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Terminal evaluation of the project “Decision Support for Mainstreaming and Scaling Up of Sustainable Land Management”



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**Terminal evaluation of the project
“Decision support for mainstreaming and
scaling up of sustainable land
management”**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

CDE	Centre for Development and Environment
DLDD	Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought
DSF	Decision Support Framework
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GEF	Global Environment Facility
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
LUS	Land Use System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
ToC	Theory of change
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
WOCAT	World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies

Executive summary

Purposes of the evaluation

1. The terminal evaluation of the project serves a double purpose of accountability and learning. The terminal evaluation documents important lessons to indicate future actions needed to expand on the existing project in subsequent phases, mainstream and upscale its products and practices, and disseminate information to inform continuity of the processes initiated by the project. It presents strategic recommendations in order to, among other purposes, foster the institutionalization and appropriation of the project's results by stakeholders and disseminate information to management authorities responsible for the management of other projects.

Users of the evaluation

2. The terminal evaluation is to be used for learning and for giving feedback from project implementation to identification and design of new projects. According to the Terms of Reference (TOR), the terminal evaluation will also support the financiers and implementing partners to identify possible follow-up projects that are increasingly relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable. The main audience and intended users of the evaluation are the Project Management Team, members of Project Task Force in the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), FAO Country Offices, Global Environment Facility (GEF) as the donor, National Government counterparts, as well as the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)/World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT).

Scope and objective of the evaluation

3. In 2018, the project's mid-term evaluation (MTE) covered the period from January 2015 to March 2018, as well as its conceptual phase prior to January 2015. Consequently, this terminal evaluation focuses in particular on the period from April 2018 to April 2019 and serves as a complementary exercise to the MTE. The terminal evaluation does not give much emphasis on evaluating relevance and efficiency as they were well covered by the MTE. This evaluation covers all the geographical areas where the project has been implemented (Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Lesotho, Morocco, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan), with the remark that Nigeria never really started the project activities.
4. The terminal evaluation identifies the project impacts and sustainability of project results and the likely degree of achievement of long-term results. It also considers the preconditions and arrangements in place that have contributed to, or hindered, the adequate implementation of the planned activities, including linkages and/or partnerships between the project and other major country initiatives.
5. The evaluation questions from the TORs of the terminal evaluation grouped by evaluation criteria are found below:

Relevance	Were the project strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved in sustainable land management?
Achievement of project results	To what extent have project outcomes and objectives been achieved, and how effective was the project in achieving them?
	Did the project produce any unintended results, either positive or negative? What were the contributing factors for the results achieved and what can be particularly attributed to the project?
	To what extent has the global DLDD and SLM decision-support platform been able to develop technical and scientific tools and methods for SLM up-scaling?
Efficiency, project implementation and execution	How did the project's design, management and execution, institutional arrangements, partnerships, knowledge management and communications, and the financial and human resources available contribute to, or impede, the achievement of the project's results and objectives?
	To what extent has the management been able to adapt to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
	To what extent were the recommendations provided by the mid-term evaluation addressed in the second phase of the project?
Monitoring and Evaluation	How effective was the functioning of the project results-based M&E system to follow-up progress?
	How was the information from this system used to make timely decisions during project implementation?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project created ownership among counterparts and stakeholders?
	How sustainable are the results achieved at the environmental, institutional, social and financial levels?
Stakeholder engagement	To what extent has the project engaged stakeholders, in particular farmers and herders, in pilot site management?
	To what extent does the project develop new partnerships or enhance existing ones?
	What linkages, if any, exist between the capacities developed among diverse types of stakeholders (government ownership, partnerships, capacity development)?
	How have stakeholders contributed to the results achieved?
Gender	To what extent (and how) has the project contributed to the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups throughout its implementation?
Co-financing	To what extent has the expected co-financing been delivered?
Progress to impact	To what extent and how is the project likely to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in national or subnational planning, financing and policy frameworks?
	Is there any evidence of SLM mainstreaming at the decision-making level that can be attributed to the project?
	Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term results? What is the likelihood of longer-term impacts of the project?
Lessons learned	What lessons can be learned from the project, in terms of its design, new approaches (e.g. introduction of the Decision Support Framework), implementation, up-scaling and sustainability that may be useful for future and similar FAO interventions particularly funded by GEF or other donors in general?

Methodology

6. The approach and methodology that was used to conduct this terminal evaluation complies with FAO and GEF evaluation standards. It also complies with international criteria and professional norms and standards, including the norms and standards adopted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).
7. The terminal evaluation adopted a consultative, participative and transparent approach with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation team's

approach to the terminal evaluation was constructive and pragmatic. It is more important to learn lessons that help the continuous improvement of project design and implementation than to focus on problems and possible mistakes.

8. The two team members visited Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama and Turkey to interview key stakeholders and collect evaluative evidence. Originally, the team was also supposed to visit China, but the national project team members were not available and thus the visit was cancelled. Country visits to Morocco, Panama and Turkey included field visits to project demonstration sites allowing also to interview farmers and other ultimate beneficiaries of the project.
9. The countries visited were selected by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED). The selection criteria included: i) adequately representative sample by geographic regions; ii) countries known to have interesting results; and iii) not overlapping with those countries visited during the mid-term evaluation.
10. Primary data (Skype and face-to-face interviews, or getting written responses to evaluation questions) collections sample was targeted: all National Project Coordinators (except for Nigeria for which the Project Coordination Unit could not provide name nor contact), FAO country or regional office representative in those countries which were feasible, Project Task Force members at FAO headquarters, WOCAT representatives, representatives of project partners in countries visited, other key project stakeholders and beneficiaries in countries visited, and other selected relevant informants who have been involved in the project planning and/or implementation, e.g. FAO consultants.

Data collection methods

11. Data collection methods included:

Documentation Review: The evaluation team conducted a documentation review (some 160 documents, reports, etc.) during the field missions and at home offices (see Bibliography).

Interviews: Key stakeholders were interviewed (see Appendix 2) either in person (91 persons) or via Skype (26 persons) with some follow-up using emails when needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings were incorporated in the final report.

Global meeting: The Team Leader and the Team Member together with the Evaluation Manager from the Office of Evaluation (OED) participated in the project's third and final global meeting and the Project Steering Committee meeting in Ankara, Turkey, from 24 to 27 April 2019. Parallel, it was possible to interview several country delegations present at these events.

Country visits: Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama and Turkey.

Main findings

12. The main findings of the evaluation are presented below, grouped by evaluation question.

Were the project strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved in sustainable land management?

Finding 1. In general, the project strategy and actions responded to the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The project addresses a common but differentiated problem of the participating countries.

Finding 2. The project strategy is considered highly appropriate in combining policy and strategy mainstreaming work with the implementation of SLM practices at pilot/demonstration scale.

Finding 3. Field observations showed that weak capacity of extension services to promote SLM may hinder the progress of SLM out-scaling.

Finding 4. The original results matrix had flaws but the modular implementation/decision support framework (DSF) introduced during the inception phase facilitated project implementation.

- 2.1 To what extent have project outcomes and objectives been achieved, and how effective was the project in achieving them?
- 2.2 Did the project produce any unintended results, either positive or negative? What were the contributing factors for the results achieved and what can be particularly attributed to the project?
- 2.3 To what extent has the global DLDD and SLM decision-support platform been able to develop technical and scientific tools and methods for SLM up-scaling?

Finding 5. Effectiveness has improved considerably since the mid-term evaluation, particularly in those countries that started the implementation late. Most countries had reached or are expected to reach the results in general. However, up-scaling particularly will require more time and financing, and also SLM mainstreaming requires more time.

Finding 6. The project triggered positive regional and country-to-country cooperation (south-south), particularly in training and capacity building from more experienced countries to less experienced ones.

Finding 7. The global element of the project has facilitated broadening the perspectives (mainstreaming, strategies, up-scaling) of otherwise very technical work by technical staff.

Finding 8. Expectations on the global platform vary: database is in general highly regarded and appreciated but some countries expect more dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing technical information.

- 3.1 How did the project's design, management and execution, institutional arrangements, partnerships, knowledge management and communications, and the financial and human resources available contribute to, or impede, the achievement of the project's results and objectives?
- 3.2 To what extent has the management been able to adapt to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
- 3.3 To what extent were the recommendations provided by the mid-term evaluation addressed in the second phase of the project?

Finding 9. The Project Coordination Unit performance, efficiency and responsiveness at FAO headquarters has been considered by many stakeholders as efficient and responsive whereas others as non-responsive and slow, and apparently there have been some persistent communication problems. FAO administration rules are considered complicated and cumbersome by some countries.

Finding 10. Institutional arrangements have varied a lot from country to country, which is a positive reflection of flexibility and project's ability to adjust to country situations. In general, the established institutional arrangements have been contributing positively to project implementation. Partnerships, either established already before or during the project, have been instrumental for the achievement of results.

Finding 11. The Project Coordination Unit of FAO headquarters was too thinly resourced and in general the project budget for management and coordination was too tight in view of the project size and complexity.

Finding 12. Flexibility of the project has been important allowing to adapt to realities and changing conditions. The DSF is an important element of this flexibility.

Finding 13. The GEF co-financing concept appears to be difficult to understand and the actual amounts spent are difficult to estimate by several project countries.

Finding 14. The recommendations of mid-term evaluation are not known by all countries; no major changes in implementation efficiency observed by countries after MTE.

- 4.1 How effective was the functioning of the project results-based M&E system to follow-up progress?
- 4.2 How was the information from this system used to make timely decisions during project implementation?

Finding 15. Project reporting system with templates and focusing on modules is considered clear and well-functioning. The original project results matrix (logical framework) contains overly ambitious indicators and goals.

Finding 16. The decision-making process using the M&E information was not entirely clear.

- 5.1 To what extent has the project engaged stakeholders, in particular farmers and herders, in pilot site management?
- 5.2 To what extent does the project develop new partnerships or enhance existing ones?
- 5.3 What linkages, if any, exist between the capacities developed among diverse types of stakeholders (government ownership, partnerships, and capacity development)?
- 5.4 How have stakeholders contributed to the results achieved?

Finding 17. Stakeholder engagement has been adequate and extensive in general, with the exception of private sector involvement.

Finding 18. The project has positively contributed to the development of new partnerships (inter-institutional and cross-sectoral). Inter-institutional partnerships have been key for successful implementation.

6.1 To what extent and how is the project likely to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in national or subnational planning, financing and policy frameworks?

6.2 Is there any evidence of SLM mainstreaming at the decision-making level that can be attributed to the project?

6.3 Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term results? What is the likelihood of longer-term impacts of the project?

Finding 19. Most countries are confident that the project will significantly contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in decision-making at national and subnational levels.

Finding 20. The potential role of SLM investments by private sector is not fully understood in many countries which is a key barrier to achieving a major positive SLM impact in terms of improved land use and increased long-term productivity and profitability of agriculture under the climate change threat.

Finding 21. Up-scaling of SLM best practices will require more time and additional financing; in some countries. Such financing is expected to come mainly from domestic sources but in others additional external financing is needed.

7.1 To what extent (and how) has the project contributed to the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups throughout its implementation?

Finding 22. Project strategy and planned activities did not address specifically the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups. Most of the stakeholders believed the project was gender neutral and did not need to address gender.

9.1 To what extent has the project created ownership among counterparts and stakeholders?

9.2 How sustainable are the results achieved at the environmental, institutional, social and financial levels?

Finding 23. The project has strong national ownership in almost all the 14 countries.

Finding 24. Several countries have seen the tools and methodologies of the DS-SLM project as a good means to develop new and larger follow-up/scaling-up projects.

Finding 25. Several countries have already secured new project financing, either from domestic or external sources, and others are in the process of preparing project proposal(s).

Finding 26. Project Management started thinking and planning an exit strategy quite late, only in 2019.

Finding 27. The incipient exist strategy is not robust enough.

Finding 28. Project results are environmentally sustainable.

Finding 29. The integration of the project into the relevant national and/or regional/provincial institutions has secured institutional sustainability in many countries. However, although the project called the attention of key institutional actors and decision makers on the need to address desertification and land degradation with concrete proposals referred to the generation of information, integration of SLM in planning and regulatory frameworks, as well as in practical actions at the local level, the high-level decision makers appear to require still more convincing information and advocacy, and the plan to organize a high-level meeting on DS-SLM at the COP14 is commendable.

Finding 30. Financial sustainability is secured in some countries through the mainstreaming strategy which is expected to lead to a situation where e.g. local municipalities will continue implementation using local government budget. Additional and new project financing is also applied in many countries.

Finding 31. Social sustainability is considered satisfactory or good particularly in those countries where the pilot/demonstration activities are adopted by the local communities and where the introduced SLM practices are profitable at farm/community level.

13. The GEF ratings of the terminal evaluation are presented below.

GEF-FAO criteria/sub-criteria	Rating ¹	Summary comments
A. Assessment of project results		
1. Overall quality of project outcomes		
1.1. Relevance	HS	See section 3.1
1.2. Effectiveness	S ² /MS	See section 3.2
1.3. Efficiency	MU	See section 3.3
B. Project implementation and execution rating		
2. Quality of project implementation	MU	See section 3.3
3. Quality of project execution	S ³ /MS	See section 3.3 & 3.5
C. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) rating		
4. Overall quality of M&E		
4.1. M&E Design	MS	See section 3.4
4.2. M&E Plan Implementation	MS	See section 3.4
D. Sustainability of project outcomes		
5. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability		
5.1. Financial risk	ML	See section 3.8

¹ See rating scheme in Appendix 3.

² Overall the rating is MS. However, project results can be rated highly satisfactory in Argentina, Colombia, Morocco and Uzbekistan; satisfactory in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and RS), China, Ecuador, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey; and moderately unsatisfactory in Bangladesh and Lesotho, and highly unsatisfactory in Nigeria.

³ Overall the rating is MS. However, project execution can be rated satisfactory at least in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and RS), China, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey; highly satisfactory in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama and Uzbekistan; Bangladesh and Lesotho, the execution is rated as moderately unsatisfactory; and in Nigeria as highly unsatisfactory.

GEF-FAO criteria/sub-criteria	Rating ¹	Summary comments
5.2. Sociopolitical risk	ML	See section 3.8 & 3.7
5.3. Institutional risk	ML	See section 3.8
5.4. Environmental risk	L	See section 3.8

Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Although for the present decision support project the project's strategic focus was right, in the forthcoming follow-up projects there is a need to focus more on farmers/land users, their livelihoods and food security.

Conclusion 2. Complex projects which need intersectoral and inter-institutional coordination and cooperation require long-term commitment by partners and key stakeholders.

Conclusion 3. South-south cooperation appears to be a good cost-efficient option for the provision of training and capacity building.

Conclusion 4. Attractiveness, usefulness and expected positive impact of the WOCAT SLM platform would be enhanced by introducing a dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing of technical information element/window to the platform.

Conclusion 5. Fairly large and complex global and regional projects require adequate budget and staff for project management and coordination.

Conclusion 6. The modular Decision Support Framework is a useful innovation and should also be advocated in other projects/countries.

Conclusion 7. Fairly large and complex global/regional projects need to have focussed and very clear logical framework/results matrix. Even without ambiguities such projects are difficult enough to implement.

Conclusion 8. Exercising discipline is needed in following up M&E information, as well as mid-term evaluation recommendations as the day to day chores tend to take all the time and effort of a Project Coordination Unit. Regular Steering Committee meetings, even by Skype, would provide the necessary structure for decision-making.

Conclusion 9. Successful partnerships have been instrumental in making the project successful in several countries, particularly due to the intersectoral nature of the SLM issues.

Conclusion 10. Private sector as the key player in the decision-making and implementation of land-based productive investments has a central role and responsibility in securing sustainability of land management.

Conclusion 11. The project design was inadequate in addressing gender and vulnerable groups.

Conclusion 12. New and additional follow-up financing is needed to continue the good work started. Mainstreaming and up-scaling SLM will require more time to secure sustainability.

Conclusion 13. An exit strategy for the project needs to be prepared and in other elements should be included in addition to the ones presented and discussed in Ankara.

Conclusion 14. High-level decision makers need further information and argumentation in order to achieve deeper SLM mainstreaming.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. FAO, GEF and project countries support farmers/land users and strengthen agricultural and livestock extension services, so that they can bring practical solutions to farmers, to reduce land degradation, increase the provision of ecosystem services and, consequently, the productivity of their farms. This can be achieved by working with decision makers and integrating specific actions in new projects.

Recommendation 2. GEF, FAO and project countries seek ways to continue supporting and working on SLM mainstreaming and up-scaling that has now been well established in most of the project countries.

Recommendation 3. GEF, FAO and project countries seek ways to continue and also to out-scale to other/new countries the south-south cooperation in SLM work.

Recommendation 4. WOCAT, GEF and FAO seek ways to strengthen the SLM platform with a dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing of technical information element/window. WOCAT's SLM platform's financial sustainability needs to be secured at the same time.

Recommendation 5. FAO and GEF ensure that new global or regional projects have coordination units with sufficient human and financial resources that allow them to maintain a constant and fluid communication with the partner countries, as well as provide permanent technical support and promote exchanges and feedback between countries.

Recommendation 6. FAO should consider supporting the use of the modular Decision Support Framework of DS-SLM project also in other projects/countries.

Recommendation 7. FAO and GEF pay particular attention to the clarity and focus of the project design of large and complex global/regional projects.

Recommendation 8. FAO should secure regular Steering Committee meetings, even by Skype, to secure discipline and structure for decision-making to follow-up M&E information and mid-term evaluation recommendations.

Recommendation 9. FAO should consider promoting best practices in intersectoral and inter-agency partnership building in projects with significant cross-sectoral issues such as in SLM projects.

Recommendation 10. FAO and GEF should seek ways to engage the private sector players in future SLM projects. Partnerships with e.g. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Bank and other development financing institutions could be considered in this regard. Countries should involve private sector in relevant policy, strategy and investment programming processes in SLM work.

Recommendation 11. FAO/GEF project designs should include an assessment of relevance and importance of gender and vulnerable groups' issues, and if those issues are found relevant and important, the project strategy should include specific gender and vulnerable groups involvement

or mainstreaming strategies, and the project activities should include specific activities planned or cleared by a gender specialist.

Recommendation 12. FAO and GEF should request the inclusion of a sustainability/exit strategy as an expected outcome of any project.

Recommendation 13. FAO and project countries should encourage the country teams to write the best results and best SLM technologies and approaches in the form of an attractive and easily readable publication/book that can be given to decision makers, politicians, NGOs, farmer organizations, farmers, investors, financiers, private land-using companies. There should be handing-over meetings in every country with the presence of at least FAO, National Project Coordinator and a high-level representative of the respective Ministry.

Recommendation 14. Project countries to promote high-level decision makers discussions, capacity building and exchanges about SLM, including but not limited to the planned high-level meeting on DS-SLM project at COP14.

1 Introduction

1. This document presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the terminal evaluation of Project GCP/GLO/337/GFF - "Decision Support for Mainstreaming and Scaling Up of Sustainable Land Management".
2. Field mission and Skype interviews were carried out from April to June 2019 and covered the whole project execution period (2015-2019) with emphasis on the post-mid-term evaluation (2018-2019). The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the general guidelines of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Global Environment Facility (GEF), based on the analysis of documents and missions with project stakeholders.

1.1 Purposes of the evaluation

3. The terminal evaluation of the project serves a double purpose of accountability and learning. It documents important lessons to indicate future actions needed to expand on the existing project in subsequent phases, mainstream and upscale its products and practices, and disseminate information to inform continuity of the processes initiated by the project. It presents strategic recommendations in order to, among other purposes, foster the institutionalization and appropriation of the project's results by stakeholders and disseminate information to management authorities responsible for the management of other projects.

1.2 Intended users of the evaluation report

4. The main audience and intended users of the evaluation are the Project Management Team, members of the Project Task Force in FAO headquarters, FAO Country Offices, GEF as the donor, National Government counterparts, as well as the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE)/World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT).

1.3 Scope and objective of the evaluation

5. In 2018, the project's mid-term evaluation covered the period from January 2015 to March 2018, as well as its conceptual phase prior to January 2015. Consequently, this terminal evaluation focuses in particular on the period from April 2018 to October 2019 and serves as a complementary exercise to the mid-term evaluation. Considering that the MTE has already covered relevance and efficiency aspects, the terminal evaluation mainly focuses on results and their sustainability and covers all the countries where the project has been implemented (Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Lesotho, Morocco, Nigeria, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan), with the remark that Nigeria never really started the project activities.
6. The terminal evaluation identifies sustainability of project results and the likely degree of achievement of long-term results (impact). It also considers the preconditions and arrangements in place that have contributed to, or hindered, the adequate implementation of the planned activities, including linkages and/or partnerships between the project and other major country initiatives.

7. As per the project document,⁴ some critical issues to be evaluated in the terminal evaluation are: i) progress in finalizing desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) and sustainable land management (SLM) assessments, SLM mainstreaming, establishment of SLM pilot demonstration areas and implementation of approaches for up-scaling; ii) the functioning and effectiveness of the global DLDD and SLM decision-support platform in developing useful technical and scientific tools and methods for SLM up-scaling; iii) the functioning of the project results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system; iv) the level of involvement of farmers and herders in pilot site management and their increased capacities and local socioeconomic benefits to sustain the SLM practices in the medium- and long-term and assess opportunities for up-scaling; and v) involvement of men as well as women in pilot site activities.
8. The evaluation questions from the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the terminal evaluation are presented in Box 1.

