessments should be in line with the applicable national policies, environmental impact assessment regulations, or any required environmental and social management frameworks to mitigate social and environmental risks. This process would also support the elaboration of risk management plans.
- A gender action plan and a strategy for community and stakeholder consultations and engagement.
- A communication plan/strategy to keep relevant internal and external stakeholders informed during project implementation and upon completion.

At the end of this stage, the Implementing Entity will have completed a full-fledged project proposal, along with the preparatory studies/action plans mentioned above. Once these are approved by the fund representative at national level and the "no objection letter" is provided, the Implementing Entity could then submit the project proposal, studies and letter to the targeted fund for a full appraisal.

Step 3 – Appraisal

The appraisal is a joint due diligence process between the donor/Funding Entity and the government to assess the design of the project, the necessary risk mitigation measures and the technical feasibility and financial sustainability of the project. For loans, often the terms and conditions for the loan (interest, repayment schedule, grace period, etc.) are negotiated at this stage and all legal documents and conditions are validated.

After examination by the donor/Funding Entity's appraisal team, three scenarios may occur:

- The proposal is complete, realistic and meets the funding criteria, is consequently approved and investment can proceed. In this case, the legal agreements between the Funding Entity and the Implementing Entity(ies) would be negotiated and finalized according to the regulation and procedures of the fund. All applicable details concerning the terms and conditions of the Funding Entity's financing and terms and conditions applicable to the relationship with the Implementing Entity(ies) and the project proponent are clarified at this stage. The beginning of project implementation would then follow this process.
- The proposal meets conditional acceptance due to the existence of some gaps that should be addressed. The Implementing Entity(ies) can be asked to re-submit a revised project proposal with some partial modifications, corrections or amendments.
- The proposal is rejected due to not fulfilling the fund's requirements or not being competitive vis-à-vis other concurrent proposals. Rejected proposals may be resubmitted at a later stage after addressing the reasons for rejection.

Step 4 – Implementation

During the implementation phase, a project management team is put in place to execute the project activities and produce the deliverables. The successful implementation of a project depends on how realistic the preparation and analysis phase was.

During this phase, the focus of the Implementing Entity shifts from planning the project to its implementation. The implementation phase keeps the project plan on track with careful monitoring and control processes to ensure that the final deliverables meet the acceptance criteria. In this context, it is recommended to check progress against the work plan on a regular basis (for instance, by using project management tools like a Gantt chart) and, in close collaboration with the project partners, to update the project delivery strategy using an adaptive management approach to overcome any unforeseen obstacles during the implementation phase.

Step 5 – Monitoring and evaluation

The process of monitoring and evaluation is necessary to measure project progress and performance. It helps ensure alignment with the project management plan by using key performance indicators (KPIs). Monitoring and evaluation is used to know if:

- The project objectives are being fulfilled;
- The outputs and deliverables are being met;
- The budget is on track, by checking the effort and cost of resources; and
- The issues that arise are quickly addressed, which will give an idea of project performance.

This process allows early problem identification and provides transparency on the spending of funds. Depending on the implementation timelines, this phase may involve producing some sort of interim implementation report in addition to a final project report. In order to assess if the project was successful, it is advisable to define clear success criteria or indicators that can be reported on during this phase.

5.2 THE GLOBAL MECHANISM'S SUPPORT FOR THE ELABORATION OF LDN TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes are considered a new workstream within the LDN Programme of the Global Mechanism. Acknowledging the evolving nature of the initiative, the Global Mechanism has defined a set of support services (see Table 3) to facilitate relevant project and programme development activities undertaken by UNCCD country Parties, as per decision 3/COP.13 on the "Integration of SDG 15 and related target 15.3 [...] into the implementation of the UNCCD" and decision 14/COP.13 on the "Mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Convention." Currently, the Global Mechanism is focusing its efforts on assisting country Parties that have articulated a request for support to develop early-stage project/programme concept notes that help to achieve SDG target 15.3 and/or the voluntary LDN targets set by the country, and which can also be further developed into full project proposals. The Global Mechanism's support at this stage of the concept note development is crucial for beneficiary countries, as few funding sources provide grants at this early phase (see Figure 13). During the whole process, the Global Mechanism supports the dialogue with relevant stakeholders in an iterative manner.

Services currently being provided by the Global Mechanism include:

- Technical backstopping, by providing guidance on the idea/concept note for an LDN transformative project or programme in order to ensure the integration of LDN into the project proposal. In this context, the Global Mechanism relies on the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN and the checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, and considers the outcomes of the LDN target setting process in each country.
- Limited financial support to mobilize the required expertise to support the development of project concept notes, based on desk reviews and the engagement of national institutions and potential technical and financial partners, including the target funding source's national focal point/designated entity.



Figure 13: The Global Mechanism facilitates the articulation of initial technical concept ideas into projects

Table 3: Overview of the Global Mechanism's support for the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes throughout the different project steps

Step	Stakeholders	Input	Global Mechanism Support	Output
1. Concept note	Stakeholders • The UNCCD National Focal Point (UNCCD NFP) • The project proponent/ Executing Entity (EE) • Other concerned stakeholders	Input A project concept Early discussions between the UNCCD NFP and the fund representative 	 Providing technical capacity building through: thorough documentation: technical guide, Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN, checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and a manual to design gender-responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes; training workshops on the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and their compliance with the LDN features and on integrating gender equality into the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes; Mobilizing sound expertise at national, regional or international level; Supporting the development of LDN transformative project or programme concept notes by providing technical backstopping and follow-up, to ensure they are in line with the features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes as well as the standards of the targeted funding source(s). 	 Output A project concept note, taking into account the key LDN features and compliant with the targeted fund's standards An identified funding entity (FE) An identified Implementing Entity (IE)
Main outcome: The co	ncept note is submitted t	o the fund representative	e for approval and then to the fund by the Imp	plementing Entity
2. Project document: preparatory and analysis stage	 The UNCCD NFP The project proponent/EE The fund representative The IE 	 The project concept note The Fund's financial support for the elaboration of: Stakeholder consultations (i.e., workshops) Feasibility studies Environmental and social risk evaluation studies Gender action plan Consultation services to develop the full-fledged project proposal 	 Provide technical capacity building through: thorough documentation: technical guide, Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN, checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and a manual to design gender-responsive LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes; training workshops on the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and their compliance with LDN features and on integrating gender equality into the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes; Mobilizing sound expertise at national, regional or international level; Supporting the development of full-fledged LDN transformative project and Programme proposals by providing technical backstopping and follow-up to ensure they are in line with the features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes as well as the standards of the targeted funding source(s). 	 A full-fledged project proposal Feasibility study Environmental and social risk evaluation Gender action plan
Main outcome: The pro	oject proposal is submitte	ed to the fund representa	tive for approval and then to the fund by the	Implementing Entity
3. Appraisal	The DNCCD NFP The project	 A full-fiedged project proposal 	 Selected technical support as requested. 	 Project proposal approval (next step:

implementation) proponent/EE • Feasibility studies • Project proposal • The fund • An environmental conditionally accepted (possibility of representative and social risk evaluation study • The Fund resubmission) • A gender action plan • The IE • Project proposal rejected (possibility of resubmission after consideration of the reasons for rejection)

Step	Stakeholders	Input	Global Mechanism Support	Output
4. Implementation	 The UNCCD NFP The project proponent/EE The fund representative The Fund The Fund The IE 	 Project execution by EE based on the logical framework Project implementation by the IE (or IEs), according to the logical framework, the budget, its own and the fund's procedures and standards 	 In principle, the Global Mechanism is not involved in project implementation as such. However, if the country and Implementing Entity agree, the Global Mechanism could be involved/associated in enabling activities, such as capacity building on LDN and knowledge sharing of best practices and country experiences among country Parties. 	 Project deliverables/quality controlled by the IE Budget monitored, and audit conducted Interim reports
5. Monitoring and evaluation	 The NFP The project proponent/EE The fund representative The Fund The Fund The IE 	 Project deliverables Project reports Audit reports 	 In principle, the Global Mechanism is not involved in project monitoring as such. However, if the country and Implementing Entity agree, the Global Mechanism could be a member of the Steering Committee to take stock of the lessons learned to be shared with other country Parties. 	 Lessons learned Corrective actions undertaken, if necessary Communication products, final reports

Conclusions

Land degradation neutrality is an innovative and continuously growing key concept that is considered a strong vehicle for driving UNCCD implementation. Building on the momentum raised by the definition and adoption of LDN targets at the highest level in over 120 countries, and considering the possibilities to leverage LDN in a broad range of land-based sectors and in several complementary initiatives, there is a strong need to move towards implementation by translating national voluntary LDN targets into practice on the ground. Building on existing opportunities and experiences, countries have the interest in developing LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.

With this in mind, the Global Mechanism is providing unique support to assist countries in early-stage project preparation, for which limited sources of funding are available and where it is essential to conceptualize projects and programmes and to engage both national and international technical and financial partners that can support preparation and implementation.

To bring the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN to the operational level through the development of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes, supporting documents such as the checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes and other dedicated guidelines, including those on mainstreaming gender, have been produced. With these guiding documents, LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes can be easily aligned with each country's priorities, needs and defined national LDN targets, and would comply with the safeguards, standards and criteria of each targeted funding source.

Moreover, the LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes development process is sustained by increasing dialogue and coordination between all stakeholders, from government to implementing partners and funding sources, which is critical for successful LDN implementation at country level. Achievement of the LDN targets also requires increased efforts to incorporate the LDN concept in national and local land use planning processes.

The Global Mechanism is playing an important role in supporting countries to develop LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes by addressing both the technical aspects, ensuring the compliance of the LDN transformative project or programme concept notes with the LDN features, and the financial aspects, such as identifying funding sources to be targeted and facilitating dialogue between the different stakeholders.