Box 1: Key guiding evaluation questions

Relevance	Were the project strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved in sustainable land management?
Achievement of project results	To what extent have project outcomes and objectives been achieved, and how effective was the project in achieving them?
	Did the project produce any unintended results, either positive or negative? What were the contributing factors for the results achieved and what can be particularly attributed to the project?
	To what extent has the global DLDD and SLM decision-support platform been able to develop technical and scientific tools and methods for SLM up-scaling?
Efficiency, project implementation and execution	How did the project's design, management and execution, institutional arrangements, partnerships, knowledge management and communications, and the financial and human resources available contribute to, or impede, the achievement of the project's results and objectives?
	To what extent has the management been able to adapt to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
	To what extent were the recommendations provided by the mid-term evaluation addressed in the second phase of the project?
Monitoring and Evaluation	How effective was the functioning of the project results-based M&E system to follow-up progress?
	How was the information from this system used to make timely decisions during project implementation?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project created ownership among counterparts and stakeholders?
	How sustainable are the results achieved at the environmental, institutional, social and financial levels?
Stakeholder engagement	To what extent has the project engaged stakeholders, in particular farmers and herders, in pilot site management?
	To what extent does the project develop new partnerships or enhance existing ones?
	What linkages, if any, exist between the capacities developed among diverse types of stakeholders (government ownership, partnerships, and capacity development)?
	How have stakeholders contributed to the results achieved?
Gender	To what extent (and how) has the project contributed to the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups throughout its implementation?

⁴ Information extracted from the Project Document, p. 127.

Co-financing	To what extent has the expected co-financing been delivered?
Progress to Impact	To what extent and how is the project likely to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in national or subnational planning, financing and policy frameworks?
	Is there any evidence of SLM mainstreaming at the decision-making level that can be attributed to the project?
	Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term results? What is the likelihood of longer-term impacts of the project?
Lessons Learned	What lessons can be learned from the project, in terms of its design, new approaches (e.g. introduction of the Decision Support Framework), implementation, up-scaling and sustainability that may be useful for future and similar FAO interventions particularly funded by GEF or other donors in general?

1.4 Methodology

9. The approach and methodology that was used to conduct this terminal evaluation complies with FAO and GEF evaluation standards. It also complies with international criteria and professional norms and standards; including the norms and standards adopted by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG).
10. The terminal evaluation adopted a consultative, participative and transparent approach with internal and external stakeholders throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation team's approach to the terminal evaluation was constructive and pragmatic. It is more important to learn lessons that help the continuous improvement of project design and implementation than to focus on problems and possible mistakes. According to the TOR, the terminal evaluation supports donors and implementing partners to identify possible follow-up projects that are increasingly relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable.
11. Field visits were conducted in Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama and Turkey to interview key stakeholders and collect evaluative evidence. Originally, the team was also supposed to visit China, but the national project team members were not available and thus the visit was cancelled. Country visits to Morocco, Panama and Turkey included field visits to project demonstration sites allowing also to interview farmers and other ultimate beneficiaries of the project.
12. The country selection criteria included: i) adequately representative sample by geographic regions; ii) extent of demonstration/pilot field work; iii) availability of the countries to receive the evaluation team; and iv) not overlapping with those countries visited during the MTE.
13. Primary data (Skype and face-to-face, or getting written responses to evaluation questions) collections sample was targeted: all national project coordinators,⁵ FAO country or regional office representative in those countries which were feasible, Project Task Force members at FAO headquarters, WOCAT representatives, representatives of project partners in countries visited, and selected representatives of other country-based stakeholders such as relevant ministries or departments (at national, regional/provincial and local levels as appropriate), other land management and land use related institutions, local farmers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), academia and research centres.

⁵ With the exception of Nigeria.

14. The full list of people consulted is presented in Appendix 2. All stakeholders have been working directly on the project and/or are project beneficiaries, and thus the information received from them is considered to be directly relevant to the terminal evaluation.

1.4.1 Data collection methods

15. Data collection methods included:
16. **Documentation Review:** The evaluation team conducted a documentation review (some 160 documents, reports, etc.) during the field missions and at home offices (see Bibliography).
17. **Interviews:** Key Stakeholders were interviewed either in person (91 persons) or via Skype (26 persons) with some follow-up using emails when needed. Confidentiality was guaranteed to the interviewees and the findings were incorporated in the terminal report. The list of project stakeholders interviewed and/or consulted during the terminal evaluation is presented in Appendix 2. Stakeholders included the project task force based at FAO headquarters, country-based Project National Coordinators and their teams, FAO project focal points at FAO country or regional offices, and selected representatives of other country-based stakeholders such as relevant ministries or departments (at national, regional/provincial and local levels as appropriate), other land management and land use related institutions, local farmers, NGOs, CBOs, academia and research centres.
18. **Global meeting:** The team leader and the team member together with the evaluation manager from the Office of Evaluation (OED) participated in the project's third and final global meeting and the Project Steering Committee meeting in Ankara, Turkey, from 24 to 27 April 2019. Parallel, it was possible to interview several country delegations present at these events.
19. **Country visits:** to Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama and Turkey.
20. Proof of evidence to each key finding is provided by giving more than one reference (either documentary evidence from reports, publications, etc. or evidence from several evaluation interviews – names of the persons are not mentioned but in most cases a list of countries from where the respective interviewees were from is given).

1.5 Limitations

21. The project has a fairly large number of countries (15, including one where project activities never really started) and partners that are spread over all the FAO regions. It was not possible, due to financial and time constraints, to visit all the countries to verify e.g. field implementation. Thus, in many cases proof of evidence depends on the quality and accuracy of the reports. Also, the field missions were relatively short by cause of necessity.
22. The evaluation team mitigated the risk caused by these limitations by double or triple checking any major findings that lead to significant conclusions and recommendations, i.e. basing them on similar and triangulated information originating from more than one country. Actually, the evaluation team based all its conclusions leading to recommendations on findings that are broad-based and common to several partner countries. Thereby the conclusions and respective recommendations have solid basis and substantive value. Therefore, they can be generalized to a broader variety of country situations.

1.6 Structure of the report

23. This report is structured in accordance with the GEF guidelines for terminal evaluations and includes the purpose, scope of the terminal evaluation and methodology (section 1), the background and context of the project as well as its theory of change (ToC, section 2), the major evaluation findings structured according to the key evaluation questions (section 3) and a final section with lessons learned (section 4), followed by conclusions and recommendations (section 5).
24. Given the limited coverage of Latin American countries (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Panama) during the mid-term evaluation, a separate self-standing report is presented in Annex 1. This contains the assessment of project implementation in these countries and it contributes to the findings, conclusions and recommendations presented in this report.

2 Background and context of the project

25. This section presents the developmental context in which the project was formulated and its theory of change to provide an overall understanding of the project, including its logic and results chain.

2.1 Context of the project

26. According to the project document, about 52 percent of the land used for agriculture worldwide is estimated to be already moderately or severely affected by land degradation, and nearly 2 billion ha of land, an area twice the size of China, are already seriously degraded, some irreversibly. Land degradation reduces productivity and food security, disrupts vital ecosystem functions, negatively affects biodiversity and water resources, and increases carbon emissions and vulnerability to climate change. Some studies indicate that land degradation directly affects 1.5 billion people around the world with a disproportionate impact on the poor, women and children, and has already reduced the productivity of the world's terrestrial surface by about 25 percent from 1981 to 2003. However, economic data on degradation is seriously lacking. The Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands (LADA) project cited a 1992 estimate of the annual global cost of land degradation at some USD 40 billion. However, this does not include degradation's hidden costs, such as the need for more external inputs when cultivating degraded lands and the loss of ecosystem services that are essential for food production, water provision and for regulating the global carbon cycle. The global reduction of soil services resulting from improper management has been estimated to be in excess of USD 1 trillion per year.
27. Despite the seriousness and huge negative impacts of land degradation, land use decision makers and particularly land users themselves have limited access to land resources mapping and land use planning tools, as well as to information about effectiveness of traditional and innovative sustainable land management approaches and technologies that would enable good or best land use and management practices to be adopted, sustained and upscaled. According to a review conducted as part of the preparation of the project, more than 90 SLM knowledge management platforms, databases and networks on SLM and land degradation were found, but the information is fragmented and there is no "standard and all comprising platform", but many different types and structures of platforms that emphasize or cover different functions and topics. There are also major knowledge gaps related to the costs and benefits of various SLM practices and their values and impacts, both direct and indirect. It is thus difficult to make a convincing case to policymakers on the importance of investing in SLM and preventing land degradation.
28. Another challenge is the limited capacity to adapt to new and emerging threats to land resources, such as increasing competition for land due to population increase, land fragmentation, biofuel production, change of markets, variability in food prices and impacts of climate change and associated changes in rainfall and hydrological regimes. These capacity-related barriers to SLM are often coupled with weak enabling environments towards harmonization and coordination of policy, legal and regulatory frameworks: a) between sectors competing for land area and natural resources; b) across landscapes and river basins; and c) among weak institutions in charge of coordinating land issues and the implementation of the National Action Plans (NAPs) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

29. Following the first Scientific Conference of UNCCD (September 2009), where ten priorities for improving the monitoring and assessment of land degradation and SLM to support decision-making in land and water management were identified, the second Scientific Conference of UNCCD (April 2013) focused on the economic assessment of desertification, SLM and resilience of drylands. At this conference it was concluded that the evidence base needs to be expanded further in a systematic way and that improving estimates of the magnitudes of economic and social impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought would require better measurement of the extent and rate of change of land degradation.
30. Therefore, the project was conceptualized to contribute filling these evidence gaps by providing improved tools and methods for assessing the impacts of DLDD and the benefits of SLM, as well as providing new assessments and data from representative countries in four regions affected by DLDD. In addition to the needs of filling these evidence gaps, the project was also developed to address key barriers for DLDD assessment and SLM up-scaling existing in the 15 participating countries. These barriers are complex and interlinked and their respective importance can vary from country to country, but they can be grouped into three main types of barriers: i) institutional and policy barriers (top-down approaches to land management limits the participation of local people in sustainable land management projects; compartmental approach of many SLM programmes and knowledge management systems); ii) economic and financial barriers (limited access to financial resources by governments and donors); and iii) knowledge and technology barriers (inadequate access to information and knowledge by smallholders and existing knowledge is fragmented and not sufficiently disseminated and implemented).
31. The total budget of the project is USD 44 214 077 of which USD 6 116 730 (14 percent) comprises a full-sized project (FSP) grant from GEF. The co-financing amounted to USD 38 097 347 (86 percent) and was to be committed by the national governments and other country partners (USD 30 717 347; 70 percent), CDE/WOCAT Secretariat (USD 1 500 000; 3 percent) and USD 5 880 000 (13 percent) from FAO (USD 4 820 000 from the field programme and USD 1 060 000 from headquarters).
32. The project was initially planned to be conducted in a three-year period. A first no-cost extension of one year was granted in February 2018, and another for an extra half a year in April 2019. The implementation started in May 2015 and will reach its expected closure in October 2019. The project is a joint effort between the 15 government partners (Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Lesotho, Morocco, Nigeria,⁶ Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan), the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Bern, the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies, FAO and GEF.
33. The 2018 mid-term evaluation identified that the project was highly relevant and aligned with GEF, UNCCD and FAO objectives and stressed that the progress made towards the achievement of project objectives was limited. The implementation of the project had been delayed by numerous administrative bottlenecks and by the lack of responsiveness from the

⁶ Nigeria did not establish an approved work plan with FAO, nor started project activities; thus at the time of the terminal evaluation Nigeria could not really be considered as a partner country of the project. The terminal evaluation could not interview any representative of Nigeria as the Project Management Team was unable to provide any names and contacts in Nigeria. The original National Project Coordinator of Nigeria had left his position.

Project Coordination Unit, which resulted in a low disbursement of the GEF grant. The prospect of sustainability of project achievements was considered limited, due to the fact that it was based on a series of valid assumptions but in which some of them had a high level of risks and may not be materialized. The overall performance according to the GEF ranking scheme presented in the MTE report is presented in the table below.

Table 1: GEF ranking table (mid-term evaluation)

GEF - FAO criteria/sub criteria		Rating ⁷
1.	Overall quality of project outcomes	
1.1	Relevance	HS
1.2	Effectiveness	MS
1.3	Efficiency	MU
2.	Quality of project implementation	MU
3.	Quality of project execution	MU
4.	Overall quality of M&E	
4.1	M&E Design	MS
4.2	M&E Plan Implementation	MS
5.	Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability	
5.1	Financial risk	ML
5.2	Socio-political risk	ML
5.3	Institutional risk	ML
5.4	Environmental risk	L

Source: Information extracted from the mid-term evaluation report

Project objectives

34. According to the project document, the project's **global environmental objective** is to contribute to combating desertification, land degradation and drought worldwide through scaling-up sustainable land management best practices based on evidence-based and informed decision-making. In line with FAO's global mandate to achieve food security for all, the **project's development objective** is to increase the provision of ecosystem goods and services and enhance food security in countries and regions affected by DLDD through the promotion of SLM, integrated management, and efficiency in the use of natural resources. It was planned that these objectives are achieved through a set of 3 components, which are divided in 4 outcomes and 11 outputs, as presented below:

Component 1: National and local decision-support on combating DLDD and promoting mainstreaming and up-scaling of SLM best practices

Outcome 1.1: SLM best practices mainstreamed into national and/or subnational agricultural and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies and programmes to address DLDD in 15 countries.

⁷ See rating scheme in Appendix 3.

Output 1.1.1: Countries delivering reliable DLDD and SLM assessments and information on SLM best practices suitable for mainstreaming at national or subnational levels.

Output 1.1.2: DLDD and SLM assessments findings mainstreamed into planning and investment processes at national and subnational levels.

Output 1.1.3: Strengthened regional and interregional capacity development and experience sharing for DLDD and SLM.

Outcome 1.2: Up-scaling of SLM best practices catalyzed in countries through targeted actions on the ground and strategic decision-making from local to national levels.

Output 1.2.1: Strengthened delivery mechanisms for SLM demonstration, awareness raising and training.

Output 1.2.2: Implementation of SLM best practices leading to adoption and progressive up-scaling of cost-effective and innovative SLM technologies covering a spectrum of land use system (LUS).

Output 1.2.3: Strengthened country and regional capacity for DLDD and SLM scaling-up delivered by FAO-WOCAT and through regional and interregional capacity development and experience sharing processes.

Component 2: Global DLDD and SLM Knowledge Management and Decision-Support Platform.

Outcome 2.1: Knowledge management and decision-support system and tools used to support evidence-based strategy formulation at national level for promoting SLM and contributing to global processes to address DLDD.

Output 2.1.1: A federated FAO-WOCAT, online and open access DLDD and SLM decision-support platform established that links technical and scientific information and data, networks, country partners and two to five global/(sub)regional partners and programmes.

Output 2.1.2: Guidelines for harmonized approaches and standardized methods and tools to assess land management systems in terms of DLDD and SLM available and supporting informed decision-making for up-scaling of SLM best practices.

Component 3: Monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination of project results.

Outcome 3.1: Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management.

Output 3.1.1: Project web-based monitoring system established.

Output 3.1.2: Mid-term and terminal evaluation carried out.

Output 3.1.3: Communication and dissemination of project results.

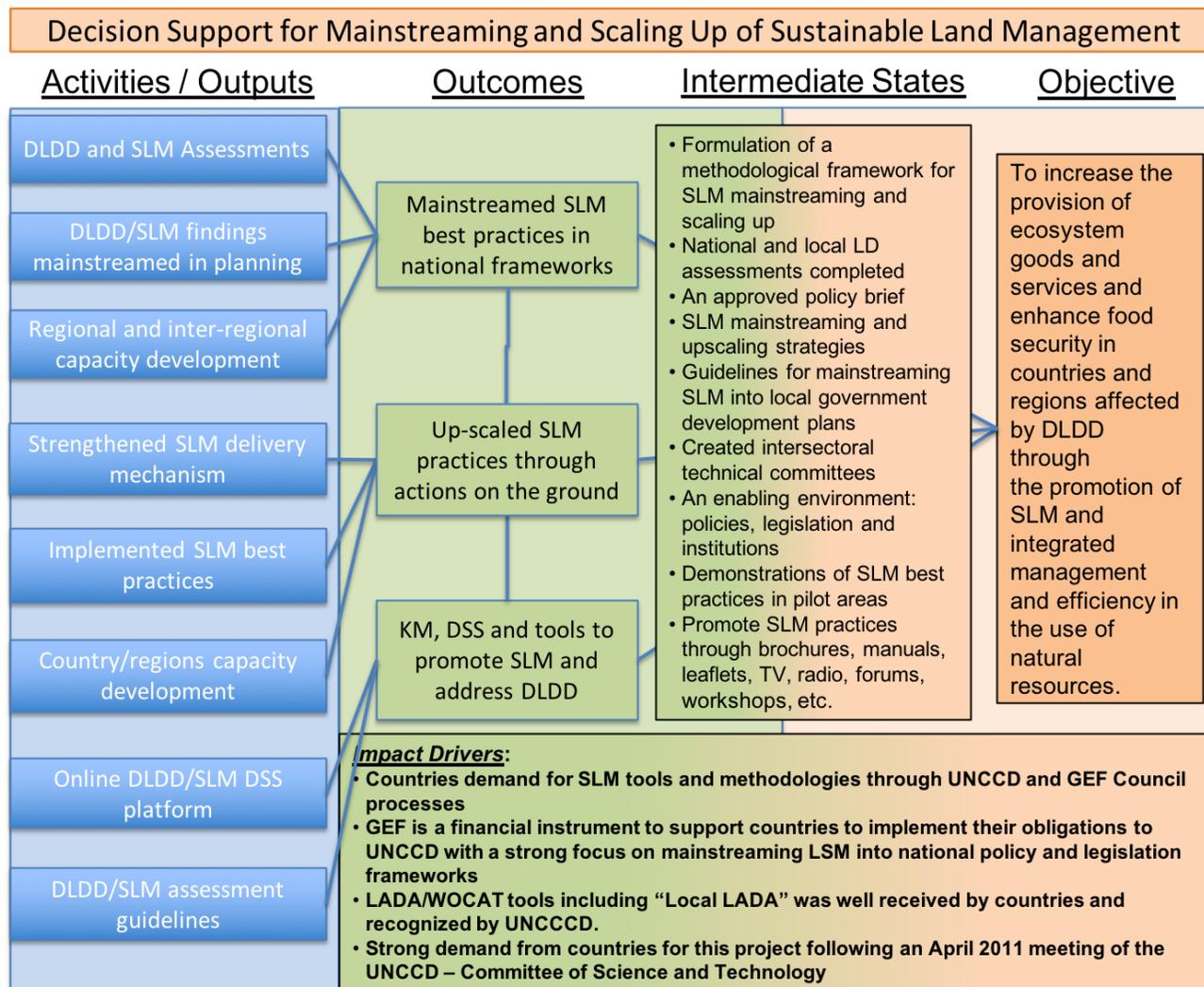
2.2 Theory of change

35. The terminal evaluation used the ToC developed and validated in the mid-term evaluation. The overall logic of the project is to mainstream SLM practices into related national and subnational development frameworks and to upscale these practices in each country through demonstration areas, while at the same time establishing a global DLDD and SLM knowledge

management and decision-support online platform to provide information, guidelines and links on technical and scientific information and data as well as networks among country, regional and global partners. All this was to be achieved through the development of nationally-based capacities and the development and provision of tools, knowledge and best practices on SLM to national decision makers.

36. The mid-term evaluation described the ToC in the means of a logical pathway (Figure 1). This logical pathway is also supported by key impact drivers. The foremost driver for this project is that under UNCCD and GEF Council processes, countries are demanding for SLM tools and methodologies. This interest was confirmed at an April 2011 meeting of the UNCCD-Committee of Science and Technology where over 40 countries participated to a side event on these SLM tools and methodologies organized by FAO and WOCAT. The interest shown by the participating countries at this event is referred by key people involved in the formulation of this project as a key starting point for the conceptualization of this project.
37. The review of this logical pathway also indicates that there is a somewhat “built-in” sequential approach. In order to succeed and reach the expected outcome, the project needs to mainstream SLM in national planning and policy frameworks, which starts with the need to conduct SLM assessments. Then, once SLM starts to be mainstreamed nationally, activities to improve the delivery of SLM practices can be expected to be upscaled nationally, using tools and methodologies to promote these practices. It is a coherent approach to disseminate SLM best practices and address land degradation and desertification issues. A summary of the “outcomes-impact pathways” is presented in the diagram below. This pathway shows clearly the logic and the coherence behind this project strategy.

Figure 1: Project theory of change



Source: Mid-term evaluation Report

3 Evaluation criteria: key findings

3.1 Main findings and ratings

38. The project was found to be highly relevant, similarly to what was stated by mid-term evaluation. Land degradation is a serious problem in the project countries and thus SLM is considered to be very important. Decision-support for SLM mainstreaming was found to be an important prerequisite for broader adoption of SLM practices, i.e. for SLM out- and up-scaling. The combination of policy/strategy work (mainstreaming to policies, strategies, investment frameworks and programmes) with demonstration/pilot field implementation of SLM best practices (technologies and approaches) was found to be the right approach. The terminal evaluation understands that the project strategy was purposefully selected not to focus on working with the ultimate beneficiaries (farmers, land users), but the terminal evaluation understands the concern by the mid-term evaluation of weak beneficiary/farmer involvement, as they are those, in addition to the private sector land-using companies, who will make the eventual land use decisions: which land and how to use it; to choose sustainable or unsustainable technologies and approaches. Therefore, SLM policy and strategy work needs to involve not only policymakers and expert organizations but also the ultimate decision makers, farmers and land-using companies.
39. During the last year of implementation, after the mid-term evaluation, project effectiveness has improved significantly especially in those countries in which the implementation had started late. Most of the project countries are expected to achieve project results, however the implementation effectiveness varies a lot between the countries: some of the countries (Argentina, Colombia, Morocco and Uzbekistan) have achieved highly satisfactory results, others (Bosnia and Herzegovina (entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; and entity Republic Srpska), China, Ecuador, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey) have achieved satisfactory results, in few others (Bangladesh and Lesotho) the results are still moderately unsatisfactory, and in Nigeria highly unsatisfactory. However, it is clear that both the SLM mainstreaming and particularly up-scaling will still require considerably more time and resources that are beyond the present project's timeline and budget. The knowledge management component has reached its expected results.
40. The implementation efficiency and the quality of project implementation have improved slightly since the mid-term evaluation. Already the MTE identified some communications and responsiveness problems within the Project Coordination Unit. The terminal evaluation found that indeed there have been some persistent communication problems in the axis of PCU – some countries, PCU – some FAO country/regional offices, and PCU – some other key stakeholders. On the other hand, many other countries and stakeholders have not experienced problems in communication and efficiency of the PCU, on the contrary. It appears that the resourcing (staffing) of the PCU (management and coordination function) has been insufficient. The terminal evaluation did not find major problems in the country execution efficiency and the quality of project execution, apart from one or two countries. Most countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic Srpska), Ecuador, Panama, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey) have executed the project satisfactorily, and in a few countries the execution efficiency could be rated as highly satisfactory (Argentina, China, Colombia, Morocco and Uzbekistan), particularly considering the complexities in the project

and the short duration. In Bangladesh and Lesotho, the execution is rated as moderately unsatisfactory at the time of the terminal evaluation.