Annexes



ANNEX 1. UNCCD COP 12 DECISIONS RELATED TO LDN

Decision 1/COP.12: Multi-year workplans of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies

Outcome indicator 2.1: The extent to which affected country Parties establish targets for addressing land degradation and rehabilitation

Decision 2/COP.12: Formulation, revision and implementation of action programmes in view of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- 3. Invites affected country Parties, in accordance with decision 22/COP.11, to establish baselines and national-level voluntary land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets within their NAPs and to address ecosystem aspects at their discretion in their sub regional and regional action programmes, making use of scientific and knowledge-based diagnostic tools at the national level;
- 4. Also invites Parties, other governments and other development partners to establish and increase partnership agreements for technical support to affected country Parties according to their bilateral priorities giving special attention to the implementation of NAPs and to assist them in monitoring progress towards achieving national targets;
- 5. Further invites affected country Parties to include voluntary national LDN targets in their national reports, as appropriate;
- 6. Requests the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) secretariats to continue consultations on the arrangements for the delivery of funding enabling activities for the sixth GEF Replenishment Phase (GEF-6) with a view to securing technical and financial support for the next reporting exercise, including in the area of progress reporting and national target setting towards achieving LDN;
- Invites Parties and technical and financial institutions to provide support to affected country Parties in establishing, aligning and implementing NAPs, including, as appropriate, target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, and LDN national voluntary target setting;
- 8. Requests Parties at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to consider adding the first review of LDN voluntary targets and their implementation so far to the agenda of the intersessional meeting of the CRIC/CST prior to the fourteenth session of the Conference of the Parties;
- **9.** Invites affected country Parties to develop and implement strategies through their NAPs to achieve the objectives of the Convention in the light of target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development;
- **10.** Requests the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to:
- (a) Enhance their assistance to country Parties in terms of technical and financial support for the implementation of target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development through the NAPs, including the LDN approach at national level;
- (b) Engage with international organizations and funds, as well as other multilateral and bilateral donors, in order to mobilize additional resources for the implementation of target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development through the NAPs, including the LDN approach at national level;
 - **11.** Also requests the secretariat to report to the next session of the CRIC on the implementation of this decision.

Decision 3/COP.12: Integration of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets into the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Intergovernmental Working Group report on land degradation neutrality

- 1. Welcomes the report of the IWG contained in part two of document ICCD/COP (12)/4;
- 2. Endorses the IWG science-based definition of LDN as follows: "Land degradation neutrality is a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems"; 28
- 5. Invites Parties to:
- (a) Formulate voluntary targets to achieve LDN in accordance with their specific national circumstances and development priorities, taking into account the list of options for operationalizing LDN at the national level as outlined by the IWG;

- (b) Use the monitoring and evaluation approach adopted in decision 22/COP.11, including the progress indicators as listed in the annex to this decision, where reliable data is available pursuant to paragraph 7 of that decision and taking into consideration national circumstances and, as needed, add additional indicators to monitor, evaluate and communicate progress towards achieving the LDN target;
- (c) Explore options on how to integrate the voluntary LDN targets in their NAPs as part of their overall discussion on the implementation of the SDGs;
- (d) Promote the use of LDN targets and projects and other SLM initiatives as an effective vehicle for mobilizing additional sustainable financing and responsible and sustainable investments that address DLDD issues;
 - 6. Encourages developed country Parties to actively support the efforts of developing country Parties in promoting SLM practices and in seeking to achieve LDN, by providing substantial financial resources, facilitated access to appropriate technology and other forms of support;
 - **7.** Also encourages developed country Parties and invites other countries in a position to do so, multilateral financial institutions, the private sector, civil society organizations, and technical and financial institutions to:
- (a) Provide scientific, technical and financial assistance to help affected country Parties requesting assistance to set and achieve LDN targets as well as to implement SLM practices and LDN initiatives;
- (b) Establish equitable partnerships that encourage responsible and sustainable investments and practices by the private sector, which contribute to achieving LDN that supports the health and productivity of the land and its people;
 - 8. Further encourages Parties requesting assistance to include this request for support in their priorities in discussions with bilateral, multilateral and other donors, based on their national development plans or strategies;
 - **9.** Directs the secretariat of the UNCCD, as the lead organisation for DLDD, to take the initiative and invite other relevant agencies and stakeholders such as United Nations agencies, international organisations, financial institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector to seek cooperation to achieve SDG target 15.3;
 - **10.** Requests the secretariat and appropriate UNCCD bodies, within the scope of the Convention, to:
- (a) Develop options for scaling up and scaling out successful LDN initiatives and other SLM practices;
- (b) Explore how they could further develop partnerships with other organisations to provide scientific and technical support to the Parties by, inter alia, developing a 'user guide' for implementing LDN at the country level;
- (c) Develop guidance for formulating national LDN targets and initiatives, including the identification, development and implementation of policy reforms, investment and incentive mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives to address DLDD;
- (d) Make options available to Parties for the integration of national LDN targets and initiatives in their NAPs;
- (e) Further develop, keep under review and facilitate, including through pilot projects, the use of the UNCCD indicator framework as a contribution to the monitoring, evaluation and communication of progress towards the national LDN targets;
- (f) Improve the effectiveness of collaboration with the other Rio conventions and other partners at national and, as appropriate, subnational levels to support the implementation and monitoring of LDN targets and initiatives;
 - **11.** Also requests the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism, in consultation with the Executive Secretary, to develop options for increasing incentives and financial support, including assisting in the possible creation of an independent LDN fund, to be made available for the full realisation of LDN initiatives;
 - **12.** Further requests the Executive Secretary to report to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth session on progress made in implementing this decision.

Decision 8/COP.12: Addressing particular regional and national conditions

- 1. Recognizes that Parties may use the UNCCD to guide their policies relating to DLDD and voluntary targets when striving to achieve LDN at national and subnational levels;
- 2. Invites the secretariat, relevant Convention bodies, and bilateral and multilateral partners to provide assistance to Parties in that regard;

3. Requests the Executive Secretary to report to the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties on the implementation of the present decision.

Decision 9/COP.12: Leveraging of synergies among the Rio conventions and promoting partnerships with other international agencies and bodies

- 1. Proposes the use of the three land-based progress indicators as set out in decision 15/COP.12 for reporting under the Rio conventions, which are coherent with the progress indicators/metrics adopted in decision 22/COP.11, namely:
- (i) Trends in land cover;
- (ii) Trends in land productivity or functioning of the land;
- (iii) Trends in carbon stock above and below ground;

2. Requests the secretariat:

- (a) To promote further harmonisation of indicators and reporting procedures, including the land-based progress indicators across the Rio conventions;
- (b) To continue working with the Interagency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) in order to define indicators for SDG target 15.3;
 - **3.** Also requests both the secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue to fulfil their respective roles in the established partnerships and to seek new partnerships according to their respective mandates in order to further enhance the implementation of the Convention and, if appropriate, to bring them to the attention of the Conference of the Parties for any necessary action;

Decision 12/COP.12: Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

- 1. Welcomes the continued support for the implementation of the Convention and the increase of resources for the land degradation focal area under GEF-6 as compared to GEF-5;
- 2. Invites the GEF to continue its support for the implementation of the Convention under GEF-6 in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 15.3;
- **3.** Also invites the donors to the GEF to consider providing increased support to address country priorities relating to the implementation of the Convention, in the light of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 15.3, during the planning process for GEF-7;
- 4. Encourages Parties to engage in South–South cooperation under GEF-6 and invites the GEF to continue its support to Parties in this regard;
- 5. Also invites the GEF to consider enhancing its support to the GEF Small Grants Programme under GEF-7;
- 6. Further invites donors to the GEF to give due consideration to the concerns expressed regarding the allocation of resources across the different focal areas and encourages Parties, through the GEF and the Convention's focal points and their constituencies, to advocate for a balanced allocation of funds among the Rio conventions;
- **7.** Also invites the GEF to continue its GEF Country Support Programme, including GEF workshops aimed at strengthening the capacity of Parties to utilize GEF resources for the effective implementation of the Convention;
- **8.** Invites the GEF, in the context of enabling activities under GEF-6, to consider technical and financial support for voluntary national land degradation neutrality target setting;
- **9.** Invites the GEF to report on the implementation of this decision as part of its next report to the Conference of the Parties.

Decision 15/COP.12: Improving the procedures for communication of information as well as the quality and formats of reports to be submitted to the Conference of the Parties

Refinement of the set of progress indicators relating to the strategic objectives 1, 2 and 3 and associated methodologies

- Decides, as a means to understanding the status of land degradation and the potential for land restoration, that reporting is required for the following three progress indicators: 'trends in land cover', 'trends in land productivity or functioning of the land' and 'trends in carbon stocks above and below ground', provided that countries have sufficient national official data/information to report or validate national estimates derived from global data sources and that reporting should be provided primarily from official national data;
- 2. Requests the secretariat, in cooperation with relevant specialised institutions, inter alia those included in the annex I to this decision, to:

- (a) Compile and make available to affected country Parties national estimates of the metrics/proxies associated with these indicators from the global datasets, inter alia those indicators included in the annex I to this decision, as default data for validation in accordance with the procedure established in decision 22/COP.11;
- (b) Prepare methodological guidelines and provide technical assistance to affected country Parties on the compilation and use of such default data, including for the preparation of national voluntary targets using the progress indicators;
- (c) Undertake measures aimed at strengthening the capacities of affected Parties to validate, replace or reject the default data;
 - **3.** Decides, taking into consideration national circumstances and the availability of methodological guidelines, capacity building and financing, that affected country Parties should provide timely feedback where possible on the default data and the proposed methodology to formulate national voluntary LDN targets using the monitoring and assessment indicators framework, and complete the reporting and target setting exercise for review by the CRIC at its intersessional session that will take place after January 2018;
 - 4. Invites relevant specialised institutions, inter alia those included in the annex I to this decision, to provide access to data and methodologies and assist the secretariat in the compilation and provision of global datasets, as mentioned in paragraphs 2 and 3 above;
 - Requests the secretariat to develop a user guide for practitioners and decision-makers in order to operationalize The Strategy progress indicators with respect to national monitoring and reporting, to be submitted for consideration to the Conference of the Parties at its thirteenth session;

Decision 16/COP.12: Programme of work for the fifteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

- 1. Decides that the fifteenth session of the CRIC (CRIC 15) should, in the form of a special intersessional session, review and discuss the following items:
- (a) Inputs from regional meetings in preparation for CRIC 15;
- (b) The land degradation neutrality target setting exercise and pilot projects;
- (c) Initial findings from the Intergovernmental Working Group on the future strategic framework of the Convention with the aim of assisting its work;
- (d) The report by the secretariat on the overall reporting procedures and modalities for reporting by Parties, including, as needed, proposals of guidelines and reporting tools for progress and performance indicators;

ANNEX 2. UNCCD COP 13 DECISIONS RELATED TO LDN

Decision 1/COP.13: Multi-year workplans of the Convention institutions and subsidiary bodies

Outcome indicators:

- **1.1** Affected country Parties implement activities towards achieving the targets they have set for addressing land degradation and rehabilitation
- 1.2 Affected country Parties report on the status of land degradation and related activities
- **1.3** Scientific cooperation involving the UNCCD delivers policy-relevant science-based information for addressing desertification/land degradation, promoting SLM and contributing to LDN
- 5.1 Scope of funding sources to address land degradation
- **5.2** Affected country Parties have improved capacity to translate their project ideas for UNCCD implementation into high-quality projects

Decision 2/COP.13: Development and implementation of strategies through national action programmes to achieve the objectives of the Convention in light of target 15.3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- 1. Invites Parties to:
- (a) Formulate data-based, quantifiable and time-bound voluntary targets to achieve land degradation neutrality in accordance with their specific national circumstances and development priorities;
- (b) Endorse these voluntary land degradation neutrality targets at the highest appropriate level;
- (c) Use the concept of land degradation neutrality as one of the means to foster coherence among national policies, actions and commitments, including, inter alia, as appropriate, Nationally Determined Contributions and national adaptation plans under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets under the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and restoration commitments;
- (d) Identify the most effective mechanisms and best practices to achieve land degradation neutrality, taking into consideration the respective United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) national action programmes;
 - 3. Requests the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and appropriate UNCCD bodies to:
- (a) Continue to support Parties in their efforts to achieve land degradation neutrality, including the formulation and implementation of voluntary land degradation neutrality targets and the alignment of national action programmes with the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework;
- (b) Continue to strengthen international cooperation for the achievement of land degradation neutrality, including inter alia, by fostering synergies and increasing coherence among the three Rio conventions and other related initiatives contributing to the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development;
 - **4. Invites** multilateral and bilateral partners to support the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and Parties in implementing the activities mentioned in paragraph 3 above.

Decision 3/COP.13: Integration of Sustainable Development Goal 15 and related target 15.3 which states: "to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world," into the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

- 1. Invites Parties that formulate voluntary targets to achieve land degradation neutrality to:
- (a) Ensure that their land degradation neutrality targets and the activities to achieve these targets are directly linked to their national Sustainable Development Goal agendas and create leverage and synergies with their countries' climate and biodiversity agendas, ideally through joint programming of the three Rio conventions, at the national level and with the full engagement of relevant stakeholders;
- (b) Use the monitoring and evaluation approach adopted in decision 7/COP.13, including the progress indicators therein, where reliable data is available and taking into consideration national circumstances and, as needed, add additional indicators to monitor, evaluate and communicate progress towards achieving the land degradation neutrality target;
 - 2. Also invites all Parties and multilateral and bilateral partners to scale up and facilitate effective financing for combating desertification/land degradation and drought, achieving land degradation neutrality, and advancing the implementation of the Convention in reference to decision 14/COP.13;
 - 4. Requests the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and appropriate UNCCD bodies, including the Science-Policy Interface, within their respective mandates, to:
- (a) Continue to develop partnerships to support the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality, taking note of, as appropriate, the Changwon Initiative, the Ankara Initiative and other complementary initiatives, to provide scientific and technical support to the Parties by, inter alia, developing guidance for leveraging the implementation of the Convention and land degradation neutrality, identifying project opportunities and connecting respective partners for the further development of implementation initiatives, including transformative land degradation neutrality projects and programmes, promoting gender responsive approaches in line with the Gender Action Plan found in decision 30/COP.13, and providing advisory support for nationally accredited institutions to the climate finance and other sustainable development finance institutions;
- (b) Contribute to the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which will address Sustainable Development Goal 15, among others, by engaging with and, as appropriate, facilitating participation in regional meetings and other activities leading up to the 2018 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, and providing inputs, including a potential submission in consultation with the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties, with the aim of highlighting countries' progress towards the implementation of the Convention and, as appropriate, the achievement of their voluntary land degradation neutrality targets;

ANNEX 3. CHECKLIST FOR LDN TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES

1 Purpose of the checklist

- To provide project developers with clear guidance in designing Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) transformative projects, while avoiding being prescriptive;
- To define the key features of LDN transformative projects based on the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN (LDN-SCF);¹⁰³
- To ensure that the guiding principles of the LDN-SCF are considered to the extent feasible during the design of LDN transformative projects; and
- To ensure that given proposals are gender responsive, committed to gender equality and comply with the environmental and social safeguard standards of the target funding sources.

Box 1: Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in a nutshell

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) defines LDN as "a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems" (decision 3/COP.12, UNCCD, 2015).

The goal is maintaining or enhancing the land resource base – in other words, the stocks of natural capital associated with land resources and the ecosystem services that flow from them.

The objectives of LDN are to:

- maintain or improve the sustainable delivery of ecosystem services;
- maintain or improve productivity, in order to enhance food security;
- increase resilience of the land and populations dependent on the land;
- seek synergies with other social, economic and environmental objectives; and
- reinforce responsible and inclusive governance of land. (Orr et al. 2017: 3)

LDN is being pursued in the context of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development which seeks to protect the planet from degradation, including through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change, so that it can support the needs of the present and future generations (Preamble of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development). Leaving no one behind is an overarching principle in the development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This principle must also be embedded in LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes (TPP).

Box 2: What is transformation in the realm of LDN?

Transformation is defined as a change in the fundamental attributes of natural and human systems (IPCC 2014).

Transformations are shifts that fundamentally alter system functions, interactions and feedbacks.

LDN TPP seek to generate and sustain fundamental and sustainable positive change in the coupled humanenvironmental system where interventions are targeted. Positive transformation in the frame of LDN TPP can be pursued through sustainable and inclusive interventions at scale (e.g., in landscapes) while featuring innovation in terms of locally adapted technology, practices and financial mechanisms (e.g., blended finance).

¹⁰³ See Orr *et al.* (2017): Scientific-Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality. Available at: https://www.unccd.int/publications/scientific-conceptual-framework-land-degradation-neutrality-report-science-policy

2 Six defining features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes

A. Features that are fundamental to LDN

- Ise a landscape approach by choosing an area large enough to involve multiple land units of a variety of land types (e.g., within a watershed), sectors and jurisdictions/administrative boundaries that are inclusive of different land tenure governance (communal, private and public land);
- Employ fundamental elements of the LDN-SCF:¹⁰⁴
 - Promote neutrality (i.e., counterbalancing for no net loss) within the project area;¹⁰⁵
 - Use the response hierarchy through a mosaic of interventions across different land units to avoid > reduce > reverse land degradation; and
 - Present the interventions according to land type¹⁰⁶ for each component of the response hierarchy.
- Contribute to (sub)national LDN targets;
- Select project location considering the countries' priorities identified through their national sustainable development plans and/or land use planning policy/legislation and/or LDN target setting process;
- Include a monitoring system consistent with national LDN targets and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, particularly SDG 15.3 and its indicator 15.3.1 on LDN;
- Ensure there are mitigating measures for potential leakage (negative offsite effects as opposed to positive spillover effects) beyond the project area;
- Ensure the commitment to the principle of gender equality throughout the entire process;
- Description of the second s
- Ensure methods for gender responsive evaluation and adaptive learning are applied throughout the project cycle;
- Establish a system that involves relevant stakeholders in the regular monitoring and validation of LDN status reporting as well as project implementation outcomes, with a particular attention to gender.

B. Features that deliver multiple benefits

- Oreate linkages to multiple SDGs by designing interventions that generate multiple environmental, economic and social benefits, while minimising trade-offs and maximising synergies and taking into account the different needs and priorities of women and men;
- Show a clear pathway to deliver multiple benefits whereby gains in natural capital contribute to improved and more sustainable livelihoods;
- Provide economic incentives that benefit both men and women to improve livelihoods (e.g., creation of green jobs and enhanced access to inclusive credit lines);
- Promote land use decisions based on an assessment approach¹⁰⁷ which takes into account, inter alia:
 - land potential, land condition, resilience;
 - social, cultural and economic factors and their impacts, including consideration of vulnerable groups and gender;¹⁰⁸
 - participation of relevant stakeholders representing key land uses and land governance systems in the intervention area/landscape;
 - both short- and long-term sustainability.
- Identify land-based pathways for improving livelihoods, sustainable food systems and/or inclusive as well as sustainable value chains for current and future generations.

¹⁰⁴ Following the guidance provided in the LDN-SCF, Voluntary Guidelines on the Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forestry (VGGT) and safeguards are key to how LDN can be pursued with less risk of unintended consequences associated with land tenure insecurity, land appropriation and land conflict.

⁵ Neutrality can be achieved also at landscape level, or at sub/national level: net surplus produced in the project area can counterbalance the net loss in other parts of the country, advancing LDN in the country.

¹⁰⁶ Definition of land type: "Class of land with respect to land potential, which is distinguished by the combination of edaphic, geomorphological, topographic, hydrological, biological and climatic features that support the actual or historic vegetation structure and species composition on that land. Used in counterbalancing "like for like." (Orr *et al.* 2017: 15)

¹⁰⁷ Gender analysis is one of the cornerstones of gender mainstreaming but is often a weak link in the overall programme planning process. It involves efforts to understand if, how and why issues affect women and men differently and unequally within a particular context or development sector, and what options exist to address them. The diagnosis also encompasses the current policy environment, the political climate, the organizational structures and cultures in which an agency/programme is situated, and the availability of resources; and it builds on what has been learned from well-evaluated experiences from previous programmes. Prerequisite resources for effective gender analysis include: specialized expertise in gender issues and sector-specific technical expertise to conduct or to use research: time for analysis of data; and access to adequate and flexible financial resources for new research. Gender analysis also relies upon access to national data such as gender statistics, operations research (i.e., findings derived from testing pilot projects, and from programme monitoring and evaluation) as well as qualitative data generated through policy and academic research and participation assessments. For an overview with further resources: UN – Women (2014): Guidance note Gender mainstreaming in development programming, p.15. *et seq*. http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/02/gender-mainstreaming-issues.