41. Project's monitoring and evaluation system design and plan implementation were found to be moderately successful. The reporting system templates and focusing on modules is considered clear and well-functioning. The original project results matrix (logical framework) contains overly ambitious indicators and goals. The decision-making process using the M&E information was not entirely clear, to large extent due to the very few and deferred Steering Committee meetings.
42. The likelihood of the sustainability of project outcomes was found to be reasonably good, and the likelihood of risks to sustainability low (environmental risks) or moderately low (financial, socio-political and institutional risks). The project was found to have strong national ownership in almost all the 14 countries. Several countries have seen the tools and methodologies of the DS-SLM project as a good means to develop new and larger follow-up/scaling-up projects. Many countries (e.g. Bangladesh, Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic Srpska, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan) have already secured new project financing, either from domestic or external sources, and others are in the process of preparing project proposal(s). However, Project Management started thinking and planning an exit strategy for the global project quite late, only in 2019.
43. The project results are environmentally sustainable. The integration of the project into the relevant national and/or regional/provincial institutions has secured institutional sustainability in many countries. Financial sustainability is secured in some countries (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic Srpska), China, Morocco) through the mainstreaming strategy which is expected to lead to a situation where e.g. local municipalities will continue the implementation using local government budget, and e.g. in Lesotho the government now finances community engagement in SLM activities. Additional and new project financing is also applied in many countries. Social sustainability is considered satisfactory or good particularly in those countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic Srpska), Colombia, Morocco, Panama and Uzbekistan) where the pilot/demonstration activities are adopted by the local communities and where (Morocco, Uzbekistan) the introduced SLM practices are profitable at farm/community level.

Table 2: GEF ranking table (terminal evaluation)

GEF - FAO criteria/sub criteria	Rating ⁸	Summary comments
A. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT RESULTS		
1. Overall quality of project outcomes		
1.1 Relevance	HS	See section 3.1
1.2 Effectiveness	S ⁹ /MS	See section 3.2
1.3 Efficiency	MU	See section 3.3
B. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION RATING		
2. Quality of project implementation	MU	See section 3.3
3. Quality of project execution	S ¹⁰ /MS	See section 3.3 & 3.5
C. MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) RATING		
4. Overall quality of M&E		
4.1 M&E Design	MS	See section 3.4
4.2 M&E Plan Implementation	MS	See section 3.4
D. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
5. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability		
5.1 Financial risk	ML	See section 3.8
5.2 Socio-political risk	ML	See section 3.8 & 3.7
5.3 Institutional risk	ML	See section 3.8
5.4 Environmental risk	L	See section 3.8

3.2 Relevance

- 1.1 Were the project strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved in sustainable land management?

Finding 1. In general, the project strategy and actions responded to the needs of stakeholders and beneficiaries. The project addresses a common but differentiated problem of the participating countries.

44. In most participating countries (e.g. Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Ecuador, Lesotho, Morocco, Panama, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan) the project contributed significantly to attract the attention of key institutional actors and decision makers, on the need to address desertification and land degradation with concrete proposals related

⁸ See rating scheme in Appendix 3.

⁹ Overall the rating is MS. However, the project results can be rated highly satisfactory in Argentina, Colombia, Morocco and Uzbekistan; satisfactory in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and RS), China, Ecuador, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey; moderately unsatisfactory in Bangladesh and Lesotho; and highly unsatisfactory in Nigeria.

¹⁰ Overall the rating is MS. However, the project execution can be rated satisfactory at least in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and RS), China, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey; highly satisfactory in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama and Uzbekistan; in Bangladesh and Lesotho, the execution is rated as moderately unsatisfactory; and in Nigeria as highly unsatisfactory.

to information, planning and regulatory frameworks at the national and regional level, as well as in practical terms at the local level.

45. In a few countries (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco) representatives of beneficiaries and key stakeholders were consulted in the project approval and/or launching stage and their needs and expectations were assessed as well. Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina used FAO Participatory land use development methodology to carry out the stakeholder analysis. China reported that there have been already several earlier land degradation and SLM projects working with beneficiaries and stakeholders, and thus the needs, capacities and resources were known. For example, Thailand's National Land Development Department (LDD) has 77 substations all over the country and a network of 70 000 volunteer soil doctors, and thus the LDD has an excellent outreach and understanding of the capacities, needs and expectations of key beneficiaries and stakeholders.
46. Two countries (Bangladesh and Lesotho) reported that the needs, capacities and resources of the beneficiaries and stakeholders were not known in the beginning of the project. There was also an opinion that the original project design was top-down.
47. The project's planned activities¹¹ allowed to address the needs of the beneficiaries and stakeholders. The actions were jointly planned with the beneficiaries and stakeholders (Morocco) or the actions allowed sufficient flexibility to respond to the needs and realities (Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan). According to Bangladesh the planned actions only partially met the needs, capacities and resources, and according to Lesotho project duration was too limited to allow this.

Finding 2. The project strategy is considered highly appropriate in combining policy and strategy mainstreaming work with the implementation of SLM practices at pilot/demonstration scale.

48. The project strategy, including the combination of policy work with the field implementation of SLM best practices at pilot/demonstration scale,¹² is generally considered appropriate (Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan). As an example, in the Philippines there already is a wealth of knowledge on SLM and on the SLM best practices in the country, but the problem has been the limited use of knowledge in decision-making.
49. Two counties (Bangladesh and Lesotho) had reservations - e.g. for the reason that the strategy did not cater for the local needs.
50. Turkey mentioned that the project strategy did not adequately address the barriers for SLM investments from the point of view of farmers and land-based investors; sustainable (SLM) production and investment is often more expensive and may be less profitable in the short-

¹¹ Project document, pages 138–144: Appendix 2: Work Plan (Results Based).

¹² The level of work at pilot/demonstration scale varied considerably among countries and the involvement of farmers varied considerably between countries. At least in Colombia, Morocco, Panama and Uzbekistan the pilot/demonstration work had a strong farmer involvement. In some other countries, e.g. Argentina, Bangladesh, China, Philippines and Turkey, the farmer involvement was limited.

term than a respective unsustainable one. This is a key issue that needs to be addressed and solved.

Finding 3. Field observations showed that weak capacity of extension services to promote SLM may hinder the progress of SLM out-scaling.

51. Particularly in Latin American project countries (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador and Panama) the field observations revealed that the extension services have limited capacity to promote and support SLM implementation.¹³ Lesotho reported similar problems related to extension service. It is observed that such weakness may act as a bottleneck for the out-scaling of SLM best practices.
52. FAO has strong experience in supporting and strengthening extension services (FAO. 2019). The extension services have not been commonly working on sustainable land management. However, this does not mean that they could not do that. For example, in Thailand there is an innovative system of voluntary soil doctors who are assigned by the Land Development Department (LDD, 2014). These voluntary soil doctors are not linked with the extension system as such but in reality they are providing a typical extension service function. Another example is Uzbekistan where Farmer Field Schools (FFS) have already included land management/SLM in their curriculum.

Finding 4. The original results matrix had flaws but the modular implementation/decision support framework (DSF) introduced during the inception phase facilitated project implementation.

53. Original project results matrix (logframe) is not entirely clear and logical, and particularly the targets for outcome indicators were overly ambitious vs project duration and budget (e.g. size of targeted areas). The countries report their results following the modular project DSF, although the Project Implementation Reports compiled by the Project Manager report against the results and indicators of the project results matrix.
54. The DSF allowed to address the needs of the beneficiaries and stakeholders. The introduction of the project's modular DSF was considered complicated at first, but once those responsible for its implementation had properly internalized it, it was considered a relevant, useful and adequately flexible methodological framework that allowed adapting to the realities of the different project countries.

¹³ The weakness of extension services was mentioned as a knowledge and technological barrier in the Project Document p. 35: "In many countries formal extension services are very weak as funding is very limited and there is a need to strengthen the capacity of alternative service providers such as NGOs and civil society organizations in promoting adapted SLM technologies and participatory experiential approaches including facilitating expansion of successful FFS approaches, through self-financing strategies and access to alternative funding sources".

55. As indicated in the diagram below, the DS-SLM DSF is composed of seven modules:

Module 1: Operational Strategy and targeted action plan for SLM mainstreaming and scaling out (Phase A: Review and initial strategy and action plan; Phase B: Partnerships and capacity development; and Phase C: Scaling out through policies, territorial strategies, incentives, financing mechanisms)

Module 2: National/Subnational Level Assessment

Module 3: Selection of Priority Landscapes

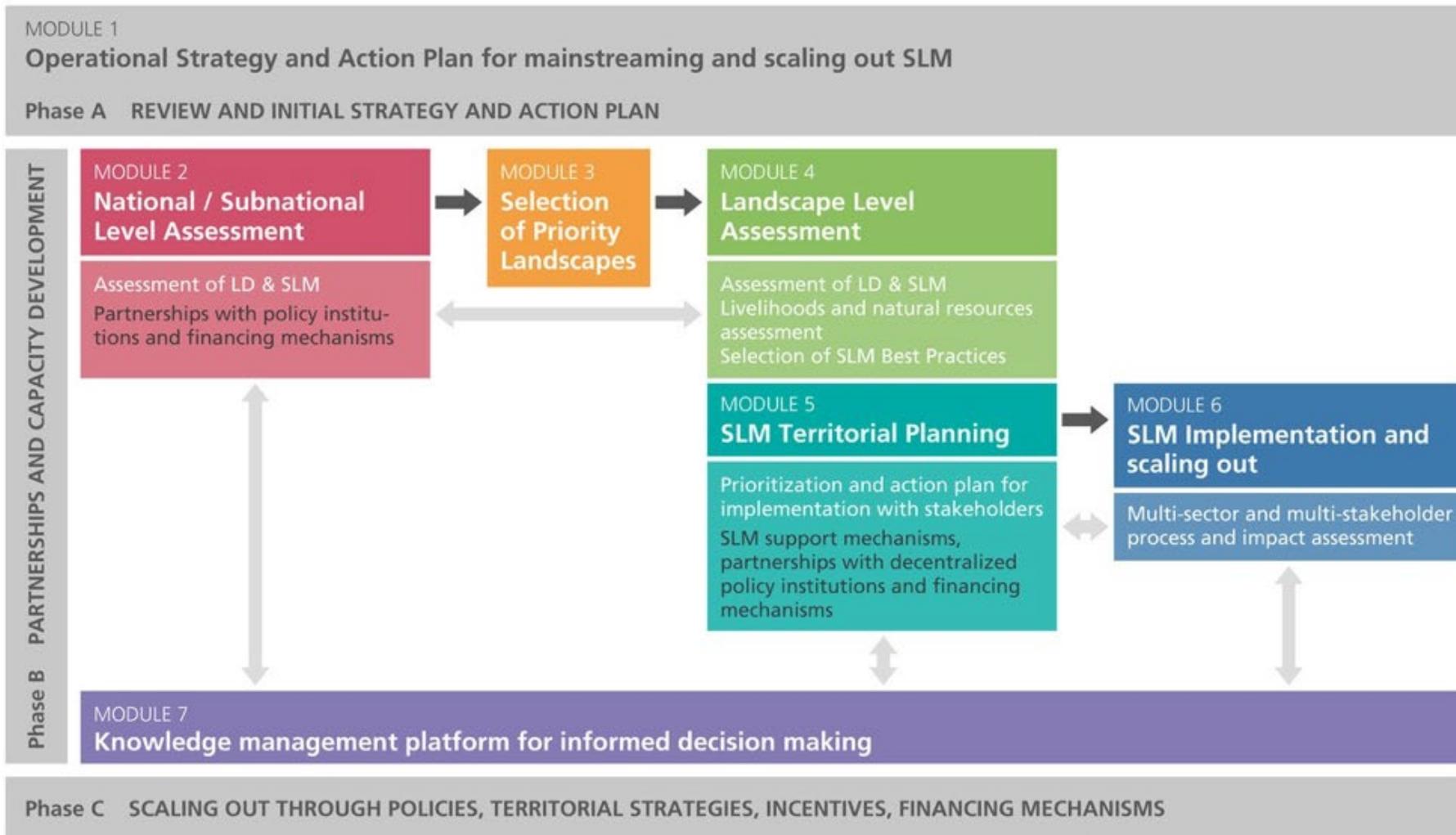
Module 4: Landscape Level Assessment

Module 5: SLM Territorial Planning

Module 6: SLM implementation and scaling out

Module 7: Knowledge management platform for informed decision-making

Figure 2: Thailand’s National Land Development Department (LDD)



Source: FAO / DS-SLM factsheet

3.3 Effectiveness/Achievement of project results

- 2.1 To what extent have project outcomes and objectives been achieved, and how effective was the project in achieving them?
- 2.2 Did the project produce any unintended results, either positive or negative? What were the contributing factors for the results achieved and what can be particularly attributed to the project?
- 2.3 To what extent has the global DLDD and SLM decision-support platform been able to develop technical and scientific tools and methods for SLM up-scaling?

Finding 5. Effectiveness has improved considerably since the mid-term evaluation, particularly in those countries that started the implementation late. Most countries had reached or are expected to reach the results in general. However, up-scaling particularly will require more time and financing, and also SLM mainstreaming requires more time.

56. The main stakeholders in the project countries have now understood and internalized the importance of the project's expected outcomes which are, though, very ambitious in view of the project's resources and duration (1. SLM best practices mainstreamed into national and/or subnational agricultural and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies and programmes to address DLDD in 15 countries; 2. Up-scaling of SLM best practices catalyzed in countries through targeted actions on the ground and strategic decision-making from local to national levels; 3. Knowledge management and decision-support system and tools used to support evidence-based strategy formulation at national level for promoting SLM and contributing to global processes to address DLDD; and 4. Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management.) Mainstreaming has now been started, up-scaling has been catalyzed but still in limited scale, knowledge management and decision-support system and tools have been produced and there is evidence of their use.
57. Under the global component, the project has prepared, in collaboration with countries, three methodological guidelines: i) Mainstreaming SLM into National Policy Instruments - Guideline and Toolkit; ii) Guidelines for the national assessment of land degradation and conservation using the LADA-WOCAT mapping approach; and iii) The Sustainable Land Management Mainstreaming Tool.
58. For the assessment and documentation of SLM best practices, training was provided in collaboration with CDE/WOCAT to national counterpart institutions in Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina (in both entities), Morocco, Panama, Thailand and Tunisia, as well through a workshop at regional level in Uzbekistan with participants from Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (PIR 2018).
59. WOCAT has established the DS-SLM Knowledge Management Platform designed in support of the project and countries have started to contribute with relevant information on the respective country page.
60. The FAO Land and Water Division (CBL) has developed, in parallel but in coordination with the project, an e-learning course on SLM and Land Restoration (FAO, 2019) that is available and can be used for additional training and capacity building.

61. At the time of the terminal evaluation, the project was well under implementation in 14 of the 15 partner countries,¹⁴ and 5 (Argentina, Colombia, China, Ecuador and Uzbekistan) of them had already basically completed the project.
62. Table 3 below summarizes the status of implementation in countries at the time of the terminal evaluation. The information is drawn from the implementation monitoring templates distributed at the project's last global meeting in Ankara, as well as from the country presentations in the Ankara meeting and national project reports.
63. Module 1: Ten countries had formulated a national or local level mainstreaming strategy (Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina (both entities), China, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey (up-scaling) and Uzbekistan). Depending on national priorities and conditions, some countries have advanced in integrating SLM strategies into their national planning processes (Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Uzbekistan) and e.g. Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Uzbekistan also in the local government planning processes, and other Latin American project countries than Argentina are planning or are in the process of doing the latter. Others have done relevant elements or related other activities.
64. Module 2: Nine countries have concluded the national or subnational assessments of land degradation and SLM options (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan). China had done the national assessment already under LADA-1 and Turkey has well-established assessment with LUS maps already from before. Both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lesotho were carrying out the assessment at the time of the terminal evaluation, and others had started relevant elements of the work.
65. Module 3: All other countries except for Philippines and Thailand have selected the pilot landscapes or sites for demonstration activities. The Philippines have chosen an approach to focus on a propriety river basin across several provinces, and Thailand will do the landscape selection using a multi-disciplinary expert group. Also, Thailand identified the hotspots and bright spots according to the rate and degree of land degradation from the LUS. Local level assessments and demonstration sites for scaling-up have been conducted in these landscape areas which were determined based on their soil problems of salinity, acidity and erosion, as well as within lowland areas surrounded by steep mountains, in highland areas of the Northeast and in the agriculture areas in the lowland.
66. Module 4: Landscape level assessment and the selection of SLM best practices has been done by eight countries (Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama, Thailand, Tunisia and Uzbekistan). In Bangladesh consultations have been conducted but the assessment still ongoing, in Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska local stakeholder workshops and trainings are done, in Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina SLM conference, trainings, PLUD meetings and technologies were selected, in China the landscape level assessment was completed already under LADA-1, in Lesotho the project districts were visited and within a district a watershed was selected where demonstrations were going to be conducted,

¹⁴ Nigeria had not started the project, see Paragraph 99 under Section 3.4.

agreements with NGOs and ministries were established and SLM technologies were tentatively identified, in the Philippines SLM best practices were selected, and in Turkey trainings are done.

67. Module 5: Entity Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco and Uzbekistan have duly implemented the territorial planning with prioritization and action planning for implementation. Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina Republic Srpska, Colombia, Lesotho and Panama are in the process of doing this. Thailand is starting to work on it. Argentina and Ecuador decided not to do this due to budget constraints. Other countries have chosen a different but related approach to proceed with the work, such as using a national project for implementation of the module in China, promotion and capacity building in the Philippines, consultation meetings in Tunisia, and in Turkey a "techno-economic" farm was selected without planning *per se* to showcase SLM practices.
68. Module 6: Nine countries have implemented selected SLM best practices in pilot/demonstration sites (Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina (both entities), China, Colombia, Lesotho, Morocco, Panama, Philippines and Uzbekistan). Bangladesh, Thailand and Tunisia have plans to start the implementation, Ecuador has provided capacity building to local stakeholders without implementing the SLM best practices, Lesotho is scaling-up the implementation to other locations. Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (both entities) and Uzbekistan, are using existing policy tools, territorial strategies, incentives and financial mechanisms to promote the implementation of SLM best practices.
69. Module 7: All countries have either published policy briefs, guidelines, other publications, or organized conferences, seminars, meetings, trainings and/or exchanged experiences and information in regional or global events. At the time of the terminal evaluation, the countries had published under the WOCAT SLM Platform 42 SLM technologies and 27 approaches of which 1 technology from Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska and 2 technologies from entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5 technologies from Colombia, 7 technologies and 3 approaches from Morocco, 3 technologies and 9 approaches from the Philippines, 1 technology and 1 approach from Thailand,¹⁵ 12 technologies and 14 approaches from Tunisia, and 11 technologies from Uzbekistan.
70. Those countries which started the project implementation late (particularly Bangladesh and Lesotho, and to a lesser degree also Bosnia and Herzegovina and Thailand) have still considerable work to accomplish before project closure.
71. Argentina (see Box 2 below) carried out the national assessment adapting the LADA WOCAT methodology to the conditions of the country and availability of information. Ecuador carried out the evaluation at the national and subnational level. Colombia and Panama conducted subnational evaluations. In Argentina, Colombia and Panama, SLM practices were implemented in pilot sites. In Colombia the benefits of SLM practices were assessed (see Box 3 below). The project managed to attract the attention of multiple actors triggering diverse actions such as the integration of SLM in proposals for new projects and in regulatory frameworks. Another example of an innovative project work is the production of a mobile application of the WOCAT QA/QT questionnaires by the Kasetsart University in Thailand. The application will be available

¹⁵ E.g. Thailand has submitted 40 documented approaches and technologies to WOCAT which had not been cleared yet by CDE/WOCAT at the time of the TE.

for wider use after the current test phase. Further example of innovative project execution is the consolidation of two groups of young agro-environmental leaders, from agrotechnical schools, who were trained in the use of drones to monitor the land use and land degradation in Panama. Yet another example is from Lesotho where officers were trained on land monitoring tool (Collect Earth). Lesotho has managed to collect around 7 000 plots of 2 km by 2 km on Collect Earth. The ministry has integrated this tool within its activities, and it is through this tool that it is able to locate both land degradation and SLM hotspots. This Collect Earth tool is also important in helping with monitoring and evaluation of activities done within the catchments using the change in Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) values before and after the activities have been done. It also helps the country to recognise its restoration potentials.

Box 2: Innovative and effective implementation in Argentina

In Argentina the project developed a geographic web-based validation system associated with GeoServer, for the **national assessment validation** by qualified specialists. For the validation process, three online applications were developed, which allowed the validation of the LUS, QM and NDL models, which are part of the LADA WOCAT Platform. These applications are simple and low-cost tools, that allowed the collection of systematic and objective information, facilitating the analysis and interpretation of results. Other countries and stakeholders could carry on similar processes, with their own human and technological resources (see terminal evaluation recommendations 2, 3, 13 and 14).

The role given to SLM specialized human resources stands out, including technicians, academics and researchers from different institutions, who were grouped into four committees (ad hoc) to work on project implementation, consolidating a specialized inter-institutional and interdisciplinary team.

The project identified SLM practices along the country, publishing six documents compiling SLM practices targeting different regions. Publications are available through Observatorio Nacional de la Degradación de Tierras y Desertificación (ONDTyD, 2019).

Local-level mainstreaming actions were developed in the two pilot sites. In the province of Entre Ríos, private actors began to take interest in learning more about SLM and its impact on agricultural and livestock production. The provincial government promotes the Law of Promotion to the Agroecological Productive Systems that seeks the transition of the land-based production towards more sustainable practices. In the province of Salta, the municipality of Embarcación gave an endorsement to the SLM technology through a declaration of interest in one of the SLM practices implemented in the pilot site. According to the stakeholders interviewed, the declaration aims to promote the use of SLM technology by local stakeholders with their own resources which in some cases could also help fundraising by local organizations.

Box 3: Quantification of SLM benefits in Colombia

In Colombia the project partners quantified environmental and socioeconomic benefits associated with the establishment of silvopastoral systems in an extensive livestock degraded land.

Socioeconomic benefits:

- i. Fodder production increased by 6 percent with the implementation of SLM technologies.
- ii. Animal production increase from 1 animal/ha to 4-5 animals/ha.
- iii. Lower investment in agricultural material costs including fertilizers and labour.
- iv. Milk production increased from 15 liters to 45 liter.
- v. Increase in milk production and cattle weight generated an increase in the total agricultural income.

Environmental benefits:

- i. Available soil moisture increased from 7.7 cm/m to 9.6 cm/m due to an increase in soil porosity and improvement of soil structure and organic matter content.
- ii. Pasture and *Leucaena* bushes enhanced ground coverage preventing runoff and erosion.
- iii. Soil compaction decreased due to an increase in soil porosity.
- iv. Degraded land in the property decreased by 23 percent.
- v. Soil organic carbon below ground level increased from 1.1 percent to 2.2 percent of the soil stock.

Table 3: Progress of implementation by country by project modules

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
Argentina	Mainstreaming strategy for each pilot site (local level). Integration of four stakeholders commissions (ad doc) responsible for project implementation within the National Observatory of Desertification and Soil Degradation.	National Assessment with an upgraded methodology. Online app for National Assessment validation.	Pilot sites: 1) Arroyo Las Estacas (provincia Entre Ríos) and 2) Chaco semiárido (provincia de Salta).	Local assessment in five pilot sites.	Due to funding and time constraints, agreed not to address module 5 and focus on the other modules.	SLM practices implemented in both pilot sites. Capacity building of local stakeholders (farmers mainly).	Strengthening of the National Observatory and Infodesert websites. Six publications on SLM practices for different regions.
Bangladesh	Mainstreaming strategy formulated in March 2019.	National training on WOCAT tools (QA & QT) conducted Vegetation, water and soil degradation maps prepared.	Four degradation hotspots selected: Chittagong Hill Tracts, High Barind Tract, Waterlogged area, Saline prone area.	Four sub-national consultations conducted in the identified hotspot areas 50 SLM practices identified of which 33 have been visited and data collected.	Barriers and opportunities of SLM technologies identified in the four hotspots. National strategy under development.	Not yet implemented, but respective LOAs in pipeline with a plan to establish three SLM demonstration plots and to conduct ten sub-national ToT as well as to carry out field visits.	Two videos on SLM prepared. Leaflets prepared. A national web platform to be developed. A publication on SLM to be published. All SLM practices will be submitted to WOCAT platform.
Bosnia & Herzegovina (entity)	Mainstreaming strategy done.	National assessment being done.	Three municipalities (Pelagicevo,	Local stakeholder workshops on SLM delivery	Revision of a national strategic document done, and respective	SLM practices implemented: irrigation, flood	Media presentations and broadcasts over national TV, Youtube, websites.

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
Republic of Srpska)			Samac, Trebinje) selected.	building capacities hold in three pilot sites and trainings on WOCAT tools provided.	strategic documents for pilot municipalities produced.	protection, reforestation. Scaling out SLM implemented: irrigation, flood protection, soil amelioration for natural forest regeneration, reforestation.	Two SLM technologies documented and uploaded to WOCAT SLM platform of which one published.
Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mainstreaming strategy being done.	National and subnational (cantonal) level assessment was done, inception workshop, roundtable.	Nine municipalities of Tuzla Canton (Tuzla, Gradacac, Gracanica, Banovici, Sapna, Zivinice, Kalesija, Kladanj, Srebrenik) and Ravno Municipality in HNK Canton selected.	Trainings on WOCAT tools organized, Conference on SLM held, Several PLUD meetings in pilot municipalities held, eighteen SLM technologies selected from WOCAT to be applicable in Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, consultative meetings organized.	Territorial planning was conducted using PLUD, hotspots and priority areas for interventions identified.	Implementation of four demonstration activities being implemented: (i) growing blueberries in containers in a mine disposal site, (ii) fishbone structures for erosion control, (iii) land consolidation, and (iv) contour ploughing.	Two SLM technologies are published in WOCAT database, media presentations and broadcasts over national and international TV and radio as well as newspaper articles, a book on sustainable land management – approaches and practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina being prepared in Bosnian and English languages.

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
China	National operational strategy and recommendations for mainstreaming and scaling up SLM into national policy instruments done in 2017.	National level assessment done under LADA-1 in 2014 Research on national hotspots and bright spots in arid region lead to landscape selection.	Wengniute banner in Inner Mongolia selected as a demonstration site. Training on national desertification monitoring and land degradation assessment organized.	Sub-national assessments completed under LADA-1 SLM practices and models to combat desertification: road building in sandy land, green house agriculture, desert tourism and desert park China's Sustainable Land Practice 3 will be published.	Plan to scale up the selected SLM practices with support from China national project to combat land degradation in Inner Mongolia.	The selected SLM practices being implemented in the demonstration sites.	Training and capacity building for SLM implementation and scaling up organized "Best sustainable land management in dryland areas of China III" published with the cooperation of GEF OP12. "Strategies, Policies and Methods of Land Degradation Assessment and Mainstreaming and Scaling-out of Sustainable Land Management in China" published 2018. "Strategies, Policies and Methods of Mainstreaming and Scaling-out Land Degradation and Sustainable Land Management in China" published 2019. "Strategies, Policies and Methods of Mainstreaming and Scaling-out Sustainable Land Management at Local Level" published 2019. Participated in COP13 and attended FAO/WOCAT side events and seminars.
Colombia	Mainstreaming strategy at national level. Creation of the Mesa Técnica Institucional as an institutional consultative body.	Subnational Assessment in four departments.	Landscape of the San Juan de Nepomuceno municipality (Departamento Bolívar) includes five pilot sites.	Local Assessment at the San Juan de Nepomuceno municipality level.	Support to the land use planning of the San Juan de Nepomuceno municipality.	SLM practices implemented in pilot sites. Capacity building of local stakeholders (farmers mainly).	Five SLM technologies published in the WOCAT Platform.

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
Ecuador	Creation of the Grupo Núcleo Institucional as an institutional consultative body and strategy prepared.	National Assessment with support from Cuba.	Landscape of the Loja province, where SLM practices were identified.	Local Assessment of a landscape in the Loja province. Manual with the SLM practices identified.	Due to funding constraints, agreed not to address module 5.	Capacity building of local stakeholders (they didn't implement SLM practices).	<i>Policy brief</i> with the main project results (no disseminated yet).
Lesotho	No done yet; two-day workshop with focus group discussions organized; engagement strategy established.	Being done; baseline establishment by a local consultant Capacity building done.	Three demonstration sites identified: (i) Leribe – foothills site, (ii) Berea – lowlands site, (iii) Quthing – Senqu river valley site.	Visits to four project districts and agreements with NGOs and line ministries. SLM technologies tentatively identified: Diversion furrows / Infiltration furrows and pits Brush control and Brush packs/ Trash-lines Reseeding of marginal lands Gully Structures Rainwater harvesting including in-field structures.	Delineation of catchments at community level conducted.	SLM demonstrations conducted at Mphosong catchment in Leribe. Scaling out activities done in two other locations.	Knowledge collected and documented SLM Information Centres at local and national level established. DS-SLM database on WOCAT country profiles established. Ministerial website maintained.

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
Morocco	Mainstreaming strategy formulated, including: National Land Degradation Neutrality Plan and a related Investment Plan – under finalization; Regional 3-year Action Plan in Souss-Massa - still under negotiation; Three commune level 3-years Action Plans (Amskroud, Aziar and Tamri) – finalized.	National assessment finalized.	Souss-Massa region and there three communes: Amskroud, Aziar and Tamri.	QM assessment and mapping at Souss-Massa region as well as in three pilot communes Amskroud, Aziar and Tamri Analysis of erosion biological degradation.	Training needs assessment with gender assessment. Training of trainers. Workshop producing. Territorial Development Plans for thee Communes. Three-year SLM Action Plan for the province of Agadir – Ida-Outanan.	Demonstration activities under implementation (with financing from other projects and / or from government financing) in the three pilot communities (Amskroud, Aziar and Tamri).	Series of capacity building and trainings on LADA / WOCAT tools at Souss-Massa. Seven best practices and three approaches submitted and published at WOCAT SLM Platform. Synthesis report “Evaluation de la dégradation des terres et la promotion des meilleures pratiques de GDT au niveau de la région Souss-Massa/Maroc” published. Experience sharing at COP13 & a regional workshop on SFA, as well as in the FAO Land and Water Day in Cairo March 2019 Provided experience sharing for a Sudanese delegation in April 2019.
Nigeria	Nigeria has not started the project execution.						
Panama	Strategy prepared and Soil Law project proposal underway. SLM practices economic assessment and financial mechanism consultancy study used to feed discussions for the creation of a new	Subnational Assessment in the Herrera province, with support from Cuba .	Parita y Tonosi watersheds as pilot sites.	Local Assessment using QM tool in the pilot sites.	Watershed committee’s creation and kick off, including its regulation.	SLM practices implemented in both pilot sites. Capacity building of local stakeholders (farmers mainly).	Capacity building and dissemination events at national level.

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
	Ministry of Environment trust fund (fideicomiso).						
Philippines	<p>Integrated Land Management Framework Plan and Guidelines for Mainstreaming Integrated Land Management Framework/Sustainable land Management (ILMF/SLM) into the Comprehensive Land Use.</p> <p>Plans of LGUs finalized.</p> <p>Comprehensive Land Use Planning tested in two LGUs in the South.</p> <p>Mainstreaming of SLM into the Strategic Plans of Department of Agriculture (DA) and Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) piloted.</p>	<p>Assessment of land degradation hotspots done using Land Use System Map.</p> <p>Two consultation meeting and two workshops conducted.</p>	<p>Assessment of priority river basin and delineation of provinces within the river basin under LDN.</p>	<p>SLM best practices selected: Vegetative strips, sloping agricultural land technology, Rainwater harvesting, Multi storey, Stonewall terraces, Watershed forest, Agro-forestry.</p> <p>16 demonstration farms established in different regions to showcase the SLM best practices</p>	<p>Effective soil and water conservation approaches and technologies for broader adoption promoted LGUs in the promotion and implementation of soil and water conservation measures at the local level capacitated</p>	<p>Implementation of SLM was initiated in sloping areas being cultivated to herbicide-resistant corn varieties Conducted awareness-raising and advocacy campaign through technology briefing to 850 farmers and agricultural technicians as participants; Conducted 11 specialized capacity building activities on soil conservation and management Testing 21 SLM technologies and practices</p>	<p>Documented 22 technologies and 9 approaches covering five ecosystems 3 technologies and 9 approaches published under the WOCAT Platform Conducted trainings and workshops on WOCAT SLM documentation tools, processes and methodologies Developed decision support tool in Java script Developed a spreadsheet on Financial Analysis as another decision support tool in the selection of appropriate SLM practices Produced a compilation of SLM practices summarizing case studies (WOCAT format), 600 printed copies Generated IEC materials in form of leaflets/flyers in English and translated to three local dialects Processed documentation which can be accessed through Youtube Established on-line database on SLM knowledge management: http://www.bswm.da.gov.ph/philcat-slm/</p>
Thailand	<p>Mainstreaming strategy formulated with focus on: Promotion and facilitation of innovative</p>	<p>Land Use System (LUS) maps of Thailand and</p>	<p>Identification of bright spots and hotspots</p>	<p>Adaptation of Training modules on LADA and QA &</p>	<p>Not yet done</p>	<p>Identify three demonstration sites (not yet done)</p>	<p>1 technology and 1 approach published under the WOCAT Platform National on-line database & inventory of existing data and tools</p>

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
	financing mechanisms and incentives to support farmers and land users to adopt SLM practices; e.g. working with Agriculture Bank of Thailand to provide incentives to farmers Integration of SLM best practices into land use planning at sub-district, local and farm levels Promoting inter-institutional dialogue on SLM Building partnerships	LUS administrative maps developed	A multi-disciplinary expert group will select agro-ecosystems / landscapes (not yet done)	QT for Thailand context Training of trainers on LADA & LD Mapping (QM) and QA/QT by national consultants among LDD 12 Regional Offices and sub-stations Documentation of at least 40 SLM good practices (not yet done)			Mobile application on QA & QT Regional partnership networking exchanges: biochar with Indonesia, regional forum, exchange visit in the Philippines
Tunisia	Mainstreaming strategy produced Financing mechanism DGFIOP	Assessment of Land Degradation at national / subnational levels done and 2 maps produced Four evaluation studies on goods practices produced	Local scale mapping done to target the selected priority landscapes for the implementation of good practices	LD and SLM evaluated and participatory expert assessment workshops done Four best practices selected	Sandy soil amendment selected for application through consultation meetings at different levels	Demonstration sites selected and training organized	World Soils Day organized in 2017 12 technologies and 14 approaches published under the WOCAT Platform Regional demonstration visits

Country	Module 1. Mainstreaming strategy	Module 2. National assessment	Module 3. Landscape selection	Module 4. Subnational	Module 5. Territorial planning	Module 6. Implementation	Module 7. Knowledge Management
Turkey	SLM Up-scaling Strategy formulated	Not addressed under this project; well established already	Karapinar basin area selected to work with private sector	The Great Konya Basin in Central Anatolia has been the area selected for evaluation. SLM assessment tools training and introduction done.	A “techno-economic” farm was selected to showcase SLM practices.	Existing policy tools, territorial strategies, incentives and financing mechanisms are used to promote SLM practices.	Exchange of experiences with other countries, including during the workshop and training course in Uzbekistan Two field trips with experts and to inform local actors about sustainable land, water and forest management.
Uzbekistan	Operational strategy and targeted action plan for mainstreaming and scaling out at local level finalized. Assessment of SLM policies, legislative and institutional frameworks and national sector programs done.	LUS maps developed for 2 project regions National Soil Organic Carbon Map developed DLDD assessment at national level done.	2 regions selected: (i) rainfed lands in the southern semi-desert region (Kashkadarya), (ii) irrigated croplands in salt-affected areas in central semi-desert region (Djizak).	Assessments done and SLM options formed, long list of 60 technologies and five approaches prepared and selection of 11 technologies for scaling out by a workshop.	Local participatory land use planning done using FAO PLUD approach in selected 4 local communities (151 participants including 39 women). Limiting factors and barriers identified and respective strategy prepared.	TOT workshops (10) and trainings of target groups of FAO FFS in project area provided to 216 participants including 62 women. Stimulation of 133 local households for up-scaling agroforestry with 2500 almond and fruit seedlings. Demonstration of 4 technologies at 2 project sites.	11 technologies published under the WOCAT Platform. Publication of project results and sharing experiences in forums and conferences: Global Landscapes Forum 2018 Bonn; 10th International Soil Science Congress in 2018 Almaty; XI Congress of Ukraine Soil Scientists 2018 Kharkiv.

Source: adapted by the TE team using mainly material compiled by Soledad Bastidas, DS-SLM Consultant

Finding 6. The project triggered positive regional and country-to-country cooperation (south-south), particularly in training and capacity building from more experienced countries to less experienced ones.

72. Several project countries have benefitted from regional and/or country-to-country cooperation. Some of the cooperation was generated at the project countries' own initiative, but under the framework and general support of the project, e.g. in Latin America the countries contacted Cuba, which was a LADA country, and also China was proactive by its own initiative. The Uzbekistan trainings and visits were promoted and supported by the Project Coordination Unit to speed up the project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Turkey. Colombia, Ecuador and especially Panama benefitted from the alliance with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, whose specialists played a role of technical advisers. Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Turkey benefitted from trainings and field visits organized by the project in Uzbekistan.
73. South-South cooperation was echoed during the Asian SLM Forum organized by DS-SLM in Thailand in January 2019 and attended by nine countries from the Asian and Pacific Region. The Region has been proactively advocating for strategic South-South Cooperation opportunities particularly in the context of capacity development and learning opportunities. For example, Thailand benefitted from training and guidance given by China and from a study tour to the Philippines, the Philippines learned from Thailand (use of vetiver grass).
74. Some countries (e.g. Morocco) have also received missions from third countries to learn from project experiences, thus the project has presumably also had a wider impact beyond project countries.
75. In Latin American project countries, according to interviewees in the four countries as well as most of the producers in the pilot sites in Panama, the project contributed to reducing migration from the countryside to the cities. Small producers and farmers usually leave the countryside when their production systems cease to be profitable, in many cases due to soil degradation. The project offered an alternative to small producers of degraded sites, by implementing SLM practices that helped them increase production and improve the flow of ecosystem services. Finding statistical evidence to proof this opinion of the interviewees is beyond the scope of the terminal evaluation, and thus the opinion is just recorded here in view of possible further analytical work by other projects or research groups.
76. In Argentina, given its participation in the LADA project, the methodology for assessing land degradation was upgraded. The baseline of land use systems and their functional degradation was updated using improved information, which was validated by specialists. For the validation process, three online applications were developed, which allowed the validation of the LUS, QM and land degradation neutrality (LDN) models, which are part of the LADA WOCAT Platform. These applications, developed by national technicians, are simple and low-cost tools that allowed the collection of systematic and objective information, facilitating the analysis and interpretation of results. The adjustment of the LADA WOCAT methodology and the use of internet-based applications for the validation process of the degradation map are considered positive and unintended results. These results are planned to be published, with the idea that other actors can develop similar processes, with the human and technological resources available in each institution and country.

77. In Panama, an unintended result is the consolidation of two groups of young agro-environmental leaders, from agrotechnical schools, who were trained in the use of drones to monitor land use and land degradation.
78. In some countries (e.g. Lesotho, Morocco and Thailand) the project has triggered cooperation and co-financing with other existing projects. For example, in Morocco practically all field implementation of SLM demonstrations have been financed by other projects (by Government, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), national financing agencies, etc.) which has: i) allowed much more significant outreach than the small project budget would have allowed; and ii) fostered inter-institutional partnerships that are likely to be highly useful also in the future in SLM mainstreaming and up-scaling. This excellent cooperation was possible due to the well-functioning inter-institutional Project Task Force in Morocco. The Task Force enabled the exchange of information between different projects and financiers as well as on funding opportunities related to SLM best practices and their piloting/demonstration. The project's own resources alone would not have allowed such broad and well-organized piloting work. In Lesotho, the Lesotho Soil Information System (LESIS) under project, also implemented by the Ministry of Forestry, purchased equipment for laboratory, GPSs, computers, Geographic Information System (GIS) server and a plotter. Cooperation with LESIS initiative made it easy for the DS-SLM project to have maps, make soil and water analyses in laboratories. LESIS also hired temporary staff in a laboratory to conduct analyses which DS-SLM project also was able to use freely.
79. In Thailand the project became a national project although the original intention was to focus only on one watershed. Thus, the project impact in Thailand has become larger than originally planned. Some SLM technologies identified were such that the farmers had been using them but for the Land Development Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives they had been unknown before the project.
80. In some countries (e.g. Bangladesh) the tools and SLM technologies produced by the DS-SLM project are going to be used in other larger projects, including investment projects financed e.g. by the World Bank, and projects implemented in landscapes affected by migration/refugee settlements.
81. In Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska the mainstreaming strategy prepared under the project led to the increased appreciation of the Institute of Agroecology and Soil Science of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Banja Luka by the Government of the country. This led the Government to commission to the University the preparation of the Republic Srpska entity Strategy on SLM.

Finding 7. The global element of the project has facilitated broadening the perspectives (mainstreaming, strategies, up-scaling) of otherwise very technical work by technical staff.

82. The good quality of the technical expertise and technical know-how provided by FAO and WOCAT was quoted by many interviewees (e.g. in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia and Uzbekistan) as an important factor behind project achievements. The quality of FAO and WOCAT technical experts visiting the countries and the quality of trainings provided were rated as good.
83. In the Latin American project countries, the technical project teams and their networks, at national, regional and local level, have been a key factor that has contributed to the results

achieved that can be attributed to the project. In general terms, the synergies and alliances with institutions, programmes and projects working on SLM have contributed significantly to the achievement of results.

84. Another key factor for Latin American project countries was the alliance with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, whose specialists played a role of technical advisers, promoting the exchange of experiences and information among Latin American project countries.

Finding 8. Expectations on the global platform vary: database is in general highly regarded and appreciated but some countries expect more dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing technical information.