^a See SDG indicator 5.A.1(a) and also the UNCCD Gender Action Plan based on decision 30/COP 13, UNCCD 2017: 3-9). Available at: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/ documents/2018-01/GAP%20ENG%20%20low%20res_0.pdf

C. Features that promote responsible and inclusive governance

- Safeguard land rights of local land users including individual and collective access to land, land tenure and resource rights, inheritance and customary rights;¹⁰⁹
- Ensure free, prior and informed consent¹¹⁰ of indigenous people and local communities for any activities affecting their rights to land, territories and resources;
- Define mechanisms for ensuring gender-responsive engagement of key stakeholders in project design and implementation;
- Ensure strong gender equality, inclusiveness, accountability and transparency in land use decisions and planning;
- Avoid forced displacement/involuntary resettlement resulting from the intervention;
- Strengthen or develop institutional arrangements through collaboration with the range of actors at multiple administrative levels;
- > Strengthen or develop a grievance redress mechanism.

D. Features that promote the scale out and up of what works

- Employ science based and local and indigenous knowledge as well as best practices including sustainable land management that contributes to land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation;¹¹¹
- Apply innovative locally adapted technologies, tools, and techniques that consider context and target group specificities including, for instance, local and indigenous knowledge and traditional practices;
- Or Capture and disseminate what is learned from the interventions and identify ways to address knowledge gaps through accessing all knowledge forms, and where necessary conducting research;
- Insure there is adequate investment in activities designed to scale-up and out best practices.

E. Features that enhance (sub)national ownership and capacities

- Identify and employ capacity development mechanisms such as public awareness, education and capacitybuilding campaigns that are aligned with enduring domestic procedures, tailored to the specific needs and social behaviors of both women and men, and existing national strategies and programmes;
- Identify and employ domestic public and private financing vehicles, including co-financing arrangements that ensure the cost-efficient pursuit of multiple benefits;
- Identify and employ strategies which can ensure the positive impact of the intervention beyond the project lifetime.

F. Features that leverage innovative finance (especially private sector)

- Include/prepare for an investment component that leverages private sector mobilisation;
- Foster activities that incentivise income generation and job creation for the communities in the project intervention areas;
- Identify and leverage innovative and sustainable finance mechanisms which create incentives for and/or directly reward land stewardship;
- Promote innovative financing (e.g., blended finance, green bonds) from broad range of financing sources (climate finance, development finance, domestic finance – national forest funds, special taxation scheme, etc.).

¹⁰⁹ See recommendations made to the country parties of the UNCCD by civil society regarding land rights. (Decision 5/COP 13, UNCCD 2017)

¹¹⁰ In conformity with relevant UN Conventions, including United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous People (especially Art 19 and Art 32) https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ unpfil/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf; and International Labour Organization Convention 169 especially Part II Land) C.f. http://www.eds.eu/library/ILO_Indigenous%20and%20Tribal%20 Peoples%20Convention_1989_EN.pdf. More information in: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2013): Free, Prior and Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ipeoples/freepriorandinformedconsent.pdf

¹¹¹ See Sanz et al. (2017). Available at: https://www2.unccd.int/publications/sustainable-land-management-contribution-successful-land-based-climate-change

ANNEX 4. THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR LDN

A Principles underpinning the vision of LDN

These principles guide the implementation of LDN towards positive outcomes and avoid perverse outcomes. Governments may also establish nationally-specific principles to complement these generic principles.

- 1. Maintain or enhance land-based natural capital: LDN is achieved when the quantity and quality of land-based natural capital (World Bank, 2012) is stable or increasing, despite the impacts of global environmental change.
- 2. Protect human rights and enhance human well-being: Actions taken in pursuit of the LDN target should not compromise the rights of land users (especially small-scale farmers and indigenous populations) to derive economic benefit and support livelihoods from their activities on the land and should not diminish the provisioning capacity and cultural value of the land.
- **3.** Respect national sovereignty: Governments set national targets guided by the global level of ambition while taking into account national circumstances. Governments decide the level of aspiration and how LDN targets are incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies.

B Principles related to the frame of reference

- 1. The LDN target equals (is the same as) the baseline: The baseline (the land-based natural capital as measured by a set of globally agreed LDN indicators at the time of implementation of the LDN conceptual framework) becomes the target to be achieved, in order to maintain neutrality.
- 2. Neutrality is usually the minimum objective: countries may elect to set a more ambitious target, that is, to improve the land-based natural capital above the baseline, to increase the amount of healthy and productive land. In rare circumstances a country may set (and justify) its LDN target acknowledging that losses may exceed gains, if they forecast that some portion of future land degradation associated with past decisions/realities is not currently possible to counterbalance.

C Principles related to the mechanism for neutrality

- Apply an integrated land use planning principle that embeds the neutrality mechanism in land use planning: The mechanism for neutrality should be based on a guiding framework for categorizing and accounting for land use decisions and the impacts of land use and management with respect to a "no net loss" target.
- 2. Counterbalance anticipated losses in land-based natural capital with gains over the same timeframe, to achieve neutrality: Achieving LDN may involve counterbalancing losses in land-based natural capital with planned gains elsewhere within the same land type.
- **3.** Manage counterbalancing at the same scale as land use planning: Counterbalancing should be managed within national or subnational boundaries at the scale of the biophysical or administrative domains at which land use decisions are made, to facilitate effective implementation.
- 4. Counterbalance "like for like": Counterbalancing gains and losses should follow, as far as possible, "like for like" criteria and thus will generally not occur between different types of ecosystem-based land types, except where there is a net gain in land-based natural capital from this exchange. Clear rules should be established ex ante for determining what types of "net gains" permit crossing land type boundaries, to ensure that there is no unintended shifting in the overall ecosystem composition of a country and no risk to endangered ecosystems.
- 5. Within a land type, counterbalancing cannot occur between protected areas and land managed for productive uses.
- 6. Ensure that all stakeholders, public and private, pursue LDN responsibly by working in partnership with relevant levels of government and local land holders, doing no harm, ensuring that planning processes are transparent and participatory, providing spatial systems to record individual and collective tenure rights, and safeguarding against dispossession of legitimate tenure right holders, environmental damage, and other threats and infringements.

D. Principles related to achieving neutrality

 Balance economic, social and environmental sustainability: LDN seeks to maintain or enhance the quality of all ecosystem services, optimizing the trade-offs between environmental, economic and social outcomes. Implementing LDN contributes to sustainable development by integrating economic and social development and environmental sustainability within the biophysical limits of natural capital and seeking to manage the land for ecosystem services while avoiding burden shifting to other regions or future generations.

- **2.** Base land use decisions on multi-variable assessments: Land use decisions should be informed by appropriate assessments (land potential, land condition, resilience, social, cultural and economic factors, including consideration of gender), validated at the local level before initiating interventions to ensure evidence-based decisions and reduce the potential risk of land appropriation.
- **3.** Ensure that land management aligns with the capability of the land to minimise the risk of land degradation and help identify and prioritize appropriate land use practices.
- 4. Leverage existing planning processes: LDN planning and implementation should be aligned with and incorporated into existing planning processes, including UNCCD NAPs, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and mainstreamed into national development plans and other policy processes. This will promote action to achieve LDN, reduce burdens and minimise the duplication of effort. Promote review of existing planning processes, to facilitate revision and adoption of innovated approaches, where appropriate.
- 5. Apply the response hierarchy: In devising interventions and planning for LDN, the response hierarchy of Avoid > Reduce > Reverse land degradation (Figure 6) should be applied, in which avoid and reduce have priority over reversing past degradation, so that the optimal combination of actions can be identified and pursued with the aim of achieving no net loss across the landscape.
- 6. Quantify projected land degradation: Projected land degradation due to anticipated land use changes (e.g., projected urban expansion), or due to anticipated ongoing unsustainable management needs to be estimated so that ways to reduce or counterbalance these anticipated losses with positive interventions elsewhere can be identified.
- **7.** Apply a participatory process: Planning and implementation of LDN involves well-designed participatory processes that include stakeholders, especially land users, in designing, implementing and monitoring interventions to achieve LDN. Processes should consider local, traditional and scientific knowledge, applying a mechanism such as multi-stakeholder platforms to ensure these inputs are included in the decision-making process. The process should be sensitive to gender, and imbalances in power and information access.

E Principles related to good governance

- 1. Effectiveness: define clear LDN goals and targets at all levels of government in order to focus policy development and implementation efforts towards achieving those goals and meeting the agreed targets;
- 2. Efficiency: maximise the benefits of avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation at the least cost to society;
- **3.** Trust and engagement: build public confidence and ensure inclusiveness through collaborative legitimacy, ensuring the security of livelihoods and fairness for society at large;
- 4. Sustainability and local responsiveness: balance the economic, social, and environmental needs of present and future generations and ensure the interchange between institutions/multi-stakeholder platforms at different scales;
- Legitimacy and equity: achieve societal endorsement through collaborative processes and deal fairly and impartially with individuals and groups, providing non-discriminatory access to services;
- **6.** Transparency, accountability and predictability: strive for open governance that demonstrates stewardship, responds to feedback and communicates decisions in accordance with rules and regulations;
- 7. Integrity: ensure a clear separation between private interests and governance decisions.

F Principles related to monitoring

- Make use of three land-based indicators and associated metrics: land cover (assessed as land cover change), land productivity (assessed as NPP) and carbon stocks (assessed as soil organic carbon), as minimum set of globally agreed indicators/metrics, which were adopted by the UNCCD for reporting and as a means to understanding the status of degradation (UNCCD, 2013b).
- 2. Monitoring and reporting should be primarily based on national data sources, including aggregated subnational data;
- **3.** Make use of additional national and sub-national indicators, both quantitative and qualitative data and information, to aid interpretation and to fill gaps for the ecosystem services not fully covered by the minimum global set.
- 4. Methods for monitoring need to be available to all countries. Monitoring does not require sophisticated technology or high investment and can be carried out at different levels of intensity and involve different stakeholders. Many different monitoring techniques are available, and each country should select the technique(s) most appropriate to its priorities and available resources and apply these consistently over time.