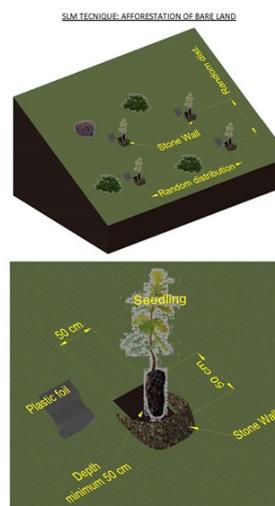
85. The WOCAT inputs to i) the project's conceptual development (Project Modules and their contents); ii) the development of and training on the LADA/WOCAT tools; and iii) and the knowledge component of the project have been generally highly appreciated. The WOCAT inputs to making the SLM Platform operational have been generally appreciated, but some country stakeholders had expected more in terms of an interactive forum to exchange experiences and information. Several interviews confirmed that such dynamic element of the Platform had been discussed during project implementation, but it was not implemented under the present project due to a lack of budget.
86. The expectations in relation to the LADA WOCAT Platform vary among actors. The Platform is visualized as a global database, which will remain beyond the life of the project, so they consider it important to incorporate the information generated in the pilot sites of each country, to ensure its future availability. Many countries (Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan) mentioned that the Platform has been very useful, and in some countries (e.g. Bangladesh and Morocco) there is evidence that some land users/land investors/financiers have learned about the Platform due to the DS-SLM project and are now actively and regularly using it for their own purposes.
87. Some actors (e.g. Argentina, Thailand, Tunisia) propose that the Platform should be more interactive and user-friendly (simplified questionnaire for farmers as the present WOCAT questionnaire is too academic), allowing a greater exchange of experiences and dynamic discussions. WOCAT representatives were aware of such expectations which were active in 2016, but they underlined that the project's financial resources were not sufficient to allow staff costs that would have been required for the introduction of a dynamic element (e.g. questions and answers, moderated discussion forum, interactive blog, etc.) in the Platform.
88. At the time of the terminal evaluation, the WOCAT Platform had under the DS-SLM project search criteria 42 SLM technologies and 27 approaches published of which 1 technology from Bosnia and Herzegovina Republic Srpska and 2 technologies from Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 5 technologies from Colombia, 7 technologies and 3 approaches from Morocco, 3 technologies and 9 approaches from the Philippines, 1 technology and 1 approach from Thailand, 12 technologies and 14 approaches from Tunisia, and 11 technologies from Uzbekistan. Box 4 and 5 below present brief summaries of two examples of published SLM technologies.

Box 4: Technical specifications - afforestation of bare land in karst areas, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The natural conditions of the Herzegovinian karst greatly reduce the range of plant species that could be considered for afforestation. Also, limestone-dolomite soils are usually shallow, dry and xero-termophilic and require irrigation to increase success. Container seedlings whose root system is coated with high quality substrate and protected by plastic foil have been used for afforestation.

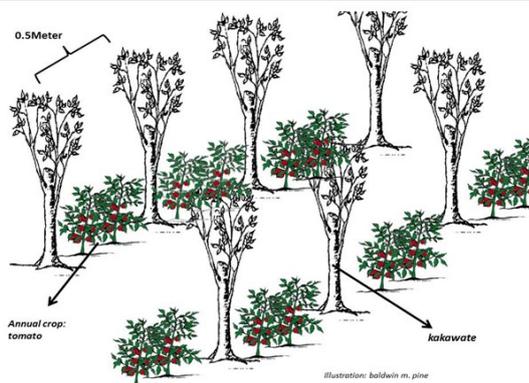
The dimensions of each hole are 50x50x50cm. Due to the unfavorable conditions (high level of rockiness, shallow soils, steep slopes, water deficit etc.), around 1150-1400 trees can be planted per hectare. This technology requires manual work, without any use of machines, due to steep slopes and high rockiness. A stone wall is being built at the lower part of the mountain which acts as a barrier. The role of this barrier is to slow down the water movement down the slope and retain the soil moisture. After having planted the tree polyvinyl foil has been placed in funnel form, to collect rain and create a compact compound of the substrate in the touching zone with the soil around the root.

For the Herzegovina area, the best time for afforestation is October and November. Afforested plants have to be protected from animals at least for the first 3 years. Also, fertilization is applied once per year and mechanic weed control techniques are used for plant protection and treatment of soil surface.



Box 5: Highly diversified cropping in live trellis system, Philippines

Kakawate cuttings are planted with an estimated planting distance of 0.5 m to 1 m. They are trimmed and maintained at around 3 meters high for every 3-6 months or as needs arise. In between the kakawate are annual crops like tomato, chayote, beans, cucumber, lettuce and cabbages which are planted in rotation depending on the season.



3.4 Efficiency of the project implementation and execution

- 3.1 How did the project's design, management and execution, institutional arrangements, partnerships, knowledge management and communications, and the financial and human resources available contribute to, or impede, the achievement of the project's results and objectives?
- 3.2 To what extent has the management been able to adapt to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?
- 3.3 To what extent were the recommendations provided by the mid-term evaluation addressed in the second phase of the project?

Finding 9. The Project Coordination Unit performance, efficiency and responsiveness at FAO headquarters has been considered by many stakeholders as efficient and responsive whereas others as non-responsive and slow, and apparently there have been some persistent communication problems. FAO administration rules are considered complicated and cumbersome by some countries.

89. Most of the interviewed National Project Coordinators (Bosnia and Herzegovina, both entities, China, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan) considered FAO's Project Coordination Unit and the Project Manager as efficient and responsive. According to other countries and the FAO GEF Coordination Unit, there have been communication problems and lack of responsiveness by the Project Coordination Unit, thus hindering the achievement of results and objectives. Particularly, the Latin American countries project team members considered that the Project Coordination Unit, located at FAO Rome, didn't provide the coordination and technical support expected. These problems seem to be, at least partly, due to the understaffing of the Project Coordination Unit compared to the amount of work.
90. The technical support, assistance and training (i.e. the knowledge inputs) provided by the Project Coordination Unit in terms of visiting experts, both from FAO and WOCAT, has been highly appreciated by several countries (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina, both entities, Morocco and Thailand). It was also mentioned that the visits of FAO experts increased the positive attention to the project by the decision makers.
91. The efficiency and/or responsiveness of some FAO country or regional offices were criticized by some of the interviewees. The country/regional offices were mainly involved in administrative and financial matters. The terminal evaluation was informed that the links with Country Offices can help to: a) communicate key messages from the project to policymakers at the national level; b) create within FAO a virtuous circle of lessons learned across countries; and c) enhance quality of project delivery and sustainability of results from the capitalization of Country Offices' knowledge of the context and technical expertise.
92. The necessity to establish bilateral Government Cooperative Programme (GCP) agreements between FAO and the project countries (well documented by the mid-term evaluation) as well as Work Plans and Letters of Agreement (LOA) before the project start-up in a country, has delayed significantly project execution in some countries, notably in Colombia, Bangladesh, Lesotho, Thailand and Turkey. This issue is particularly relevant in global projects with fairly large number of project countries and thus a large number of separate agreements to be negotiated and signed. According to interviews, it appears to be common that there are delays in project start-up in FAO implemented global/regional GEF-financed projects. The terminal evaluation was informed that there is an alternative implementation modality (FAO, 2015), Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM), under the FAO Manual Section 701, that can be suggested as an implementation modality for similar projects. For smaller amounts (e.g. up to USD 200 000) the signing of a Letter of Agreement would be the appropriate instrument to implement the project at country level.
93. Some countries (e.g. Lesotho and Thailand) mentioned that FAO administrative rules are complicated and cumbersome and hindered the implementation to some degree. Similarly, another interviewee mentioned that a major challenge for FAO is to work with countries on project management because FAO lacks service orientation; the country governments are clients of FAO, but there are so many complicated rules by the administration that the sense of service orientation is lost, and the transaction costs are high.

94. There have been some unclarity on the roles of, and communication problems with FAO country and/or regional offices. The key issue seems to be the role of FAO country or regional offices in a centrally (headquarters) implemented project, and the availability of project financing (recording working time and field trip travel costs) for oversight at a country or regional office. Some country office focal points mentioned that they did not have any budget allocation to provide support to the project¹⁶ whereas Project Coordination Unit informed that such allocations/rights to record project costs had been given. Apparently, there seems to have been lack of communication/misunderstandings. It must be mentioned also that some interviewed country office focal points said that the roles and responsibilities have been very clear and there have been no problems, and communication with headquarters has been prompt and good.
95. Some high-level interviewees commented that the project management's time and energy appear to have gone to solving daily problems and doing necessary chores (which they understood as the project has been complex) and less attention has been given to the "bigger picture". The opportunity to make a real difference in terms of getting global and/or high-level attention to project's objectives and potential impacts, as well as to best results of the project may have lost. FAO's good expertise in SLM is still appreciated in the project countries (ref. evaluation interviews) but the opportunity to become a globally recognized knowledge centre in SLM/LDN was not achieved by FAO during the project. One interviewee expressed that "the project management lacked leadership and vision".
96. At the time of the evaluation, the review of financial records as recorded in the FAO Field Programme Management Information System (FPMIS) indicates that the actual expenditures disbursed against the GEF grant from May 2015 to end of May 2019 represent about 97 percent (USD 5 927 620) of the approved budget of USD 6 116 730. Unspent balance of the project was about USD 190 000 at the end of May 2019. The Project Coordination Unit is confident that all funds will be spent by the end of October. The breakdown of project expenditures by country and FAO so far is presented in the table below.

¹⁶ The FE was informed that funding should not be a precondition of engagement by Country Offices. Involvement can also take other forms beyond the administrative support. This can include discussions with Country Offices during the project design phase to ascertain relevance of the project to the work of the Country Office, engaging the Country Office in relevant activities during project implementation, ensuring the Country Office is provided copies of relevant publications and awareness raising tools, and briefing the Country Office at the conclusion of the project.

Table 4: Financial Status as of 31 May 2019 in USD¹⁷

	GEF-5 STAR allocation	Expenditures + Commitments	HQ Exp. for Countries	Total	Balance	Delivery (%)
Argentina	79 118	69 608	4 449	74 058	5 060	94 %
Bangladesh	250 000	215 108	9 106	224 214	25 786	90 %
Bosnia & Herzegovina	290 000		278 832	278 832	11 168	96 %
China	131 364		114 570	114 570	16 794	87 %
Colombia	209 839	221 861		221 861	-12 022	106 %
Ecuador	86 000	89 974		89 974	-3 974	105 %
Lesotho	303 500	149 908	9 123	159 031	144 469	52 %
Morocco	309 182	231 075	21 272	252 347	56 835	82 %
Nigeria	86 500		11 923	11 923	74 577	14 %
Panama	448 636	411 400	11 974	423 374	25 262	94 %
Philippines	41 000	20 755	5 486	26 240	14 760	64 %
Thailand	1 328 545	1 295 346	6 929	1 302 275	26 270	98 %
Tunisia	131 364	57 240	64 965	122 205	9 159	93 %
Turkey	86 000	31 711	8 251	39 962	46 038	46 %
Uzbekistan	171 818	170 787	758	171 545	273	100 %
Subtotal Countries	3 952 866	2 964 773	547 638	3 512 411	440 455	89 %
HQ	2 163 864	2 962 847	-547 638	2 415 209	-251 345	112 %
Grand total	6 116 730	5 927 620		5 927 620	189 110	97 %

Source: financial reports from FAO headquarters

97. At the country level, the level of disbursements of the respective STAR allocations varies a lot but is in line with the progress made in each country. According to the table above, the rate of disbursement varies from 46 percent in the case of Turkey (excluding Nigeria which is an outlier)¹⁸ to 106 percent in Colombia. Overall, 89 percent of the participating countries STAR allocations have been disbursed so far (USD 3.51 million of USD 3.95 million) and headquarters has also absorbed costs that were incurred by direct country support missions and international consultancies.

Finding 10. Institutional arrangements have varied a lot from country to country, which is a positive reflection of flexibility and project's ability to adjust to country situations. In general, the established institutional arrangements have been contributing positively to project implementation. Partnerships, either established already before or during the project, have been instrumental for the achievement of results.

98. The institutional agreements in general for the project and partnerships established in the countries, including the institutional arrangements for the coordination and implementation of the project, contributed positively to the achievement of the objectives and proposed results. Practically all the project countries underlined the important role of the established partnerships. In some countries (e.g. Morocco) the partnerships have led e.g. to accessing significant additional financing to project field demonstration activities.

¹⁷ The column "HQ Exp. for Countries" refers to expenditures that have entered the system with the headquarters budget code but should have been charged to the respective country code.

¹⁸ Nigeria participated in the first global meeting of the project but according to the information received from the Project Coordination Unit, the National Coordinator resigned after that and Nigeria did not nominate a new National Project Coordinator. Following, contacts with Nigeria stopped.

99. The institutional home of the project and the project coordinator varies significantly from country to country but no correlation between the successfulness of project execution and the institutional home can be drawn. For example, in Argentina and Panama the project coordinator is part of the environmental authority, in Argentina the Secretary of Environment and Sustainable Development (SADS) of the Nation, and in Panama, the Ministry of the Environment. In Colombia and Ecuador, the project coordinator is based in FAO and has a support team in a national government institution, the Rural Agricultural Planning Unit (UPRA), a technical unit of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) in Colombia and the Ministry of the Environment in Ecuador. In Bangladesh the project coordinator is a staff of Department of Environment under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. In Morocco the project coordinator is part of Agadir Provincial Directorate of Water, Forests and Fight Against Deforestation. In Uzbekistan the project coordinator is technical director of a scientific research and design and surveying institute. In those countries where the project coordinator and the National Project Coordination Unit is embedded in a national or regional/local level government department/unit, the sustainability of the arrangement can be assessed to be better (see finding 29 under section 3.9 on Sustainability).
100. In Argentina, the role given to SLM specialized human resources stands out, including technicians, academics and researchers from different institutions who were grouped into four committees or commissions (ad hoc) within the Observatory to work on project implementation.

Finding 11. The Project Coordination Unit of FAO headquarters was too thinly resourced and in general the project budget for management and coordination was too tight in view of the project size and complexity.

101. Some countries, (e.g. Thailand and Turkey) noted that the FAO Project Coordination Unit was understaffed particularly in view of the project's scope (15 countries widely scattered) and complexity. Some interviewees noted that GEF's decision to cut the regional coordination units and to reduce the project management staff and budget was a mistake that reduced the project's capacity to achieve results and impacts.
102. GEF rules allowed earlier six percent and now five percent of the project GEF financing to be used for project management and coordination.¹⁹ This allocation appears to be same for all projects regardless the complexity of the project, i.e. the same percentage is applied for both national and global projects although management and coordination requirements and the levels of challenges are quite different in diverse types of projects. It is clear that the "transaction costs" are higher in global projects than in national ones.
103. Similarly, the budget allocation for technical assistance was small compared to the country requirements in this kind of project where new concepts and planning frameworks are introduced to organizations that have no prior experience in similar processes, and whose capacities need strengthening in terms of training and technical assistance.
104. The project countries understood well the reason for fairly small project budget at country level, and they adapted to the available financing. The financing, even if small, was not criticized;

¹⁹ Information received from FAO GEF Unit.

however, several country representatives mentioned that they could have achieved much more if the financing had allowed it. Particularly, scaling up was pointed as a topic which suffered from limited funds.

105. In Morocco the project team succeeded to access additional financing from national project partners.
106. In Argentina, the committees or work teams, led by the main project partners, fostered collaborative work and capacity building among governmental, academic, scientific and technical institutions, consolidating an interinstitutional and interdisciplinary specialized SLM team.
107. In Colombia, the evaluation of the degradation at the national level was not carried out, given that the resources assigned to the project and the socio-ecosystem diversity of the country did not allow to carry out the exercise with quality standards. In Ecuador, the project did not implement SLM practices in pilot sites due to the lack of financial resources.

Finding 12. Flexibility of the project has been important allowing to adapt to realities and changing conditions. The DSF is an important element of this flexibility.

108. The original project design did not include modular implementation approach which is inbuilt in the DSF. The seven modules were introduced during the inception phase. This innovation allowed during the course of project implementation is considered by many interviewees as instrumental and positive to the success of project implementation. The modular DSF of the DS-SLM project could well be useful also in other countries and could be advocated.
109. The delays in getting the Government Cooperative Programme agreements and LOAs signed in some countries, and the subsequent delay in starting project activities necessitated extension of the project which was accepted twice, i.e. the project duration was extended by 50 percent from three years to four years and a half which is cited as a credit to the project management by several interviewees. The other side of the coin was that the project did not have the required results-based budget which makes it difficult to assess the opportunity cost of the two extensions.

Finding 13. The GEF co-financing concept appears to be difficult to understand and the actual amounts spent are difficult to estimate by several project countries.

110. Co-financing commitments at the outset of the project were USD 38 097 347 (see Table 5 below), which represented over 86 percent of the total amount USD 44 214 077 of the resources allocated in the project document for the implementation of the project. The co-financing status reported by the project countries at the end of June 2019 is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Co-financing status as of 30 June 2019 in USD

Partners	Type	Co-financing at CEO Endorsement	Actual as of June 30. 2019	% actual/ committed	Expected total disbursement by the end of the project
Argentina	In-kind/Cash	270 318	113 539	42%	270 318
Bangladesh	In-kind	610 000	40 099	7%	610 000
Bosnia and Herzegovina	In-kind/Cash	990 000	1 319 951	133%	1 319 951
China	In-kind	700 000	200 000	29%	700 000
Colombia	In-kind	560 000	669 304	120%	669 304
Ecuador	In-kind/Cash	300 000	345 483	115%	450 483
Lesotho	In-kind/Cash	950 000	946 000	100%	950 000
Morocco	In-kind	950 000	29 000	3%	950 000
Nigeria	In-kind	18 400 000			
Panama	In-kind	2 040 000	750 400	37%	2 040 000
Philippines	In-kind	181 394	338 394	187%	338 394
Thailand	In-kind	3 985 635	3 271 659	82%	3 985 635
Tunisia	In-kind	430 000	142 000	33%	430 000
Turkey	In-kind	200 000	200 000	100%	200 000
Uzbekistan	In-kind	150 000	193 120	129%	201 620
Subtotal countries		30 717 347	8 558 949	28%	13 115 705
WOCAT	In-kind/Cash	1 500 000	1 500 000	100%	1 500 000
FAO (headquarters)	In-kind	1 060 000	1 253 042	118%	1 290 000
FAO (field projects)	Cash	4 820 000	4 820 000	100%	4 820 000
Total		38 097 347	16 131 991	42%	20,725,705

Source: PIR 2019

111. At the end of June 2019, the official reported co-financing by the 15 project countries was only 28 percent of the committed amounts (co-financing at the CEO endorsement). Other project partners, WOCAT and FAO (headquarters and field projects recorded separately) have reported 100 percent or more (118 percent by FAO headquarters) use of the co-financing. The project total co-financing use was 42 percent which can be considered very low. However, the single most important factor behind the low reported use of co-financing is that Nigeria did not really start the project implementation, and thus Nigeria's very large (USD 18.4 million) co-financing commitment did not materialize at all. When Nigeria is eliminated from the co-financing status analysis, the actuals become more reasonable (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Co-financing status as of 30 June 2019 in USD without Nigeria

Partners	Co-financing at CEO Endorsement	Actual as of June 30. 2019	% actual/ committed
Subtotal countries without Nigeria	12 317 347	8 558 949	69%
WOCAT	1 500 000	1 500 000	100%
FAO (headquarters)	1 060 000	1 253 042	118%
FAO (field projects)	4 820 000	4 820 000	100%
Total	19 697 347	16 131 991	82%

Source: Calculated by the terminal evaluation team from the official figures in Table 5

112. After eliminating Nigeria from the co-financing table, the actuals/committed of remaining 14 countries was 69 percent and the total actuals/committed was 82 percent, still a bit low in a terminal evaluation.
113. The official (reported) co-financing figures indicate a large variation in co-financing actuals/committed, ranging from 3 percent (Morocco) to 187 percent (Philippines). Some of the countries with lower than 100 percent actuals are late starters such as Bangladesh and Thailand. In some others (e.g. China, Morocco, Panama and Tunisia) there seem to be estimation and reporting problems. Several countries have reported over 100 percent actuals which is likely to be correct, at least partly due to the nature of the project which aims at mainstreaming and up-scaling SLM using national, regional or local government financing, or financing from other partners and projects. Successful execution of the project will trigger much larger downstream SLM investments and other expenses, some of which could be considered as co-financing during the project period.
114. The co-financing concept as defined in the GEF projects appears to be difficult to understand as there seem to be difficulties by several countries in estimating and reporting the actual use of co-financing. Based on terminal evaluation field observations and other information from interviews and documentary sources, it is quite obvious that some countries (e.g. China, Morocco, Panama and Tunisia) have been under-reporting the actuals.
115. Co-financing has been particularly important for project implementation in countries such as Morocco, Philippines and Thailand. In all these countries, the interviewees mentioned that there has been high country ownership of the project because of the significant co-financing. Yet the official reporting of the co-financing in countries is lacking behind.

Finding 14. The recommendations of mid-term evaluation are not known by all countries; no major changes in implementation efficiency observed by countries after MTE.

116. When the mid-term evaluation was carried out (first quarter 2018), all the Latin American project countries as well as Uzbekistan had already implemented most of the proposed project actions, which is stated in the evaluation report, so when they received the MTE recommendations, they considered that these did not affect the implementation and results of the project in their countries. They also did not receive feedback from the Project Coordination Unit regarding the recommendations received and how they would be put into practice.

117. Some countries (Bangladesh, Morocco, Philippines and Tunisia) mentioned that they had not received or did not see the mid-term evaluation report nor its recommendations.²⁰ Lesotho noted that as they had not really started that time the project the recommendations could not be used. Bosnia and Herzegovina, both entities, China and Uzbekistan noted that they received the mid-term evaluation report (however, Uzbekistan noted that they did not receive the annexes which contained e.g. the MTE field mission report to Uzbekistan which they did not ever see) and used the recommendations to modify and speed up project implementation at national level. Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska was of the opinion that after the mid-term evaluation project implementation by FAO and WOCAT speeded up in Republic Srpska. Thailand and Turkey had received the report but because they had just recently started, the report was not really relevant to their situations. The observed (by the terminal evaluation) improvement of execution effectiveness in the countries cannot be attributed to any follow-up actions on mid-term evaluation recommendations.
118. Specifically, in the Latin American project countries, according to stakeholders interviewed, the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation did not affect the implementation of the project, nor did they bring about changes in the relationship with the Project Coordination Unit.
119. The Table below assesses the implementation of the mid-term evaluation recommendations. The assessment is done by the terminal evaluation as the Project Coordination Unit was not able to provide such an assessment despite several attempts. The terminal evaluation could not find evidence on improvement of implementation efficiency of the project since the MTE.

²⁰ All the project countries/National Project Coordinators have been on the delivery list, but there may be various reasons why the report has not been received or seen: e.g. the email has gone to trash folder, email inbox has been full, etc.

Table 7: Assessment of the implementation of mid-term evaluation recommendations

	Recommendation	Implementation
Recommendation 1. To the Project Implementation Team (PCU)	The project implementation team needs to be more responsive to country-based implementation teams requests. It is suggested for instance that a brief project update should be sent electronically to all once a month and quarterly reports should be exchanged with each participating country using a basic one-page template listing key activities implemented the past quarter and an update on the GEF grant budget obtained from the FPMIS.	Not done.
Recommendation 2. To the Project Implementation Team (PCU) and PSC	A greater focus on sustainability and up-scaling project achievements during the last period of this project is necessary. The assumption that up-scaling SLM practices can be achieved through mainstreaming SLM approaches into sectoral policies is valid but the mainstreaming strategy formulated in the project document is not convincing. Improving national policy frameworks and the adoption of best practices by users are difficult results to be achieved; and “unleashing” funding from regular national government budgets is even more difficult. The implementation strategy documented in the project document, focusing mostly on some training and implementation of pilot sites will not be enough. Discussions with participating countries on exit strategies are needed to identify what the project could support to improve the likelihood of project achievements to be sustained over the long term.	Expert support provided for the preparation of national mainstreaming strategies in several countries. Exit strategy discussions with project countries started in April 2019 in the Ankara meeting.
Recommendation 3. To the Project Implementation Team (PCU) and PSC	More PSC meetings (2-3?) are recommended during the last year of the project, focusing on the project exit.	One PSC meeting organized in April 2019 in Ankara. GEF Unit informed the TE that 2 remote PSCs were planned in December 2018 to communicate and discuss results from the MTR exercise. This was an explicit request by the GEF Coordination unit, in an attempt to improve communication with countries, and share the management response and actions in response to MTR recommendations. It is not well understood why these video conference PSC meetings did not take place.
Recommendation 4. To the Project Implementation Team (PCU) and PSC	Increase the financial transparency of the project disbursements and the reliability of the information to produce timely and accurate financial reports per project outcome. It is necessary for an implementing agency to rely on a financial system producing transparent and reliable project financial reports.	No evidence provided to verify any progress.
Recommendation 5. To the Project Implementation Team (PCU)	Strengthen the monitoring and reporting on gender disaggregated data and information. Gender disaggregated reporting on related outputs in the indicator tracking table should be made mandatory. Recording the participation of men and women land users in project activities at the land use level should be encouraged so as to get a better understanding of the impact of	Some countries provide gender disaggregated data in their reports, but not all. No evidence provided on strong follow-up.

	Recommendation	Implementation
	the project at the local level. This will also help to assess results in the terminal evaluation of the project. Countries that have just started implementing their project should consult with the Gender Focal Points in the FAO country offices in order to promote greater participation by men and women land users. Efforts can be made to identify the more vulnerable land users or communities in the project areas.	Those countries that started the project implementation during 2018 had not contacted the Gender Focal Points in the FAO country offices.
Recommendation 6. To the Project Implementation Team (PCU)	Add and monitor the risk “weak coordination and networking hampering the exchange of knowledge and experiences among the Parties” to the project risks log; including the formulation of mitigation actions as needed. The lack of coordination and networking has been affecting the delivery of the project. Adding this risk log and monitoring it will allow the project implementation team to quicker act upon any deterioration of these critical functions of the project.	No evidence provided on the implementation.
Recommendation 7. To the Project Implementation Team (PCU) and PSC	Focus the global and regional project support on countries with the most needs, including Tunisia, Bosnia, Morocco, Thailand, China, Turkey, Philippines, Nigeria, Lesotho and Bangladesh.	Expert support was provided, after the MTE recommendation, at least to Bosnia, Morocco, Thailand, China, Turkey, Lesotho and Bangladesh and Tunisia.
Recommendation 8. To FAO and CDE/WOCAT	Conduct an independent assessment of the DS-SLM methodological framework, including the LADA tools, LADA local and the WOCAT knowledge platform. The current focus is much on SLM tools and methodologies and training of stakeholders/SLM decision makers. It focuses more on land use and less on land users. There is a need to assess the implicit objective of this framework that by applying SLM best practices, land productivity and sustainability will increase, and by extension it is assumed that land users will benefit from this and sustain these practices.	According to the PCU, all tools and methodologies included in the DS-SLM project have been developed, tested, assessed and peer-reviewed under separate projects and programmes, often also including independent evaluations, and are generally accepted by countries and partners. No independent assessment of the DS-SLM methodological framework, including the LADA tools, LADA local and the WOCAT knowledge platform, has been done as such.
Recommendation 9. To FAO and GEF	As an implementing agency, FAO needs to find a more efficient way to mobilize project financial resources to a project with a global reach; particularly when these resources are small grants. Within this project, the average budget per country is USD 263.5k, yet for each country, a GCP needed to be established and LOAs have been developed based on detailed work plans. The result is that “transaction costs” are very high for a limited value added to the project.	The TE was informed that FAO has been looking for solutions to avoid project specific GCP agreements, and to reduce transaction costs. However, no robust solution has been found and effected yet.

3.5 Monitoring and evaluation

- 4.1 How effective was the functioning of the project results-based M&E system to follow-up progress?
- 4.2 How was the information from this system used to make timely decisions during project implementation?

Finding 15. Project reporting system with templates and focusing on modules is considered clear and well-functioning. The original project results matrix (logical framework) contains overly ambitious indicators and goals.

120. The project results-based M&E system, using pre-established formats, is clear, simple and functional. The follow up carried out by each country has focused on the implementation of the Decision Support Framework modules, a tool used to guide the planning, implementation and monitoring of the project (see section 3.2). This had led to the situation where the project's M&E system focused mainly on the project process and outputs instead of outcomes.
121. The project results matrix (logical framework) and Table 2.3 of the project document contains overly ambitious indicators and targets in relation to the duration and budget available. Also, indicators aggregated at global/regional level over different countries, scales and agro-ecosystems are difficult to monitor. Specifically, the targets related to Project Development Objective and Outcome 1.2 related to the increase of parameters such as land use productivity (10 percent increase by the end of the project); and the project country specific targets (in Table 2.3), such as increase in productivity, total carbon sequestration by the end of the project, increase in land cover by the end of the project, are difficult to achieve in a period of three years. On the other hand, the FAO GEF Unit informed the terminal evaluation that a number of indicators in the results matrix are indicators mandatory to be monitored and reported against for the donor. These indicators are common to all GEF projects in the specific focal area and are used by GEF to report on portfolio-wide progress and achievements to its constituency.
122. The mid-term evaluation found that there were too many indicators, many of which are not SMART (MTE, p. 46). The present terminal evaluation subscribes that finding but does not need to repeat it. In relation to this, the FAO GEF Unit further informed the terminal evaluation that a M&E specialist was hired at the early stages of the project to rework the results matrix, ensure that a solid baseline situation was provided, and countries were equipped to provide evidence of progress against a common set of indicators (for instance, all countries would use the same tool to report on carbon benefits). It is unclear what happened to the work of this consultant, and why the project entirely moved away from the results matrix in the project document agreed upon by the donor, FAO and all project partners. Furthermore, the GEF Unit informed that they had made several efforts to obtain FAO mandatory six-monthly progress reports, all in vain.
123. In reality, the Global Environmental Objective and Global Development Objective related indicators of the results matrix have not been really monitored. Several targets that had not been specified in the project document were just "XX" in the respective places in the results matrix with a note "To be defined during first phase of project". However, those targets were never defined, and they were thus not monitored.

124. Colombia was the only country that had reported data at the time of the terminal evaluation, in the final national report, for the indicators of Result 1.2, obtaining increases in carbon sequestration, vegetation cover and productivity of the pilot sites. The quantification of these values was possible thanks to the fact that the five pilot sites were previously linked to other projects coordinated by FAO, where SLM practices were already being implemented. The project focused on measuring and monitoring SLM practices using impact indicators in accordance with the ones proposed in the project document.

Finding 16. The decision-making process using the M&E information was not entirely clear.

125. The M&E system has provided information from the countries to FAO headquarters. Feedback to countries from FAO has been less clear. Country representatives affirmed that project implementation at national level was largely decided upon by the National Project Coordinators, either independently or in consultation with their superiors and/or other national project partners, within the limits of approved budgets and transfers of funds by FAO.
126. The Project Steering committee had met only three times during the project implementation, at: ii) the Global Inception Meeting; ii) the Second Global Meeting of the Project in Rome in 2018; and iii) the Third and Last Global Meeting of the Project in Ankara in 2019. The M&E information system has been used in these three meetings. Apparently, the limited number of Steering Committee meetings has been due to high costs involved in organizing such meetings for a project with 15 countries, 2 global level implementing partners (FAO and WOCAT) and 1 donor (GEF). The FAO GEF Unit informed the terminal evaluation that at the first Project Steering Committee meeting in Rome, it was decided that regular Project Steering Committee meetings would take place via video conferencing. It was recognized that for global projects, regular exchanges amongst participating countries are fundamental. However, this decision was not implemented.
127. The mid-term evaluation recommended more frequent Steering Committee meetings. This recommendation is at least partially implemented as two of the total three Steering Committee meetings were organized in the last year of the project.
128. The FAO GEF Unit had requested, already before and again after the mid-term evaluation, a monthly meeting with the Project Coordination Unit. Such meetings did not take place. The FAO GEF Unit informed the terminal evaluation team that they had not received the Project Progress Reports.

3.6 Stakeholder engagement

- 5.1 To what extent has the project engaged stakeholders, in particular farmers and herders, in pilot site management?
- 5.2 To what extent does the project develop new partnerships or enhance existing ones?
- 5.3 What linkages, if any, exist between the capacities developed among diverse types of stakeholders (government ownership, partnerships, capacity development)?
- 5.4 How have stakeholders contributed to the results achieved?

Finding 17. Stakeholder engagement has been adequate and extensive in general, with the exception of private sector involvement.

129. Stakeholder involvement, including farmers and other local level stakeholders (CBOs, NGOs) has been broad and intensive in almost all the countries (Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina (both entities), China, Colombia, Lesotho, Morocco, Panama, Philippines, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uzbekistan) to large extent thanks to the LADA/WOCAT assessment tools and FAO PLUD methodology, both of which have been widely used in the project. Stakeholders have been involved in workshops and trainings, as well as in the pilot/demonstration implementation.
130. In some countries (e.g. Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic of Srpska, Morocco) the stakeholders (partner institutions including representatives of farmer organizations and NGOs as well as municipalities/local communities) have been involved from the very beginning of the project in planning and setting up project activities. On the other hand, e.g. in Panama, it was observed that farmers, despite being totally motivated by the implementation of SLM practices, in some cases were not involved in the property planning phase, previously carried out by consultants. From the conversations held with them, it is understood that SLM practices will be maintained and expanded to the extent that they have a positive economic impact. The environmental impact may be reflected in variables such as increased productivity and improvements in the quality of production and ecosystem services, which is not always perceived by farmers.
131. In Argentina, Colombia, Morocco and Panama the farmers from the pilot sites, defined the SLM practices to be implemented in their farms assuming the responsibility to keep them.
132. Private sector²¹ has been involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska, Turkey, Philippines and Thailand, and to a limited extent also in Morocco. In most other countries, private sector has not been involved which could be considered a mistake as it takes many of the key decisions related to land use investments in most of the countries, including project countries. In the interviews, many country representatives noted this omission and e.g. in Morocco also the high-level government representatives interviewed mentioned that their intention is to involve the private sector in the "next stage of the project."
133. Several interviewees mentioned that, at hindsight, they now realise that the omission of banks/financiers and the private sector as a key stakeholders have been a mistake: "the project is talking about developing SLM technologies and best practices to be used by investors, but we are not involving them nor talking with them."

Finding 18. The project has positively contributed to the development of new partnerships (inter-institutional and cross-sectoral). Inter-institutional partnerships have been key for successful implementation.

²¹ The private sector is the part of the economy which is owned by private individuals or groups. The private sector that is relevant in the context of SLM includes companies (small, medium and large/domestic, international and multinational) that finance, invest in and/or produce agricultural, agro-industrial, animal husbandry or forestry products. Private farmers (family farms) can be also considered part of private sector, but for analytical and planning reasons it is better to keep family farmers and the rest of the private sector separated as their behaviour and investment decision processes are typically different. From the SLM investment point of view, the whole production chain from field to markets is relevant as sustainably produced products need to reach the markets to make SLM-based production profitable and financially sustainable.

134. In several countries (e.g. Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Morocco, Panama, Thailand, Tunisia and Uzbekistan) the project has succeeded in establishing good inter-institutional partnerships that have been instrumental for the progress in mainstreaming and up-scaling of SLM. For example, in Morocco all the interviewed project partners from other sectors, agencies, academia or NGOs praised the good cooperation and transparent communication by the project's National Project Coordinator, and the project in Morocco has indeed secured good alliances and also significant co-financing from other national project partners. Also, in the Philippines cooperation with various other related projects was a significant contributing factor. Lesotho noted that the project revived the inter-ministerial good relations in the government sector.
135. In Argentina, the commitment of a group of technicians, academics and researchers from different governmental, academic, scientific and technical institutions, within the Observatory, stands out; they grouped together (ad hoc) to develop a collaborative work, consolidating a specialized inter-institutional and interdisciplinary team. In the province of Entre Ríos, private actors such as the Rural Society and the Bolsa de Cereales began to take an interest in learning more about SLM and its impact on agricultural and livestock production; The Provincial Commission for Soil Conservation and Management, which brings together public and private actors, was also reactivated, which has defined soil conservation as one of its flagship.
136. In Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska farmers and agricultural company formed a public private partnership (PPP). The partnership building is based on trust that is gained little by little.
137. In Colombia, the project convened an institutional technical board with a consultative role, which gave guidance to the development of the subnational assessment. The board was inactive once the project finished, however some of its members expressed their interest in developing a roadmap that allows their reactivation. In the pilot sites, agreements were made between owners and private actors to purchase their production directly.
138. In Ecuador, the creation of an institutional working group facilitated the development of the national assessment. The group disintegrated at the end of the project.
139. In Morocco, most of the interviewed project partners mentioned that this project has been innovative and transformational in a proactive manner as it has brought relevant partners (government departments, other public agencies, financing institutions, research organizations, NGOs) together and fostered good cooperation. The secret for the success has been in the excellent communication and coordination capabilities of the National Project Coordinator.
140. In Panama, a framework cooperation agreement was signed between the Ministry of the Environment of Panama and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment of Cuba, which facilitated the achievement of project results and will allow the country to receive technical assistance beyond the project's closing date.

3.7 Progress to impact

- 6.1 To what extent and how is the project likely to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in national or subnational planning, financing and policy frameworks?
- 6.2 Is there any evidence of SLM mainstreaming at the decision-making level that can be attributed to the project?

- 6.3 Are there any barriers or other risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term results? What is the likelihood of longer-term impacts of the project?

Finding 19. Most countries are confident that the project will significantly contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in decision-making at national and subnational levels.

141. In Argentina, local-level mainstreaming actions were developed in the two pilot sites. In the province of Entre Ríos stands out the proposal of a provincial law called Law of Promotion to the Agroecological Productive Systems, promoted by the provincial government. This normative proposal seeks the transition of the provincial production towards more sustainable practices. In the province of Salta, the municipality of Embarcación declared one of the SLM practices implemented in the pilot site was of municipal interest.
142. In Bangladesh, the project has a good potential to have bigger impacts as there is evidence on high demand by various land users for the knowledge, information and tools produced by the project. However, that would require translation of the best practices and lessons to local languages and written in a manner that the farmers understand. The private sector would need to be get involved as well to make a significant impact.
143. In the entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, due to the very complex administrative situation in the Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina it was decided to focus on subnational (cantonal) level as well as on the local level. Mainstreaming strategy is prepared for Tuzla Canton and activities will be funded by canton and municipalities. the federal government recommended to cantonal ministries responsible for agriculture to initiate land capability mapping with a study on SLM approach. During the project four municipalities prepared such maps. Land capability study and maps are being prepared for nine municipalities of Tuzla Canton in total. The preparation of land capability studies and maps are financed by cantonal governments which is evidence for the ownership and commitment to continue the work to produce the expected impact.
144. In Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska, the entity SLM strategy is now being developed and the SLM best practices are now supported by the government, thus the government is committed to continue the work to achieve the expected positive impact of increasing the sustainability of land use. The DS-SLM project can be considered as a game changer in Republic Srpska in terms of public recognition of SLM which is now a lot in the mass media; e.g. there have been many TV and radio shows on land degradation.
145. In China, the provided guidance and methods in mainstreaming SLM in planning and policy formulation are used in the national and provincial processes to improve the sustainability of land use e.g. in road construction, selection of agricultural crops and other SLM best practices, etc. at local level, as well as to provide model and guidance for the similar work at national level.
146. In Colombia, the project supported the formulation of the Land Management Plan (POT) of the municipality of San Juan Nepomuceno, where the results of the local assessment were incorporated. The Land Management Plan is being implemented and it is expected to achieve the impact of improving the sustainability of land use, as well as improving livelihoods of local farmers.
147. In Ecuador, FAO and a public bank BanEcuador signed an agreement for the creation of a green credit line that incorporates SLM practices in the livestock sector.

148. In Lesotho, the project is likely to contribute very positively both at national and subnational levels to the sustainability of land use and management with the long-term positive impact of improving the sustainability of local livelihoods, provided there will be no negative political interference.
149. In Morocco, the project is based on the National Plan to Combat Desertification (2013) and is considered as one important element/step in the implementation of that National Plan to reduce desertification and land degradation, which are the expected key impacts together with the improvement of land productivity and increasing the profitability of dryland agriculture in the long-term. The project is considered successful and having produced, foreseen to produce, all the expected results:
- i. mainstreaming strategy has been produced;
 - ii. National Land Degradation Neutrality Plan and a related Investment Plan are under finalization, and the key elements are already finalized;
 - iii. the Regional three-year action plan in Souss-Massa is still under negotiations
 - iv. three community level three-year action plans have been finalized.
150. In Panama, the project is supporting the draft of a new Soil Law that will integrate SLM, which if approved would facilitate the integration of SLM into the country's planning, financing and policy frameworks. The ecological-economic assessment study of the best SLM technologies including the proposal of a financial mechanism for its implementation in the Parita and Tonosi basins, financed by the project, was used as a technical input in the discussions for the creation of a new trust fund for Water, Protected Areas and Wildlife created by the Ministry of Environment. At subnational level the project also played a key role in the creation and kick off of the Parita River Basin Committee integrated in 2017 and the Tonosi River Basin Committee formed in 2019. The first already has its own regulatory framework and the second one is working on it. The basin committees are autonomous entities that promote SLM actions as contemplated in the Land Management Plan and the Basin Management Plan. All these outputs and outcomes are expected to contribute positively to the achievement of the expected impact which is the improved sustainability of land use and related sustainability of local livelihoods.
151. In the Philippines, the integration of SLM best practices in the Land Use Planning Guidelines of the Local Governments is expected to bring about significant long-term impact as these Guidelines are an effective instrument in guiding land use decisions. However, the mainstreaming work needs to be carried out for more years to see real long-term impact. In the Philippines, the DS-SLM project is seen as a good contribution towards reaching the LDN target by 2030. The DS-SLM project is also seen to contribute positively to the next generation of SLM/LDN projects.
152. In Thailand, Tunisia and Uzbekistan, the project is expected to contribute significantly to the mainstreaming of SLM in national and subnational planning, financing and policy frameworks, and thus increasing the sustainability of land use as well as increasing the long-term profitability of agriculture under sustainable practices. However, Thailand noted that some activities, such as erosion prevention and control will require more time and financing.

Table 8: Success story from Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan the project institutions and partners understood the importance of studying and communicating the positive benefits of SLM in general and of the project in particular. The project's National Lead Agency was able to assess the socioeconomic and environmental benefits of demonstrated SLM technologies.

Socioeconomic benefits:

SLM technologies demonstrated at the project sites lead to adoption and out-scaling of at least four to six cost effective and innovative SLM technologies in salt affected and drought-prone landscapes; the area under SLM during two crop seasons are increased from 2 347 ha (2017) to 4 723 ha (2018). In the future, expected area under SLM will be increased up to 10 000 ha (2025);

farmer benefits are: i) increasing cotton yield of "Gulistan" variety from 1.8 t/ha to 3.2 t/ha on average; ii) **farmer income increased up to 4.8 times.**

Environmental benefits:

10-20 percent increase of vegetation cover and biodiversity;
water saving during vegetation season about 1 600-2 000 m³/ha that equal two waterings;
decrease of soil erosion in rainfed areas by cultivating desert perennial plants and almonds;
sequestration of carbon in biomass and soil in the amount of 4,5 tons/ha (equivalent to 16,5 tons CO₂) by cultivating desert perennial crops and tree species (almond).