- 5. The pursuit of harmonization in monitoring methods across countries is important, with the potential for standardization where appropriate and feasible, while also accommodating variability in the causes and consequences in land degradation among countries, and in their capacity to measure and monitor change. 57
- **6.** The integration of results of the three global indicators should be based on a "one-out, all-out" approach where if any of the three indicators/metrics shows significant negative change, it is considered a loss (and conversely, if at least one indicator/metric shows a significant positive change, and none show a significant negative change it is considered a gain).
- **7.** Apply in-situ validation and local knowledge obtained through local multi-stakeholder platforms to interpret monitoring data according to local context and objectives, within agreed guidelines.
- 8. Recognizing that a minimum set of globally accepted indicators will lead, under certain circumstances, to "false positives" (e.g., shrub encroachment may lead to higher NPP and soil organic carbon), the monitoring system needs to provide the opportunity to report false positives, supported by national data and contextual information.
 - National level monitoring should include process indicators to complement outcome indicators.
- **9.** Monitoring should be viewed as a vehicle for learning. Monitoring provides: opportunities for capacity building; the basis for testing hypotheses that underpin the counterbalancing decisions and the interventions implemented, the LDN concept, and this conceptual framework; and knowledge to inform adaptive management.

ANNEX 5. ANNOTATED CONCEPT NOTE TEMPLATES OF TARGETED FUNDS

The features of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes are presented below and highlighted in the different sections of the respective donor's concept note template, according to the targeted programme theme or area. For ease of reference, a different colour has been attributed to each of the six features:

- Features that are fundamental to LDN
- Features that deliver multiple benefits
- Features that promote responsible and inclusive governance
- Features that promote the scale out and up of what works
- Features that enhance (sub)national ownership and capacities
- Features that leverage innovative finance (especially private sector)
Concept note

Projects/programmes Title:

Country(ies):

National Designated Authority(ies) (NDA):

Accredited Entity(ies) (AE):

Date of first submission/ version number:

Date of current submission/ version number

[YYYY-MM-DD] [V.0]

[YYYY-MM-DD] [V.0]





Notes

- The maximum number of pages should not exceed 12 pages, excluding annexes. Proposals exceeding the prescribed length will not be assessed within the indicative service standard time of 30 days.
- As per the information disclosure Policy, the concept note, and additional documents provided to the secretariat can be disclosed unless marked by the accredited entity(ies) (or NDAs) as confidential.
- The relevant national designated authority(ies) will be informed by the secretariat of the concept note upon receipt.
- NDA can also submit the concept note directly with or without an identified accredited entity at this stage. In this case, they can leave blank the section related to the accredited entity. The secretariat will inform the accredited entity(ies) nominated by the NDA, if any.
- Accredited entities and/or NDAs are encouraged to submit a concept note before making a request for project preparation support from the Project Preparation Facility (PPF).
- Further information on GCF concept note preparation can be found on GCF website funding projects fine print.



A. Projects/programmes summ	ary (max. 1 page)		
A.1 Project or programme	Project	A.2 Public or private sector	Public sector
	Programme		Private sector
A.3 Is the CN submitted in response to an RFP?	Yes 🗆 No 🗆 If yes, specify the RFP: 	A.4 Confidentiality ¹¹²	Confidential Not confidential
A.5 Indicate the result areas for the project/programme	 Mitigation: Reduced emiss Energy access and pov Low emission transpo Buildings, cities and in Forestry and land use. Adaptation: Increased resi Most vulnerable peop Health and well-being Infrastructure and bui Ecosystem and ecosystem 		
A.6 Estimated mitigation impact (tCO2eq over lifespan)		A.7 Estimated adaptation impact (number of direct beneficiaries and % of population)	
A.8 Indicative total project cost (GCF+ co-finance)	Amount: USD	A.9 Indicative GCF funding requested	Amount: USD
A.10 Mark the type of financial instrument requested for the GCF funding	□ Grant □ Reimbursabl □ Subordinated loan □	e grant □ Guarantees □ Equi Senior Loan □ Other: specify _	ty
A.11 Estimated duration of project/programme:	a) disbursement period:b) repayment period,if applicable:	A.12 Estimated project/ programme lifespan	This refers to the total period over which the investment is effective.
A.13 Is funding from the project preparation facility requested? ¹¹³	Yes D No D Other support received D If so, by who:	A.14 ESS category ¹¹⁴	□ A or I-1 □ B or I-2 □ C or I-3
A.15 Is the CN aligned with your accreditation standard?	Yes 🗆 No 🗆	A.16 Has the CN been shared with the NDA?	Yes 🗆 No 🗆

¹¹⁴ Refer to the Fund's environmental and social safeguards. (Decision B.07/02)

 ¹¹² Concept notes (or sections of) not marked as confidential may be published in accordance with the Information Disclosure Policy (Decision B.12/35) and the Review of the Initial Proposal Approval Process. (Decision B.17/18)
 ¹¹³ See here for access to project preparation support request template and guidelines.



A. Projects/programmes summary (max. 1 page)					
A.17 AMA signed (if submitted by AE)	Yes No If no, specify the status of AMA negotiations and expected date of signing:	A.18 Is the CN included in the entity work programme?	Yes 🗆 No 🗆		
A.19 Projects/programmes rationale, objectives and approach of programme/project (max 100 words)	Brief summary of the prok selected implementation a implementing partners.	plem statement and climate ration approach, including the executing	ale, objective and entity(ies) and other		



B. Projects/programmes Information (max. 8 pages)

B.1 Context and baseline (max. 2 pages)

Describe the climate vulnerabilities and impacts, GHG emissions profile, and mitigation and adaptation needs that the prospective intervention is envisaged to address.

Please indicate how the project fits in with the country's national priorities and its full ownership of the concept. Is the projects/programmes directly contributing to the country's INDC/NDC or national climate strategies or other plans such as NAMAs, NAPs or equivalent? If so, please describe which priorities identified in these documents the proposed project is aiming to address and/or improve.

□ Contribute to (sub)national LDN targets.

Describe the main root causes and barriers (social, gender, fiscal, regulatory, technological, financial, ecological, institutional, etc.) that need to be addressed.

Where relevant, and particularly for private sector project/programme, please describe the key characteristics and dynamics of the sector or market in which the projects/programmes will operate.

B.2 Projects/programmes description (max. 3 pages)

Describe the expected set of components/outputs and subcomponents/activities to address the above barriers identified that will lead to the expected outcomes.

- □ Use a landscape approach by choosing an area large enough to involve multiple land units of a variety of land types (e.g., within a watershed), sectors and jurisdictions/administrative boundaries that are inclusive of different land tenure governance (communal, private and public land);
- Employ fundamental elements of the LDN-SCF:
 - ✓ Promotes neutrality (counterbalancing for no net loss) in the project area;
 - ✓ Uses the response hierarchy through a spatial mix of interventions across different land units to avoid > reduce > reverse land degradation; and
 - ✓ Present the interventions according to land type for each component of the response hierarchy.
- □ Select project location considering the countries' priorities identified through their national sustainable development plans and/or land use planning policy/legislation and/or LDN target setting process;

□ Apply methods to manage or minimise environmental, economic, social and cultural trade-offs.

In terms of rationale, please describe the theory of change and provide information on how it serves to shift the development pathway toward a more low-emissions and/or climate resilient direction, in line with the Fund's goals and objectives.

□ Employ science based and local and indigenous knowledge as well as best practices including sustainable land management that contributes to land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation.



B. Projects/programmes Information (max. 8 pages)

Describe how activities in the proposal are consistent with national regulatory and legal framework, if applicable.

- □ Safeguard land rights of local land users including individual and collective access to land, land tenure and resource rights, inheritance and customary rights;
- □ Ensure free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people and local communities for any activities affecting their rights to land, territories and resources;
- □ Avoid forced displacement/involuntary resettlement resulting from the intervention;

□ Strengthen or develop a grievance redress mechanism.

Describe in what way the Accredited Entity(ies) is well placed to undertake the planned activities and what will be the implementation arrangements with the executing entity(ies) and implementing partners.

Please provide a brief overview of the key financial and operational risks and any mitigation measures identified at this stage.

□ Ensure there are mitigating measures for potential leakage (negative offsite effects as opposed to positive spillover effects) beyond the project area.

B.3 Expected project results aligned with the GCF investment criteria (max. 3 pages)

The GCF is directed to make a significant and ambitious contribution to the global efforts towards attaining the goals set by the international community to combat climate change, and promoting the paradigm shift towards low-emission and climate-resilient development pathways by limiting or reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Provide an estimate of the expected impacts aligned with the GCF investment criteria:

impact potential.

- □ Create linkages to multiple SDGs by designing interventions that generate multiple environmental, economic and social benefits, while minimizing trade-offs and maximizing synergies and taking into account the different needs and priorities of women and men;
- □ Show a clear pathway to deliver multiple benefits whereby gains in natural capital contribute to improved and more sustainable livelihoods;
- □ Identify land-based pathways for improving livelihoods, sustainable food systems and/or inclusive as well as sustainable value chains for current and future generations.

paradigm shift, (VA: https://www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/239759/GCF_Concept_Note_User_s_Guide. pdf/64866eea-3437-4007-a0e4-01b60e6e463b Innovation, Potential for scaling-up and replication (e.g. multiples of initial impact size) for both mitigation and adaptation, Potential for knowledge and learning, Contribution to the creation of an enabling environment, Contribution to the regulatory framework and policies, Overall contribution to climate-resilient development pathways consistent with a country's climate change adaptation strategies and plans).

- □ Apply innovative locally adapted technologies, tools, and techniques that consider context and target group specificities including, for instance, local and indigenous knowledge and traditional practices;
- □ Capture and disseminate what is learned from the interventions and identify ways to address knowledge gaps through accessing all knowledge forms, and where necessary conducting research;

Ensure there is adequate investment in activities designed to scale-up and out best practices.



B. Projects/programmes Information (max. 8 pages)

- □ Provide economic incentives that benefit both men and women to improve livelihoods (e.g., creation of green jobs and enhanced access to inclusive credit lines);
- □ Ensure the commitment to the principle of gender equality throughout the entire process;
- Ensure methods for gender responsive evaluation and adaptive learning are applied throughout the project cycle;
- □ Define mechanisms for ensuring gender-responsive engagement of key stakeholders in project design and implementation;

Ensure strong gender equality, inclusiveness, accountability and transparency in land use decisions and planning;

□ Identify and leverage innovative and sustainable finance mechanisms which create incentives for and/or directly reward land stewardship.

sustainable development.

□ Promote land use decisions based on appropriate assessment approach which takes into account, inter alia:

- 1. land potential, land condition, resilience;
- 2. social, cultural and economic factors and their impacts, including consideration of vulnerable groups and gender;
- 3. participation of relevant stakeholders representing key land uses and land governance systems in the intervention area/landscape;
- 4. both short and long term sustainability.

needs of recipients, country ownership, and efficiency and effectiveness.

□ Identify and employ capacity development mechanisms such as public awareness, education and capacity-building campaigns that are aligned with enduring domestic procedures, tailored to the specific needs and social behaviors of both women and men, and existing national strategies and programmes.

B.4 Engagement among the NDA, AE, and/or other relevant stakeholders in the country (max ½ page)

Please describe how engagement among the NDA, AE and/or other relevant stakeholders in the country has taken place and what further engagement will be undertaken as the concept is developed into a funding proposal.

□ Strengthen or develop institutional arrangements through collaboration with the range of actors at multiple administrative levels.



C. Indicative financing/cost information (max. 3 pages)						
C.1 Financing by comp	onents (max ½ pag	e)				
Please provide an estim	nate of the total cos	st per componei	nt/output and dis	aggregate by so	urce of financing	g.
□ Promote innovative (climate finance, de	financing (e.g., ble velopment finance	ended finance, ; , domestic fina	green bonds) from nce – national fo	m broad range o rest funds, speci	f financing sour al taxation sche	rces eme, etc.);
Identify and employ ensure the cost-effice	domestic public a cient pursuit of mu	nd private fina ltiple benefits.	ncing vehicles, in	cluding co-finan	cing arrangeme	nts that
Component/Output	Indicative cost (USD)	GCF financing amount (USD)	Financial instrument	Co-financing amount (USD)	Financial instrument	Name of institutions
Indicative total cost (USD)						
For private sector prop	osal, provide an ove	erview (diagran	n) of the proposed	l financing struc	ture.	
□ Include/prepare for	an investment cor	nponent that le	everages private s	sector mobilizati	on.	
C.2 Justification of GCF funding request (max. 1 page)						
Explain why the project/programme requires GCF funding, i.e. explaining why this is not financed by the public and/ or private sector(s) of the country.						
Describe alternative funding options for the same activities being proposed in the Concept Note, including an analysis of the barriers for the potential beneficiaries to access to finance and the constraints of public and private sources of funding.						
Justify the rationale and level of concessionality of the GCF financial instrument(s) as well as how this will be passed on to the end-users and beneficiaries. Justify why this is the minimum required to make the investment viable and most efficient considering the incremental cost or risk premium of the project/programme (refer to Decisions B.12/17; B.10/03; and B.09/04 for more details). The justification for grants and reimbursable grants is mandatory.						
In the case of private se applicable to the privat	ector proposal, con e sector operations	cessional terms 5 (Decision B.05,	should be minimi /07).	ized and justified	l as per the Guid	ling principles



C. Indicative financing/cost information (max. 3 pages)
C.3 Sustainability and replicability of the project (exit strategy) (max. 1 page)
Please explain how the projects/programmes sustainability will be ensured in the long run.
Identify and employ strategies which can ensure the positive impact of the intervention beyond the project lifetime;
□ Foster activities that incentivize income generation and job creation for the communities in the project intervention areas.
and how this will be monitored, after the projects/programmes is implemented with support from the GCF and other sources.
Include a monitoring system consistent with national LDN targets and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, particularly SDG 15.3 and its indicator 15.3.1 on LDN;
Establish a system that involves relevant stakeholders in the regular monitoring and validation of LDN status reporting as well as project implementation outcomes, with a particular attention to gender.
For non-grant instruments, explain how the capital invested will be repaid and over what duration of time.
D. Supporting documents submitted (OPTIONAL)
□ Map indicating the location of the project/programme;
□ Diagram of the theory of change;
\Box Economic and financial model with key assumptions and potential stressed scenarios;
Pre-feasibility study;
Evaluation report of previous project;
□ Results of environmental and social risk screening.

Self-awareness check boxes

Are you aware that the full funding proposal and annexes will require these documents? Yes
_____ No

- Feasibility study;
- Environmental and social impact assessment or environmental and social management framework;
- Stakeholder consultations at national and project level implementation including with indigenous people if relevant;
- Gender assessment and action plan;
- Operations and maintenance plan if relevant;
- Loan or grant operation manual as appropriate;
- Co-financing commitment letters.

Are you aware that a funding proposal from an accredited entity without a signed AMA will be reviewed but not sent to the Board for consideration? Yes \Box _____ No \Box



REQUEST FOR PROJECT/PROGRAMME FUNDING FROM THE ADAPTATION FUND

The annexed form should be completed and transmitted to the Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat by email or fax.

Please type in the responses using the template provided. The instructions attached to the form provide guidance to filling out the template.

Please note that a projects/programmes must be fully prepared (i.e., fully appraised for feasibility) when the request is submitted. The final projects/programmes document resulting from the appraisal process should be attached to this request for funding.

Complete documentation should be sent to:

The Adaptation Fund Board Secretariat 1818 H Street NW MSN P4-400 Washington, D.C., 20433 U.S.A Fax: +1 (202) 522-3240/5 Email: afbsec@adaptation-fund.org

NB: In designing the project, keep in mind that:

The project should promote innovative financing (e.g., blended finance, green bonds, etc.) from broad range of financing sources (climate finance, development finance, domestic finance – national forest funds, special taxation scheme, etc.).



PROJECT/PROGRAMME PROPOSAL TO THE ADAPTATION FUND

PART I: PROJECTS/PROGRAMMES INFORMATION

Projects/programmes category:

Country/ies:

Title of project/programme:

Type of implementing entity:

Implementing entity:

Executing entity/ies:

Amount of financing requested:

(in U.S dollars equivalent)

Project/programme background and context:

Provide brief information on the problem the proposed projects/programmes is aiming to solve. Outline the economic social, development and environmental context in which the project would operate.

Project/programme objectives:

List the main objectives of the project/programme.

Project/programme components and financing:

Fill in the table presenting the relationships among project components, activities, expected concrete outputs, and the corresponding budgets. If necessary, please refer to the attached instructions for a detailed description of each term.

□ Ensure there is adequate investment in activities designed to scale-up and out best practices;

□ Include or prepare for an investment component that leverages private sector mobilization.

For the case of a programme, individual components are likely to refer to specific sub-sets of stakeholders, regions and/or sectors that can be addressed through a set of well defined interventions/projects.

Projects/programmes components	Expected concrete outputs	Expected outcomes	Amount (USD)	
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6. Projects/programmes execution cost				
7. Total projects/programmes cost				
8. Projects/programmes cycle manageme				
Amount of financing requested				

Projected calendar:

Indicate the dates of the following milestones for the proposed project/programme

Milestones	Expected dates
Start of projects/programmes implementation	
Mid-term review (if planned)	
Projects/programmes closing	
Terminal evaluation	

PART II: PROJECT/PROGRAMME JUSTIFICATION

- **A.** Describe the project/programme components, particularly focusing on the concrete adaptation activities of the project, and how these activities contribute to climate resilience. For the case of a programme, show how the combination of individual projects will contribute to the overall increase in resilience.
 - □ Use a landscape approach by choosing an area large enough to involve multiple land units of a variety of land types (e.g., within a watershed), sectors and jurisdictions/administrative boundaries that are inclusive of different land tenure governance (communal, private and public land);
 - □ Employ fundamental elements of the LDN-SCF:¹¹⁵
 - ✓ Promotes neutrality (counterbalancing for no net loss) in the project area;¹¹⁶
 - ✓ Uses the response hierarchy through a spatial mix of interventions across different land units to avoid > reduce > reverse land degradation; and
 - ✓ Present the interventions according to land type for each component of the response hierarchy;
 - □ Select project location considering the countries' priorities identified through their national sustainable development plans and/or land use planning policy/legislation and/or LDN target setting process;
 - □ Employ science based and local and indigenous knowledge as well as best practices including sustainable land management that contributes to land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation;¹¹⁷
 - □ Apply innovative locally adapted technologies, tools, and techniques that consider context and target group specificities including, for instance, local and indigenous knowledge and traditional practices;
 - □ Provide economic incentives that benefit both men and women to improve livelihoods (e.g., creation of green jobs and enhanced access to inclusive credit lines);
 - □ Foster activities that incentivize income generation and job creation for the communities in the project intervention areas;
 - □ Identify and leverage innovative and sustainable finance mechanisms which create incentives for and/or directly reward land stewardship.
- **B.** Describe how the project/programme provides economic, social and environmental benefits, with particular reference to the most vulnerable communities, and vulnerable groups within communities, including gender considerations.
 - □ Create linkages to multiple SDGs by designing interventions that generate multiple environmental, economic and social benefits, while minimizing trade-offs and maximizing synergies and taking into account the different needs and priorities of women and men;
 - □ Show a clear pathway to deliver multiple benefits whereby gains in natural capital contribute to improved and more sustainable livelihoods;
 - Promote land use decisions based on an assessment approach which takes into account, inter alia:
 - land potential, land condition, resilience;
 - social, cultural and economic factors and their impacts, including consideration of vulnerable groups and gender;
 - participation of relevant stakeholders representing key land uses and land governance systems in the intervention area/landscape;
 - both short and long term sustainability.