Finding 20. The potential role of SLM investments by private sector is not fully understood in many countries which is a key barrier to achieving a major positive SLM impact in terms of improved land use and increased long-term productivity and profitability of agriculture under the climate change threat.

153. The identified barriers to private sector investments in SLM include:

- i. Profitability of the SLM investments (Morocco, Turkey).
- ii. Availability of and access to both budget and/or donor financing for public sector activities and loans and/or other types of investment financing for SLM investments (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco).
- iii. Political interference or lack of political support, including the changes in policies due to elections and changing governments at different levels (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lesotho).
- iv. Too short duration of support projects such as the DS-SLM; introduction and implementation of SLM is a complex and time-demanding process. Long-term and sustainable support is necessary, e.g. DS-SLM project had no long-term vision and commitment, nor financing to continue (China, Morocco).
- v. Climate change impacts that may trigger land degradation and desertification (Bangladesh).
- vi. Land tenure system that acts as a disincentive or barrier for introducing SLM (Lesotho).

154. In Latin American project countries, the articulation between the environmental sector and the agricultural and livestock sector is a barrier to the integration of SLM into national and regional planning, financing and policy frameworks; moreover, there is a weakness or absence of state agricultural extension systems in the four countries, limiting progress towards long-term results.

155. Another limitation in Latin American project countries is information and knowledge at the level of government officials, especially with the level of staff turnover that occurs in state entities. The availability of financing is another barrier.

Finding 21. Up-scaling of SLM best practices will require more time and additional financing; in some countries. Such financing is expected to come mainly from domestic sources but in others additional external financing is needed.

156. To the extent that the project's actions continue, once the project has been completed, there will be long-term project impacts. The sustainability section details the measures that countries are taking to ensure the continuity of the actions initiated by the project, as well as new actions and projects focused on SLM.
157. Several countries/entities (Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan) were of the opinion that with the dynamism established, the consultations on priorities and needs carried out and the initiated local level SLM investments which will have positive impact on land productivity and food security, the project will lead to the intensification of the application of good SLM practices, and thus there will be positive longer term impacts on land resources and their use.
158. However, it is clear that particularly the up-scaling and out-scaling of SLM best practices will require considerably more time and also additional financial resources, both from the public sector and in the private sector investments (Bangladesh, Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Morocco and Philippines). Also, extensive mainstreaming into policies, strategies, financing, programmes and plans at all levels (national, regional, provincial, local) will require more time as the cross-sectoral nature of the challenges causes the processes to be complicated and time-consuming (e.g. Colombia, Morocco and Panama). Also, the very fact that SLM is by nature tightly related to land and land tenure causes the mainstreaming processes to be highly political in many countries (e.g. Lesotho).

3.8 Gender

- 7.1 To what extent (and how) has the project contributed to the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups throughout its implementation?

Finding 22. Project strategy and planned activities did not address specifically the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups. Most of the stakeholders believed the project was gender neutral and did not need to address gender.

159. The project document included several generic statements on addressing gender considerations, including the involvement of women and vulnerable groups in project implementation, e.g:
- i. Participants and other stakeholders: Assisting in involvement of vulnerable and marginalized groups including the poor and ethnic minorities and ensuring gender balance in project activities and awareness programmes (p. 40).
 - ii. Alignment with FAO Strategic Framework and Objectives: The GEF project will also pay attention to Gender and Governance as essential considerations in promoting sustainable land management, thereby also addressing FAOs two cross-cutting themes of relevance: gender – ensuring that gender equality becomes a regular feature of work

on standard setting and of regional, subregional and country-level programme and projects (p. 57).

- iii. FAO's role and responsibilities, as the GEF Agency and the global financial and administrative executing agency: A multidisciplinary Project Task Force will be established ... Participating units from across FAO will be involved in supporting the project's work and in ensuring that the project stays on track ... When appropriate, these units and offices will provide technical support in areas such as: land resources assessment and sustainable land management, climate smart agriculture, gender, climate change vulnerability assessment and adaptation (p. 114).
 - iv. Indicators and information sources: On-the-ground impact indicators will track: The level of adoption by farmers and herders of environmentally and climate friendly production practices, productivity increase and hectares covered to be monitored in a gender-disaggregated way to ensure adequate participation of women (p. 123).
 - v. Sustainability of results [and further under] Social sustainability: This global project will contribute to national socioeconomic benefits through demonstration activities at pilot sites in 15 countries, which will include: i) sustained livelihoods for people dependent on the use and management of land resources (soil, water, biodiversity): The project will pay special attention to assessing the impacts of land degradation on vulnerable groups, such as female headed households, and identifying gender-sensitive SLM solutions; ii) the project will ensure that it works with a number of representatives of female-headed households at pilot sites; that recommended SLM solutions are benefiting men and women equally; and that there will be at least 30 percent women participating in training activities (p. 129).
160. However, as pointed out also by the mid-term evaluation (p. 46), the project strategy did not include clear and specific approaches or activities to address gender considerations. Neither did the project implementation and management arrangement include specific allocations or responsibilities nor are resources to secure that the gender considerations adequately addressed. The project results matrix included only two items where gender is taken into consideration, and both of those were related to the target groups of capacity building/training:

Output 1.1.1. Countries delivering reliable DLDD and SLM assessments and information on SLM best practices suitable for mainstreaming at national or subnational levels.

161. Target: 15 countries delivering reliable assessments and having selected cost-effective and adapted SLM best practices for various LUS suitable for mainstreaming into policies and programmes; and 50 persons in key institutions per country (40 percent women) using assessment and best practices tools.

Output: 1.2.1. Strengthened delivery mechanisms for SLM demonstration, awareness raising and training.

162. Target: At least 900 facilitators, extension workers and technical staff with acquired skills in SLM demonstration, awareness raising and training (60 per country, at least 30 percent women)"
163. Both the latest Project Implementation Review (FAO-GEF, 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018) and the evaluation interviews (e.g. Argentina, Bosnia Herzegovina entity Republic of Srpska, China,

Colombia, Ecuador, Lesotho, Morocco, Panama, Thailand, Tunisia and Uzbekistan) confirm that about half of the gender target related to Output 1.1.1 has been met. Similarly, and the same sources confirm that the gender specific target related to Output 1.2.1 has been reached only partially (again some 50 percent) although in most of the evaluation interviews the partner country representatives have mentioned that both men and women have participated in trainings.

164. According to the interviews in the Philippines there is a law requesting to address gender issues in all governmental activities, and the project e.g. had a special workshop on gender issues in 2018. In the Philippines, the documentation of SLM practices addresses gender issues which is likely to result in a better selection of SLM practices that specifically target sustainable income generation for female farmers.
165. In Bangladesh, one interviewee frankly said that gender and vulnerable groups have not been addressed at all under the project, as it is too complicated in the country; 90 percent of the stakeholders are male.
166. According to the evaluation interviews and project reports, vulnerable groups have not been addressed specifically during project implementation, with the exception of the entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia and Lesotho. In the Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina vulnerable groups are addressed in mainstreaming strategy drafted. In Colombia, according to actors interviewed, the project worked with farmers who were displaced by violence and who, recently, following the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, have returned to their lands. Displaced farmers are a vulnerable group that has been empowered by the project by involving them in local level territorial planning and selecting SLM practices to be promoted. In Lesotho, SLM activities were equally implemented by all the groups in the community more especially in the country where land resource management is in the hands of women, youth and the elderly.
167. In general, the project was considered by its stakeholders as gender neutral. This opinion can be contested. The project is not only about technical tools, but also aims at decision support for mainstreaming (to policies, strategies, investment frameworks) and up-scaling of SLM, i.e. the project has a highly political element as the land-related policy, strategy and investment planning issues are always political, and can potentially have significant impacts on the rights, roles and responsibilities of women and men in any country. Land management and land management practices have a significant impact on the roles, responsibilities, workload, income and income distribution among land users, both male and female. When land management practices are changed, e.g. from unsustainable to sustainable and new sustainable land management practices and tools are adopted, the change process can have significant impacts, either positive or negative, on different land user groups. Decision makers need to be made aware of such potential changes, and the decision support systems need to be able to track, measure and point out such changes.

3.9 Sustainability

- 9.1 To what extent has the project created ownership among counterparts and stakeholders?
- 9.2 How sustainable are the results achieved at the environmental, institutional, social and financial levels?

Finding 23. The project has strong national ownership in almost all the 14 countries.

168. In almost all the 14 countries (Nigeria excluded), the project created a sense of ownership among counterparts and stakeholders. The interviews have conveyed a clear sense of ownership. Many counterparts are visibly proud of the work they have done. Stakeholders have appropriated the project through active participation in various workshops and meetings, and many of them in most of the countries are hands-on involved in the implementation of various activities (territorial assessments, prioritization workshops, pilot/demonstration implementation) of the project. For example, in Morocco it was clear from the various interviews of stakeholders at all levels, including the community visits, that the stakeholders feel proud of the work that they are doing. Practically all stakeholders emphasized that they are doing the work not alone but together and in good cooperation with relevant other stakeholders, such as the Directorate for Water, Forests and Combatting Desertification.
169. At least in Lesotho, Morocco, Thailand, Tunisia and Turkey it is very clear that the project has been very well embedded in the programmes of the key ministry in the country.
170. In some countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina entity Republic Srpska, Morocco, Thailand) the interviewees have mentioned that they have learned a lot during the project which is also a good indication of the sense of ownership and commitment.
171. Only in Bangladesh the interviews indicate that the local FAO Office, instead of the National Project Coordinator, has been the driving force of the project. On the other hand, there has been a lot of demand for the information (documented SLM tools and best practices) produced by the project; there are daily requests by various stakeholders to get the information.
172. International commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically objective 15 and the agreements linked to UNCCD including the goals for the Land Degradation Neutrality, provide a space to continue promoting SLM actions at the national, regional, provincial and local levels. Several project countries have identified this opportunity, even though the LDN targets and commitments had not been on the international agenda at the time of project formulation.

Finding 24. Several countries have seen the tools and methodologies of the DS-SLM project as a good means to develop new and larger follow-up/scaling-up projects.

173. Several countries (Bangladesh, Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Morocco, Philippines and Turkey) have seen the tools and methodologies of the DS-SLM project as a good means to develop new and larger follow-up/scaling-up projects.

Finding 25. Several countries have already secured new project financing, either from domestic or external sources, and others are in the process of preparing project proposal(s).

174. Several countries (e.g. Bangladesh, Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic Srpska, Colombia, China, Ecuador, Morocco, Philippines, Thailand, Turkey and Uzbekistan) have already secured new project financing, either from domestic or external sources, and others are in the process of preparing project proposal(s):
175. Bangladesh has another GEF-6 SLM project with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and has also submitted in cooperation with FAO PIF to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) under GEF; under approval (Information presented in the Ankara meeting). These

- other projects, however, are not results of the DS-SLM project, but could use DS-SLM project tools and lessons in their execution.
176. Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has already started development of new joint projects and expects to receive technical support from FAO for the preparation of project proposals. Also, project partners and stakeholders have sent joint request to the federal government to support joint project for land management and SLM in Spreca valley. In addition, some new municipalities are going to implement land capability study/map with the support of faculty and technical institutions as well as cantonal ministry of agriculture.
 177. Republic Srpska next steps are very likely to be financed by domestic budget resources, e.g. municipal level incentives for SLM have been now already established thanks to the project. However, in addition there is a regional project proposal prepared by the Republic Srpska.
 178. China: there are several projects related to combatting desertification and land degradation in China, and they will continue for a long period, some for 10 years, while other projects (e.g. natural forest protection programmes) will continue for 20 years.
 179. Colombia: FAO integrated SLM on new project proposals including a climate-smart agriculture proposal presented to IKI Germany.
 180. Ecuador already has a SLM project funded by the Korean Forest Service (2019-2020) and submitted a PIF to GEF (GEF-7) in cooperation with FAO on a SLM project in the context of LDN (Information presented at the Ankara meeting and confirmed during interviews) and is working on a proposal that will present to the Green Climate Fund.
 181. Morocco: the established three-year Action Plans (at regional and communal levels in three local communities) and the national Investment Plan for Land Degradation Neutrality give all good guarantee for the continuation of the work. The implementation of those plans is expected to be financed mainly from the national/provincial/local government budgets. However, the Directorate for Water, Forests and Combatting Desertification, as well as the Provincial Administration indicated that they are formulating requests for financing to various donors/international financing mechanisms (GEF, CGF, etc.). There are also already other existing relevant projects with financing from e.g. UNDP, German government (GIZ), Swiss Development Cooperation, GEF, FAO (Regional TCP Re: Global Coalition of Soils). Particularly useful partner for accessing additional financing appears to be ANDZOA which has capacity to formulate bankable project proposals (e.g. currently having i) USD 49 million Green Climate Fund (GCF) project (2017–2021) aiming to plant 10 000 ha, of which 6 000 ha in Souss-Massa, with Argan trees on private lands; ii) women empowerment in Argan area project financed by Canada; and iii) GIZ-financed research project supporting Argan communities).
 182. The Philippines used the DS-SLM project to develop a tool to be used in a new national GEF project, and the SLM issues will be also budgeted under the regular budgets of the local government, thanks to the integration of SLM guidelines into the Comprehensive Land Use Plans of the local government units.
 183. Thailand: Forestry Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has a GEF7 funding, and the Land Development Department intends to work together with the Forestry Department.

184. Turkey has submitted a proposal to GEF (GEF-6) in cooperation with FAO on a SLM project in the context of LDN; implementation is about to start (Information presented in the Ankara meeting).
185. Turkey and Uzbekistan (as well as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) are partners in Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management (CACILM) II Project which is supported by GEF and is implemented by FAO. The overall objective of CACILM 2 is to scale-up integrated natural resources management (INRM) in drought-prone and salt-affected agricultural production landscapes in the Central Asian countries and Turkey (Information presented in the Ankara meeting [FAO, 2019]).

Finding 26. Project Management started thinking and planning an exit strategy quite late, only in 2019.

186. The project document of the DS-SLM project did not specify the need of an exit strategy for the project, nor did the mid-term evaluation point out that the project should develop such a strategy. However, the Project Management/Project Coordination Unit had realized such a need by the approaching end of the project, and incipient elements of an exit strategy were presented at the Ankara Steering Committee meeting in April 2019.

Finding 27. The incipient exist strategy is not robust enough.

187. The incipient elements were mainly focusing on: i) accessing financing for follow-up projects globally/regionally/nationally; ii) preparing for UNCCD COP 14; iii) linkages with LDN; iv) SLM criteria and indicators; v) mainstreaming SLM into financing mechanisms; and vi) South-South cooperation.
188. Other elements for the exit strategy that would need to be considered include e.g. vii) strengthening the knowledge sharing, and at the same time publicity and credibility, by encouraging the Country teams to write the best results and best SLM technologies and approaches in the form of an attractive and easily readable publication/book that can be given to decision makers, politicians, NGOs, farmer organizations, farmers, investors, financiers, private land-using companies, etc. (if additional financing is needed, it should be easily available for such a purpose); and viii) handing-over: there should be handing-over meetings in every country with the presence of at least FAO, National Project Coordinator and high-level representative of the respective Ministry.

Finding 28. Project results are environmentally sustainable.

Finding 29. The integration of the project into the relevant national and/or regional/provincial institutions has secured institutional sustainability in many countries. However, although the project called the attention of key institutional actors and decision makers on the need to address desertification and land degradation with concrete proposals referred to the generation of information, integration of SLM in planning and regulatory frameworks, as well as in practical actions at the local level, the high-level decision makers appear to require still more convincing information and advocacy, and the plan to organize a high-level meeting on DS-SLM at the COP14 is commendable.

Finding 30. Financial sustainability is secured in some countries through the mainstreaming strategy which is expected to lead to a situation where e.g. local municipalities will continue

implementation using local government budget. Additional and new project financing is also applied in many countries.

Finding 31. Social sustainability is considered satisfactory or good particularly in those countries where the pilot/demonstration activities are adopted by the local communities and where the introduced SLM practices are profitable at farm/community level.

189. The factors and facts behind environmental, institutional, financial and social sustainability are mostly interlinked, and thus difficult to separate from each other. Thus, the sustainability issues are described jointly as follows.
190. In Argentina, in the pilot site of Salta, the National University of Salta will continue supporting local stakeholders implementing SLM practices. The Observatory (ONDTyD, 2019) laid the foundations for a permanent national system for the evaluation and standardized monitoring of desertification, including socioeconomic aspects. The project strengthened the capacities installed in several governmental, academic, scientific and technical institutions, consolidating an inter-institutional and interdisciplinary team linked with the Observatory that will be active in the long-term. Some of these institutional actors will be making efforts to obtain funds to continue promoting SLM through new projects, which could be financed by state entities and by international cooperation. In the province of Entre Ríos, the Provincial Commission for Soil Conservation and Management, composed of public and private actors, has championed soil conservation as a topic that should be present in the discussions related to production at the provincial level, as well as in spaces for capacity building.
191. In Bangladesh, the project is considered to support environmental sustainability in general. Achieving institutional, financial and social sustainability would require more time.
192. In the entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the results are considered highly sustainable at environmental level as the SLM demonstration activities have successfully addressed the issue of degraded soils due to mining which is a significant environmental problem in Entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It has to be noted that the technology of cultivating blueberries on infertile/degraded soils using plant pots could be easily replicated on degraded soils elsewhere; only in Tuzla canton there are some 5 000 ha of degraded soils due to mining and industry. The results of the project are considered very sustainable also at the institutional level thanks to the efforts on capacity building and dissemination. Financial sustainability will strongly depend on the political situations.
193. In China, project results are expected to be environmentally sustainable in the long-term as the project addresses fragile and degraded ecosystems. Institutionally, project results are expected to be sustainable in China, but not necessarily financially as long-term financial support from GEF/FAO is not foreseen. Scaling up SLM will increase land productivity and restore ecosystem functions in the project regions, which is expected to provide sustainable social benefit.
194. In Colombia, the GEF Connection Biocaribe project implemented by FAO and the Natural Wealth project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), will continue activities on the pilot sites.
195. In Lesotho, project results are expected to be environmentally very sustainable as the activities are implemented at local level with local people in an environmentally friendly manner. Likewise, project results are expected to be institutionally and financially sustainable because the technologies implemented are very simple, and also because there are synergies with other

projects which helps in securing sustainability. The activities are socially acceptable and hence socially sustainable.

196. In Morocco, the project is clearly considered as an integrated element of the implementation of the National Plan to Combat Desertification. A high-level interviewee stated that "We will not finish the work with this project, but this project is one step in a long process [in combating desertification and land degradation] which is not a simple process to manage." Environmentally, the project is considered highly sustainable as degradation of soils and desertification are serious environmental threats in Morocco and the project has successfully addressed that threat, although still at a relatively limited scale. Financially and institutionally the project has good potential to be sustainable as it has ingrained itself well in the national policies and key institutions and it has succeeded to establish well working partnerships of relevant institutions, although at regional level in one region of the country. Financial sustainability of SLM activities will depend on the profitability of the activities/investments at farm/community level. So far, too little attention has been paid to secure the financial and economic profitability. Social sustainability has similarly positive prospects as the project pilot/demonstration activities are very well established and appropriated by the farmers and local communities.
197. In Panama, the establishment of two water basins committees in 2017 and 2019, including its regulatory framework, composed by multiple stakeholders from each basin, will secure the promotion of SLM practices at watershed level as well as interinstitutional cooperation. The basin committees will promote the sustainable management and territorial organization of the basins. The Ministry of the Environment will continue supporting stakeholders implementing SLM practices at the pilot sites, with a budget assigned until the year 2021. This is planned to link the producers with other initiatives and projects that allow sustainability. The synergies established with other national plans and programmes such as the National Action Program to Combat Drought and Desertification, the National Water Security Plan, Alliance for the Million (includes forest restoration actions), LDN programme, will support the continuity of the activities initiated by the project. The draft Soil Law, if approved, will facilitate the integration of SLM in decision-making.
198. In Tunisia, project results are expected to be sustainable, but more work and support is needed for mainstreaming and up-scaling. So far, only 4 of 26 SLM practices have been tested in 4 of the 24 regions in the country.
199. In Turkey, project financial sustainability is strengthened by the strong private sector involvement which is a unique example in the DS-SLM project. Private sector implementation of the SLM approaches also increases institutional sustainability in Turkey. However, an interviewee in Turkey mentioned that "mapping and producing guidelines are easy things to do, but the difficult thing is to get the SLM investments mainstreamed by farmers and investors".
200. In Uzbekistan, the financial sustainability of the project is proofed by the profitability analysis of the introduced SLM practices showing the practices to be highly profitable, and thus self-financing. Social sustainability is enhanced by the farm-level financial profitability.
201. An interviewee in Bangladesh suggested that institutional sustainability could be enhanced by the cooperation with relevant regional international organizations, such as SARC, CATIE and Mekong River Commission in the case of South and South-East Asia. Such cooperation would

still increase the leverage of the project as these regional organizations would promote the project and its results to its other member states.