¹¹⁷ See Sanz et al. (2017). Available at https://www2.unccd.int/publications/sustainable-land-management-contribution-successful-land-based-climate-change

¹¹⁵ Following the guidance provided in the LDN-SCF, VGGT and safeguards are key to how LDN can be pursued with less risk of unintended consequences associated with land tenure insecurity, land appropriation and land conflict.

¹¹⁶ Neutrality can be achieved also at landscape level, or at sub/national level: net surplus produced in the project area can offset the net loss in other parts of the country, advancing LDN in the country.

Describe how the project/programme will avoid or mitigate negative impacts, in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund.

- □ Ensure there are mitigating measures for potential leakage (negative offsite effects as opposed to positive spillover effects) beyond the project area;
- □ Apply methods to manage or minimize environmental, economic, social and cultural trade-offs.
- C. Describe or provide an analysis of the cost-effectiveness of the proposed project/programme.
- **D.** Describe how the project/programme is consistent with national or sub-national sustainable development strategies, including, where appropriate, national or sub-national development plans, poverty reduction strategies, national communications, or national adaptation programs of action, or other relevant instruments, where they exist.
 - □ Contribute to sub-national LDN targets;
 - □ Identify and employ capacity development mechanisms such as public awareness, education and capacity-building campaigns that are aligned with enduring domestic procedures, tailored to the specific needs and social behaviors of both women and men, and existing national strategies and programmes.
- E. Describe how the project/programme meets relevant national technical standards, where applicable, such as standards for environmental assessment, building codes, etc., and complies with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund.
 - □ Safeguard land rights of local land users including individual and collective access to land, land tenure and resource rights, inheritance and customary rights;
 - □ Ensure free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people and local communities for any activities affecting their rights to land, territories and resources;
 - □ Strengthen or develop a grievance redress mechanism.
- F. Describe if there is duplication of project/programme with other funding sources, if any.
- G. If applicable, describe the learning and knowledge management component to capture and disseminate lessons learned.
 - □ Ensure methods for gender responsive evaluation and adaptive learning are applied throughout the project cycle;
 - □ Capture and disseminate what is learned from the interventions and identify ways to address knowledge gaps through accessing all knowledge forms, and where necessary conducting research.
- **H.** Describe the consultative process, including the list of stakeholders consulted, undertaken during project preparation, with particular reference to vulnerable groups, including gender considerations, in compliance with the environmental and social policy of the Adaptation Fund.
 - □ Ensure the commitment to the principle of gender equality throughout the entire process;
 - □ Establish a system that involves relevant stakeholders in the regular monitoring and validation of LDN status reporting as well as project implementation outcomes, with a particular attention to gender;
 - □ Define mechanisms for ensuring gender-responsive engagement of key stakeholders in project design and implementation;
 - □ Ensure strong gender equality, inclusiveness, accountability and transparency in land use decisions and planning.
- I. Provide justification for funding requested, focusing on the full cost of adaptation reasoning.

- J. Describe how the sustainability of the projects/programmes outcomes has been taken into account when designing the project/programme.
 - □ Identify land-based pathways for improving livelihoods, sustainable food systems and/or inclusive as well as sustainable value chains for current and future generations;
 - □ Identify and employ strategies which can ensure the positive impact of the intervention beyond the project lifetime.
- **K.** Provide an overview of the environmental and social impacts and risks identified as being relevant to the project/programme.

Checklist of environmental and social principles	No further assessment required for compliance	Potential impacts and risks – further assessment and management required for compliance
Compliance with the law		
Access and equity		
Marginalized and vulnerable groups		
Human rights		
Gender equity and women's empowerment		
Core labour rights		
Indigenous peoples		
Involuntary resettlement		
Protection of natural habitats		
Conservation of biological diversity		
Climate change		
Pollution prevention and resource efficiency		
Public health		
Physical and cultural heritage		
Lands and soil conservation		

PART III: IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

- **A.** Describe the arrangements for project/programme implementation.
 - □ Strengthen or develop institutional arrangements through collaboration with the range of actors at multiple administrative levels.
- B. Describe the measures for financial and project/programme risk management.
 - □ Identify and employ domestic public and private financing vehicles, including co-financing arrangements that ensure the cost-efficient pursuit of multiple benefits;
 - Promote innovative financing (e.g., blended finance, green bonds, etc.) from broad range of financing sources (climate finance, development finance, domestic finance – national forest funds, special taxation scheme, etc.).
- **C.** Describe the measures for environmental and social risk management, in line with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund.
- **D.** Describe the monitoring and evaluation arrangements and provide a budgeted M&E plan.
 - □ Include a monitoring system consistent with national LDN targets and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, particularly SDG 15.3 and its indicator 15.3.1 on LDN;
 - □ Establish a system that involves relevant stakeholders in the regular monitoring and validation of LDN status reporting as well as project implementation outcomes, with a particular attention to gender.
- E. Include a results framework for the project proposal, including milestones, targets and indicators.
- F. Demonstrate how the project/programme aligns with the results framework of the Adaptation Fund.

Project objective(s) ¹¹⁸	Project objective Indicator(s)	Fund outcome	Fund outcome indicator	Grant amount (USD)
Project objective(s)	Project objective Indicator(s)	Fund outcome	Fund outcome indicator	Grant amount (USD)

- **G.** Include a detailed budget with budget notes, a budget on the Implementing Entity management fee use, and an explanation and a breakdown of the execution costs.
- H. Include a disbursement schedule with time-bound milestones.
- 118 The AF utilized OECD/DAC terminology for its results framework. Project proponents may use different terminology but the overall principle should still apply.

PART IV: ENDORSEMENT BY GOVERNMENT AND CERTIFICATION BY THE IMPLEMENTING ENTITY

A. Record of endorsement on behalf of the government¹¹⁹

Provide the name and position of the government official and indicate date of endorsement. If this is a regional project/programme, list the endorsing officials all the participating countries. The endorsement letter(s) should be attached as an annex to the projects/programmes proposal. Please attach the endorsement letter(s) with this template; add as many participating governments if a regional project/programme:

(Enter Name, Position, Ministry)	Date: (Month, day, year)
----------------------------------	--------------------------

B. Implementing entity certification

Provide the name and signature of the Implementing Entity Coordinator and the date of signature. Provide also the projects/programmes contact person's name, telephone number and email address

I certify that this proposal has been prepared in accordance with guidelines provided by the Adaptation Fund Board, and prevailing National Development and Adaptation Plans (<i>list here</i>) and subject to the approval by the Adaptation Fund Board, commit to implementing the projects/programmes in compliance with the Environmental and Social Policy of the Adaptation Fund and on the understanding that the Implementing Entity will be fully (legally and financially) responsible for the implementation of this project/programme.				
Name and Signature				
Implementing Entity Coordinator				
Date: (Month, Day, Year)	Tel. and email:			
Project contact person:				
Tel. and email:				

¹¹⁹ Each Party shall designate and communicate to the secretariat the authority that will endorse on behalf of the national government the projects and programmes proposed by the implementing entities.



GEF-7 PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

PROJECT TYPE: (choose project type) TYPE OF TRUST FUND: (choose fund type)

PART I: Project information

Project title:			
Country(ies):		GEF project ID:	
GEF agency(ies):	(select)	GEF agency project ID:	
Project executing entity(s):		Submission date:	
GEF focal area(s):	(select)	Project duration (months)	

A. INDICATIVE FOCAL/NON-FOCAL AREA ELEMENTS

		(In USD)	
Programming directions	Trust fund	GEF project financing	Co-financing
(select)	(select)		
Total project cost			

B. INDICATIVE PROJECT DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

Project objective:								
Project	Component	Project	Project	Trust fund	(In USD)			
components	type	outcomes	Outputs		GEF project financing	Co-financing		
Subtotal				(select)				
Project Management Cost (PMC)				(select)				

For multi-trust fund projects, provide the total amount of PMC in Table B, and indicate the split of PMC among the different trust funds here: ()

C. INDICATIVE SOURCES OF CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY NAME AND BY TYPE, IF AVAILABLE

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment mobilized	Amount (USD)
(select)		(select)	(select)	
Total Co-financing				

D. INDICATIVE TRUST FUND RESOURCES REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), COUNTRY(IES), FOCAL AREA AND THE PROGRAMMING OF FUNDS

					(In USD)		
GEF agency	Trust fund	Country/ regional/global	Focal area	Programming of funds	GEF project financing (a)	Agency fee (b)	Total (c)=a+b
(select)	(select)		(select)	(select as applicable)			
Total GEF resources							

E. PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

Is Project Preparation Grant requested? Yes □ No □ If no, skip item E.

					(In USD)		
GEF agency	Trust fund	Country/ regional/global	Focal area	Programming of funds	PPG (a)	Agency fee (b)	Total (c)=a+b
(select)	(select)		(select)	(select as applicable)			
Total PPG amount							

F. PROJECT'S TARGET CONTRIBUTIONS TO GEF 7 CORE INDICATORS

Provide the relevant sub-indicator values for this project using the methodologies indicated in the Core Indicator Worksheet provided in Annex B and aggregating them in the table below. Progress in programming against these targets is updated at the time of CEO endorsement, at midterm evaluation, and at terminal evaluation. Achieved targets will be aggregated and reported at anytime during the replenishment period. There is no need to complete this table for climate adaptation projects financed solely through LDCF and SCCF.

Pro	oject Core Indicators	Expected at PIF
1.	Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (Million Hectares)	
2.	Marine protected areas created or under improved management for conservation and sustainable use (Million Hectares)	
3.	Area of land restored (Million Hectares)	
4.	Area of landscapes under improved practices (excluding protected areas) (Million Hectares)	
5.	Area of marine habitat under improved practices (excluding protected areas) (Million Hectares)	
	Total area under improved management (Million Hectares)	
6.	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated (million metric tons of CO2e)	
7.	Number of shared water ecosystems (fresh or marine) under new or improved cooperative management	
8.	Globally over-exploited marine fisheries moved to more sustainable levels (thousand metric tons)(Percent of fisheries, by volume)	
9.	Reduction , disposal/destruction, phase out, elimination and avoidance of chemicals of global concern and their waste in the environment and in processes, materials and products (thousand metric tons of toxic chemicals reduced)	
10	. Reduction, avoidance of emissions of POPs to air from point and non-point sources (grams of toxic equivalent gTEQ)	
11	Number of direct beneficiaries disaggregated by gender as co-benefit of GEF investment	

Provide additional explanation on targets, other methodologies used, and other focal area specifics (i.e., Aichi targets in BD) including justification where core indicators targets are not provided.

G.PROJECT TAXONOMY

Please fill in the table below for the taxonomic information required of this project. Use the GEF Taxonomy Worksheet provided in Annex C to help you select the most relevant keywords/topics/ themes that best describe this project.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Influencing Models	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)
Stakeholders	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)
Capacity, knowledge and research	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)
Gender equality	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)
Focal area/theme	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)	(multiple selection)

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

1A. Project description. Briefly describe:

- 1) the global environmental and/or adaptation problems, root causes and barriers that need to be addressed (systems description).
- 2) the baseline scenario and any associated baseline projects.
 - □ Include a monitoring system consistent with national LDN targets and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, particularly SDG 15.3 and its indicator 15.3.1 on LDN.
- the proposed alternative scenario with a brief description of expected outcomes and components of the project.
 - Employ fundamental elements of the LDN-SCF:
 - Promote neutrality (i.e., Counterbalancing for no net loss) within the project area;
 - Use the response hierarchy through a mosaic of interventions across different land units to avoid > reduce > reverse land degradation; and
 - Present the interventions according to land type for each component of the response hierarchy.
 - Select project location considering the countries' priorities identified through their national sustainable development plans and/or land use planning policy/legislation and/or LDN target setting process;
 - □ Use a landscape approach by choosing an area large enough to involve multiple land units of a variety of land types (e.g., within a watershed), sectors and jurisdictions/administrative boundaries that are inclusive of different land tenure governance (communal, private and public land);
 - □ Ensure there are mitigating measures for potential leakage (negative offsite effects as opposed to positive spillover effects) beyond the project area;
 - Establish a system that involves relevant stakeholders in the regular monitoring and validation of LDN status reporting as well as project implementation outcomes, with a particular attention to gender;
 - □ Ensure there is adequate investment in activities designed to scale-up and out best practices.
- 4) alignment with GEF focal area and/or Impact Program strategies.
- 5) incremental/additional cost reasoning and expected contributions from the baseline, the GEFTF, LDCF, SCCF, and co-financing.
 - □ Identify and employ domestic public and private financing vehicles, including co-financing arrangements that ensure the cost-efficient pursuit of multiple benefits.
- 6) global environmental benefits (GEFTF) and/or adaptation benefits (LDCF/SCCF).
 - □ Create linkages to multiple SDGs by designing interventions that generate multiple environmental, economic and social benefits, while minimising trade-offs and maximising synergies and taking into account the different needs and priorities of women and men.
- 7) innovation, sustainability and potential for scaling up.

Innovation:

- Promote innovative financing (e.g., blended finance, green bonds) from broad range of financing sources (climate finance, development finance, domestic finance – national forest funds, special taxation scheme, etc.);
- □ Identify and leverage innovative and sustainable finance mechanisms which create incentives for and/or directly reward land stewardship;
- □ Provide economic incentives that benefit both men and women to improve livelihoods (e.g., creation of green jobs and enhanced access to inclusive credit lines);
- □ Apply innovative locally adapted technologies, tools, and techniques that consider context and target group specificities including, for instance, local and indigenous knowledge and traditional practices.

Sustainability:

- □ Identify and employ strategies which can ensure the positive impact of the intervention beyond the project lifetime;
- □ Foster activities that incentivise income generation and job creation for the communities in the project intervention areas;
- □ Identify land-based pathways for improving livelihoods, sustainable food systems and/or inclusive as well as sustainable value chains for current and future generations;
- □ Promote land use decisions based on an assessment approach which takes into account, *inter alia:*
 - land potential, land condition, resilience;
 - social, cultural and economic factors and their impacts, including consideration of vulnerable groups and gender;
 - participation of relevant stakeholders representing key land uses and land governance systems in the intervention area/landscape;
 - both short and long term sustainability.

Potential for scaling:

- □ Employ science based and local and indigenous knowledge as well as best practices including sustainable land management that contributes to land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- **1B. Project map and coordinates.** Please provide geo-referenced information and map where the project interventions will take place.
- **2. Stakeholders**. Select the stakeholders that have participated in consultations during the project identification phase:
 - □ Indigenous peoples and local communities;
 - □ Civil society organizations;
 - □ Private sector entities;
 - □ If none of the above, please explain why.

In addition, provide indicative information on how stakeholders, including civil society and indigenous peoples, will be engaged in the project preparation, and their respective roles and means of engagement.

- □ Safeguard land rights of local land users including individual and collective access to land, land tenure and resource rights, inheritance and customary rights;
- □ Ensure free, prior and informed consent of indigenous people and local communities for any activities affecting their rights to land, territories and resources;
- □ Define mechanisms for ensuring gender-responsive engagement of key stakeholders in project design and implementation;
- □ Avoid forced displacement/involuntary resettlement resulting from the intervention;
- □ Strengthen or develop a grievance redress mechanism.
- **3.** Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Briefly include below any gender dimensions relevant to the project, and any plans to address gender in project design (e.g. gender analysis).

□ Ensure strong gender equality, inclusiveness, accountability and transparency in land use decisions and planning.

Does the project expect to include any gender-responsive measures to address gender gaps or promote gender equality and women empowerment?

□ Provide economic incentives that benefit both men and women to improve livelihoods (e.g., creation of green jobs and enhanced access to inclusive credit lines).

yes \Box /no \Box / tbd \Box ; If possible, indicate in which results area(s) the project is expected to contribute to gender equality:

- □ closing gender gaps in access to and control over natural resources;
- \Box improving women's participation and decision-making; and/or

 $\hfill\square$ generating socio-economic benefits or services for women.

Will the project's results framework or logical framework include gender-sensitive indicators? yes \Box /no \Box / tbd \Box

- 4. Private sector engagement. Will there be private sector engagement in the project? (yes □ /no □). Please briefly explain the rationale behind your answer.
 □ Include or prepare for an investment component that leverages private sector mobilization.
- 5. **Risks.** Indicate risks, including climate change, potential social and environmental risks that might prevent the project objectives from being achieved or may be resulting from project implementation, and, if possible, propose measures that address these risks to be further developed during the
 - □ Ensure there are mitigating measures for potential leakage (negative offsite effects as opposed to positive spillover effects) beyond the project area;
 - □ Apply methods to manage or minimize environmental, economic, social and cultural trade-offs.
- 6. Coordination. Outline the institutional structure of the project including monitoring and evaluation coordination at the project level. Describe possible coordination with other relevant GEF-financed projects and other initiatives.
 - □ Strengthen or develop institutional arrangements through collaboration with the range of actors at multiple administrative levels.
- 7. Consistency with National Priorities. Is the project consistent with the National strategies and plans or reports and assessements under relevant conventions? (yes □ /no □). If yes, which ones and how:
 - National action plan for adaptation (NAPA) under LDCF/UNFCCC;
 - National action program (NAP) under UNCCD;

project design (table format acceptable).

- ASGM NAP (artisanal and small-scale gold mining) under mercury;
- Minamata initial assessment (MIA) under minamata convention;
- National biodiversity strategies and action plan (NBSAP) under UNCBD;
- National communications (NC) under UNFCCC;
- Technology needs assessment (TNA) under UNFCCC;
- National capacity self-assessment (NCSA) under UNCBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD;
- National implementation plan (NIP) under POPS;
- Poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP);
- National portfolio formulation exercise (NPFE) under GEFSEC;
- Biennial update report (BUR) under UNFCCC;
- Others.
- □ Contribute to national LDN targets;
- □ Identify and employ capacity development mechanisms such as public awareness, education and capacity-building campaigns that are aligned with enduring domestic procedures, tailored to the specific needs and social behaviors of both women and men, and existing national strategies and programmes.
- 8. Knowledge Management. Outline the "Knowledge Management Approach" for the project and how it will contribute to the project's overall impact, including plans to learn from relevant projects, initiatives and evaluations.
 - □ Ensure methods for gender responsive evaluation and adaptive learning are applied throughout the project cycle;
 - □ Capture and disseminate what is learned from the interventions and identify ways to address knowledge gaps through accessing all knowledge forms, and where necessary conducting research.

PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S):

(Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template. For SGP, use this SGP OFP endorsement letter).

NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE (MM/dd/yyyy)	

Annex A

PROGRAM/PROJECT MAP AND GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES

(when possible)

Annex B

GEF 7 Core Indicator Worksheet

Use this Worksheet to compute those indicator values as required in Part I, item F to the extent applicable to your proposed project. Progress in programming against these targets for the project will be aggregated and reported at anytime during the replenishment period. There is no need to complete this table for climate adaptation projects financed solely through LDCF and SCCF.

Annex C

Project Taxonomy Worksheet

Use this Worksheet to list down the taxonomic information required under Part I, item G by ticking the most relevant keywords/topics/themes that best describe this project.



Land Degradation Neutrality Transformative Projects and Programmes **Operational Guidance for Country Support**

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) seeks to keep healthy and productive land in balance. It represents a major opportunity to contribute to the "paradigm shift for sustainable development" by scaling up good practices and pilot activities through large-scale Transformative Projects and Programmes that are capable of generating multiple benefits, allowing positive changes in terms of human well-being, poverty alleviation and the restoration of terrestrial ecosystems and their services.

Building on the momentum created by the LDN Target Setting Programme, the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is now assisting countries to develop Transformative Projects and Programmes to achieve LDN, by providing tailored support in the early stages of project preparation.

Prepared in this framework, this operational guide, intended for policy-makers, technical experts, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector, gathers in a practical and pragmatic manner all relevant information related to the development and implementation of LDN Transformative Projects and Programmes.







Global Mechanism of the UNCCD Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1 D-53113 Bonn, Germany Tel: +49 (0) 228 815 2873 www.unccd.int/about-us/global-mechanism

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