202. In order to summarise the discussion on sustainability, the terminal evaluation presents here a somewhat unorthodox SWOT analysis of the project. The analysis, which is purposefully simplified to highlight the “big issues”, presents the project’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Opportunities and threats are purposefully focused on the future (i.e. possible follow-up) and are FAO-centred.
203. Some interviewees expressed their concern over the financial and institutional sustainability of WOCAT in general and the platform in particular. WOCAT is a global network hosted by the University of Bern and only has a very small staff. Its core financing from the Swiss government has been declining over the years. The financing of the platform derives partly from the WOCAT’s core financing and partly from various projects, such as DS-SLM, and thus the platform’s financing requires constant replenishment and marketing work.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Highly relevant. ii. Modular implementation model. iii. Participatory approach (instead of purely technocratic). iv. Several excellent country-cases. v. Enthusiasm among most of the country project teams. vi. LADA/WOCAT tools and platform. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Communication at global level. ii. Delays due to LOA bureaucracy. iii. FAO administrative bureaucracy. iv. Slow delivery in some countries. v. Lack of leadership and vision. vi. Lack of understanding land-based investments and how private sector operates.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. SLM is an increasingly big issue globally and in countries. ii. Climate change work and financing. iii. Land degradation neutrality (LDN) target. iv. UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.²² v. Potential role of FAO as the main SLM/LDN Knowledge Centre. vi. Availability of financing from various sources (GEF, GCF, Adaptation Fund, etc.). 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Competition for attention by other global big issues. ii. Competition by other incumbent SLM/LDN knowledge centres. iii. Sustainability of WOCAT.

²² In March 2019, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2021–2030 the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. UN Environment and FAO will lead the implementation.

4 Lessons learned

- 10.1 What lessons can be learned from the project, in terms of its design, new approaches (e.g. introduction of the Decision Support Framework), implementation, up-scaling and sustainability that may be useful for future and similar FAO interventions particularly funded by GEF or other donors in general?
204. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification adopted Land Degradation Neutrality as the principle target of the Convention at COP12, in October 2015. Countries are required to report on their process to achieve LDN. However, the LDN concept is much harder to intuitively understand by relevant key stakeholder (such as politicians, farmers and other land users) than SLM, and thus it is unlikely the LDN concept can be used efficiently for planning (strategic, operational and investment planning) and development purposes. It will remain as a technical concept used by specialist. There is a need to continue using more operational concepts such as SLM to have actual impact on land uses. During the DS-SLM project, the participating countries have learned that the SLM approach is a useful element in the LDN process, and this link is intended to be advocated e.g. in the coming COP14 which could be learned also by other countries.
205. The Decision Support Framework of DS-SLM approach works well in cutting across national, regional, provincial, landscape and local levels issues (Morocco, Philippines and Thailand). The approach with seven modules allows adequate flexibility that enables adjusting the framework to varying country contexts which avoids the risk of force feeding a fit-for-all-solution to situations where it does not actually work. At the same time, the framework gives adequate guidance and structure to the process. The Decision Support Framework could be an important tool for other new projects.
206. In similar global or regional projects, adequate allocation of funds for coordination and project management at global/regional level, including specialized technical personnel that can provide advice and continuous support to the participating countries, as well as promote the exchange of experiences and feedback between countries, using online and face-to-face tools, would improve project effectiveness and efficiency, and would avoid unnecessary delays and confusion.
207. Proactive and regular communication with all key partners and stakeholders is instrumentally important in other similar projects that require involvement of many sectors and stakeholders at various levels in order to achieve the project objectives.
208. Cross-sectoral and inter-institutional cooperation (participatory approach) has proven to be crucial (combined with good and transparent communication) for securing involvement of relevant key stakeholders and sectors. Sustainable land management requires cross-sectoral decision-making and action which is an important lesson for other SLM projects.
209. Projects that have among their objectives the impact on public policies require periods of at least five years for their implementation, which allow working with multiple stakeholders to establish a roadmap for the integration of a specific topic in the policy frameworks, as well as in the decision-making processes regarding planning and financing.

210. Proactive assessment of strategic South-South Cooperation opportunities are useful elements also in project design particularly in global/regional projects as it improves the efficiency and project buy-out/sustainability and avoids untried theoretical solutions that may not work in the end. FAO has established SSC approaches and tools which could be used more actively in formulating other similar projects.
211. Global or regional approach is useful when new approaches and methodologies are introduced and developed, and where policy issues are brought to normally very technical work. Such an approach allows the participating countries to share experiences, compare results and lessons.
212. LADA/WOCAT tools and DS-SLM experiences are useful elements for LDN monitoring improving the practicality and usability of the information generated and avoiding the production of unnecessary information just for the sake of reporting and monitoring purposes. These tools and experiences could be useful to be promoted to other countries under new projects.
213. The development of sustainability strategies and/or exit strategies as part of the necessary planning for the implementation of a project will facilitate its linkage with other ongoing initiatives, as a measure to guarantee the sustainability of the actions initiated by the project and the long-term impacts. Inclusion of a sustainability strategy/exit strategy as an expected outcome of any project will act as a reminder for the project managers/coordinators from the very beginning of the project to think and plan for after the project all along project implementation.
214. Introduction of SLM requires long-term financing in any country. Financing strategies are a useful tool to map opportunities, plan action and unleash such financing. New and additional domestic or donor financed projects could be one element of such a strategy, but not necessarily the most important one. Attracting private sector investment in profitable productive SLM could be more important in many situations, which is an important lesson for designing new projects.
215. SLM best practices and approaches need to be either profitable, and thus self-financing in the long-term, or they need to be subsidised for e.g. environmental reasons by the government. Such subsidies need to be long-term to trigger real and sustainable impact. Thus, departments and institutions advocating SLM best practices need to know if the best practices promoted are going to be profitable or not for the farmers/communities. Consequently, there is a need to focus more on the financial and economic analysis/studies of the SLM best practices/technologies and approaches in similar new projects.
216. Similar projects should take into better consideration existing national plans and strategies, such as the National Adaptation Plan, Zero Land Degradation Target, National Development Plans and Strategies (e.g. Bangladesh) and the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs).
217. The DS-SLM approach to link policy (mainstreaming) work with field level pilot/demonstration work appears to be the right one. Successful implementation of SLM best practices is important to get political and local buy-out. People in general, and decision makers/politicians in particular, want to see results firsthand. This has been acknowledged by practically all the project countries. In many countries the availability of existing/ongoing other relevant projects

active with similar SLM implementation has proven a useful leveraging factor, a lesson to be remembered when formulating new similar projects.

218. Land tenure may need more attention in similar new projects as it is a founding institutional arrangement either acting as a barrier to sustainable land management and investments, or encouraging such investments, depending on the clarity and specifications of the land tenure system.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

219. The evidence-based logical chain from Key Findings to Conclusions and further to Recommendations is presented below and summarised in Table 9 below. Recommendations are also targeted to either GEF, FAO, WOCAT or the project countries. Prioritization of recommendations is divided in two categories, High priority and Medium priority. Low priority recommendations are not given in this terminal evaluation. The prioritization is presented in Table 6.

5.1 Conclusions

Conclusion 1. Although for the present decision support project the project's strategic focus was right, in the forthcoming follow-up projects there is a need to focus more on farmers/land users, their livelihoods and food security.

Conclusion 2. Complex projects which need intersectoral and inter-institutional coordination and cooperation require long-term commitment by partners and key stakeholders.

Conclusion 3. South-south cooperation appears to be a good cost-efficient option for the provision of training and capacity building.

Conclusion 4. Attractiveness, usefulness and expected positive impact of the WOCAT SLM platform would be enhanced by introducing a dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing of technical information element/window to the platform.

Conclusion 5. Fairly large and complex global and regional projects require adequate budget and staff for project management and coordination.

Conclusion 6. The modular Decision Support Framework is a useful innovation and should also be advocated in other projects/countries.

Conclusion 7. Fairly large and complex global/regional projects need to have focussed and very clear logical framework/results matrix. Even without ambiguities such projects are difficult enough to implement.

Conclusion 8. Exercising discipline is needed in following up M&E information, as well as mid-term evaluation recommendations as the day to day chores tend to take all the time and effort of a Project Coordination Unit. Regular Steering Committee meetings, even by Skype, would provide the necessary structure for decision-making.

Conclusion 9. Successful partnerships have been instrumental in making the project successful in several countries, particularly due to the intersectoral nature of the SLM issues.

Conclusion 10. Private sector as the key player in the decision-making and implementation of land-based productive investments has a central role and responsibility in securing sustainability of land management.

Conclusion 11. The project design was inadequate in addressing gender and vulnerable groups.

Conclusion 12. New and additional follow-up financing is needed to continue the good work started. Mainstreaming and up-scaling SLM will require more time to secure sustainability.

Conclusion 13. An exit strategy for the project needs to be prepared and in other elements should be included in addition to the ones presented and discussed in Ankara.

Conclusion 14. High-level decision makers need further information and argumentation in order to achieve deeper SLM mainstreaming.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1. FAO, GEF and project countries support farmers/land users and strengthen agricultural and livestock extension services, so that they can bring practical solutions to farmers, to reduce land degradation, increase the provision of ecosystem services and, consequently, the productivity of their farms. This can be achieved by working with decision makers and integrating specific actions in new projects.

Recommendation 2. GEF, FAO and project countries seek ways to continue supporting and working on SLM mainstreaming and up-scaling that has now been well established in most of the project countries.

Recommendation 3. GEF, FAO and project countries seek ways to continue and also to out-scale to other/new countries the south-south cooperation in SLM work.

Recommendation 4. WOCAT, GEF and FAO seek ways to strengthen the SLM platform with a dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing of technical information element/window. WOCAT's SLM platform's financial sustainability needs to be secured at the same time.

Recommendation 5. FAO and GEF ensure that new global or regional projects have coordination units with sufficient human and financial resources that allow them to maintain a constant and fluid communication with the partner countries, as well as provide permanent technical support and promote exchanges and feedback between countries.

Recommendation 6. FAO should consider supporting the use of the modular Decision Support Framework of DS-SLM project also in other projects/countries.

Recommendation 7. FAO and GEF pay particular attention to the clarity and focus of the project design of large and complex global/regional projects.

Recommendation 8. FAO should secure regular Steering Committee meetings, even by Skype, to secure discipline and structure for decision-making to follow-up M&E information and mid-term evaluation recommendations.

Recommendation 9. FAO should consider promoting best practices in intersectoral and inter-agency partnership building in projects with significant cross-sectoral issues such as in SLM projects.

Recommendation 10. FAO and GEF should seek ways to engage the private sector players in future SLM projects. Partnerships with e.g. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), World Bank and other development financing institutions could be considered in this regard. Countries should involve private sector in relevant policy, strategy and investment programming processes in SLM work.

Recommendation 11. FAO/GEF project designs should include an assessment of relevance and importance of gender and vulnerable groups' issues, and if those issues are found relevant and important, the project strategy should include specific gender and vulnerable groups' involvement or mainstreaming strategies, and the project activities should include specific activities planned or cleared by a gender specialist.

Recommendation 12. FAO and GEF should request the inclusion of a sustainability/exit strategy as an expected outcome of any project.

Recommendation 13. FAO and project countries should encourage the country teams to write the best results and best SLM technologies and approaches in the form of an attractive and easily readable publication/book that can be given to decision makers, politicians, NGOs, farmer organizations, farmers, investors, financiers, private land-using companies. There should be handing-over meetings in every country with the presence of at least FAO, National Project Coordinator and a high-level representative of the respective Ministry.

Recommendation 14. Project countries to promote high-level decision makers discussions, capacity building and exchanges about SLM, including but not limited to the planned high-level meeting on DS-SLM project at COP14.

Table 9: Conclusions and recommendations matrix

Key findings (evaluation sub-question number)	Conclusions	Targeted recommendations	Priority
Relevance			
1. In general, the project strategy and actions responded to the stakeholders and beneficiaries needs. The project addresses a common but differentiated problem of the participating countries. (1.1 and 1.2)	C1. Although for the present <i>decision support</i> project the project's strategic focus was right, there is a need to focus more in the forthcoming follow-up projects on farmers/land users, their livelihoods and food security.	R1. FAO, GEF and project countries should support farmers / land users and strengthen agricultural and livestock extension services, so that they can bring practical solutions to farmers, to reduce land degradation, increase the provision of ecosystem services and, consequently, the productivity of their farms. This can be achieved by working with decision-makers and integrating specific actions in new projects.	Medium
2. The project strategy is considered highly appropriate in combining policy and strategy mainstreaming work with the implementation of SLM practices at pilot/demonstration scale. (1.1 & 1.2)			
3. Field observations showed that weak capacity of extension services to promote SLM may hinder the progress of SLM out-scaling. (1.3)			
4. The original results matrix had flaws but the modular implementation / decision support framework (DSF) introduced during inception phase facilitated the project implementation. (1.3)			
Effectiveness			
5. Effectiveness had improved considerably since MTE, particularly in those countries that started late the implementation. Most countries had reached or are expected to reach the results in general. However, up-scaling particularly will require more time and financing, and also SLM mainstreaming requires more time. (2.1)	C2. Complex projects which need inter-sectoral and inter-institutional coordination and cooperation require long-term commitment by partners and key stakeholders.	R2. GEF & FAO & project countries should seek ways to continue supporting and working on the SLM mainstreaming and up-scaling work that has now been well established in most of the project countries.	High
6. Project triggered positive regional and country-to-country cooperation (south-south), particularly in training and capacity building from more experienced countries to less experienced ones. (2.2)	C3. South-south cooperation appears to be a good cost-efficient option for the provision of training and capacity building.	R3. GEF & FAO & project countries could seek ways to continue and also to out-scale to other / new countries the south-south cooperation in SLM work.	
7. Global element of the project has facilitated broadening the perspectives (mainstreaming,			

Key findings (evaluation sub-question number)	Conclusions	Targeted recommendations	Priority
strategies, up-scaling) of otherwise very technical work by technical staff. (2.3)			
8. Expectations on the global platform vary: data base is in general highly regarded and appreciated but some countries expect more dynamic exchange of experiences & sharing technical information. (2.4)	C4. Attractiveness, usefulness and expected positive impact of the WOCAT SLM platform would be enhanced by introducing a dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing of technical information element / window to the platform.	R4. WOCAT, GEF & FAO should seek ways to strengthen the SLM platform with a dynamic exchange of experiences and sharing of technical information element / window. WOCAT's SLM platform's financial sustainability need to be secured at the same time.	High
Efficiency			
9. The PCU performance, efficiency and responsiveness at FAO headquarters has been considered by many stakeholders as efficient and responsive whereas others as non-responsive and slow, and apparently there has been some persistent communication problems. FAO administration rules are found complicated and cumbersome by some countries. (3.1)	C5. Fairly large and complex global and regional projects require adequate budget and staff for project management and coordination.	R5. FAO & GEF should ensure that new global or regional projects have coordination units with adequate human and financial resources that allow them to maintain a constant and fluid communication with the partner countries, as well as provide permanent technical support and promote exchanges and feedback between countries.	High
10. Institutional arrangements have varied a lot from country to country, which is a positive reflection of flexibility and project's ability to adjust to country situations. In general, the established institutional arrangements have been contributing positively to the project implementation. Partnerships, either established already before or during the project, have been instrumental for the achievement of results.. (3.2)			
11. The Project Coordination Unit of FAO headquarters was too thinly resourced and in general the project's budget for management and coordination was too tight in view of the project size and complexity. (3.3)			
12. Flexibility of the project has been important allowing to adapt to realities and changing conditions. The modular DSF in an important element of this flexibility. (3.4)	C6. The modular Decision Support Framework is a useful innovation and merits to be advocated also in other countries.	R6. FAO should consider supporting the use of the modular Decision Support Framework of DS-SLM project also in other countries.	

Key findings (evaluation sub-question number)	Conclusions	Targeted recommendations	Priority
13. The GEF co-financing concept appears to be difficult to understand and the actual spent amounts difficult to estimate by several project countries (3.5)			
14. The recommendations of MTE are not known by all countries; no major changes in implementation efficiency observed by countries after MTE. (3.6)			
Monitoring and evaluation			
15. Project reporting system with templates and focusing on modules is considered clear and well-functioning. The original project results matrix (logical framework) contains overly ambitious indicators and goals. (4.1)	C7. Fairly large and complex global / regional projects need to have focussed and very clear logical framework / results matrix. Even without ambiguities such projects are difficult enough to implement.	R7. FAO & GEF should pay particular attention to the clarity and focus of the project design of large and complex global / regional projects.	Medium
16. The decision-making process using the M&E information was not entirely clear. (4.2)	C8. Exercising discipline is needed in following up M&E information, as well as MTE recommendations as the day to day chores tend to take all the time and effort of a PCU. Regular Steering Committee meetings, even by Skype, would provide the necessary structure for the decision making.	R8. FAO should secure regular Steering Committee meetings, even by Skype, to secure discipline and structure for decision making to follow-up M&E information and MTE recommendations.	Medium
Stakeholder engagement			
17. Stakeholder engagement has been adequate and extensive in general, with the exception of private sector involvement. (5.1)	(See below re: sub-question 6.4)		
18. Project has positively contributed to the development of new partnerships (inter-institutional & cross-sectoral). Inter-institutional partnerships have been key for successful implementation. (5.2)	C9. Successful partnerships have been instrumental in making the project successful in several countries, particularly due to the inter-sectoral nature of the SLM issues.	R9. FAO should consider promoting best practices in inter-sectoral and inter-agency partnership building in projects with significant cross-sectoral issues such as in SLM projects.	Medium
Progress to impact			
19. Most countries are confident that the project will significantly contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in decision making at national and sub-national levels. (6.1, 6.2, 6.3)			

Key findings (evaluation sub-question number)	Conclusions	Targeted recommendations	Priority
20. The potential role of SLM investments by private sector is not fully understood in many countries which is a key barrier to achieving a major positive SLM impact in terms of improved land use and increased long-term productivity and profitability of agriculture under the climate change threat. (6.4)	C10. Private sector as the key player in the decision making and implementation of land-based productive investments has a central role and responsibility in securing sustainability of land management.	R10. FAO & GEF should seek ways to engage the private sector players in future SLM projects. Partnerships with e.g. IFAD, World Bank and other development financing institutions could be considered in this regard. Countries should involve private sector in relevant policy, strategy and investment programming processes in SLM work.	High
21. Up-scaling of SLM best practices will require more time and additional financing; in some countries such financing is expected to come mainly from domestic sources but in others additional external financing is needed. (6.5)			
Gender			
22. Project's strategy and planned activities did not address specifically the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups. The project was considered by most of its stakeholders as gender neutral and believed they did not need to address gender. (7.1 & 7.2)	C11. The project design was inadequate in addressing gender and vulnerable groups.	R11. FAO / GEF project designs should include an assessment of relevance and importance of gender and vulnerable groups issues, and if those issues are found relevant and important, the project strategy should include specific gender and vulnerable groups involvement or mainstreaming strategies, and the project activities should include specific activities planned or cleared by a gender specialist.	Medium
Sustainability			
23. Project has strong national ownership in almost all the 14 countries. (8.1 & 8.2)			
24. Several countries have seen the tools and methodologies of the DS-SLM project as a good means to develop new and larger follow-up / scaling-up projects. (8.1 & 8.2)	C12. New and additional follow-on financing is needed to continue the good work started. Mainstreaming and up-scaling SLM will require more time to secure sustainability.	See recommendations (R2 & R3) related to sub-questions 2.1, 2.2 & 2.3	High
25. Several countries have already secured new project financing, either from domestic or external sources, and others are in the process of preparing project proposal(s). (8.1 & 8.2)			

Key findings (evaluation sub-question number)	Conclusions	Targeted recommendations	Priority
26. The Project Management started thinking and planning an exit strategy quite late, only in 2019. (8.1 & 8.2)	C13. Exit strategy needs to be prepared and in addition to the elements presented and discussed in Ankara, there should be other elements.	R12. FAO & GEF should request the inclusion of a sustainability strategy / exit strategy as an expected outcome of any project.	High
27. The incipient exist strategy is not robust enough. (8.1 & 8.2)		R13. FAO and project countries should encourage the country teams to write the best results and best SLM technologies and approaches in a form of an attractive and easily readable publication / book that can be given to decision makers, politicians, NGOs, farmer organizations, farmers, investors, financiers, private land-using companies. There should be handing-over meetings in every country with the presence of at least FAO, National Project Coordinator, high-level representative of the respective Ministry.	High
28 The project results are environmentally sustainable. (8.3)	C14. High-level decision makers need further information and argumentation in order to achieve deeper SLM mainstreaming.	R14. Project countries should promote high level decision makers' discussions, capacity building and exchanges about SLM, including but not limited to the planned high-level meeting on DS-SLM project at COP14.	Medium
29. The integration of the project into the relevant national and / or regional / provincial institutions has secured the institutional sustainability in many countries. However, although the project called the attention of key institutional actors and decision makers, on the need to address desertification and land degradation with concrete proposals referred to the generation of information, integration of SLM in planning and regulatory frameworks, as well as in practical actions at the local level, the high-level decision makers appear to require still more convincing information and advocacy, and the plan to organise a high-level meeting on DS-SLM at the COP14 is commendable. (8.4)			
30. Financial sustainability is secured in some countries through the mainstreaming strategy which is expected to lead to a situation where e.g. local municipalities will continue the implementation using local government budget.			

Conclusions and recommendations

Key findings (evaluation sub-question number)	Conclusions	Targeted recommendations	Priority
Additional and new project financing is also applied in many countries. (8.4)			
31. Social sustainability is considered satisfactory or good particularly in those countries where the pilot / demonstration activities are adopted by the local communities and where the introduced SLM practices are profitable at farm / community level. (8.5)			

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Appendix 1. Evaluation matrix

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
1. Relevance	Were the project's strategy and planned actions relevant and adequate to meet the needs of the beneficiaries and stakeholders?	<p>1.1 Were the needs, capacities and resources of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved in sustainable land management known in the beginning of the project?</p> <p>1.2 Were the project's strategy relevant and adequate to meet the needs, capacities and resources of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved in sustainable land management?</p> <p>1.3 Were the project's planned actions (activities) adequate to meet the needs, capacities and resources of the beneficiaries and all stakeholders involved in sustainable land management?</p>	<p>Existence and adequacy of a base-line study during the project preparation.</p> <p>Degree to which the project takes into account beneficiaries and stakeholders needs.</p> <p>Beneficiaries and stakeholders perceptions respect to adequacy of project's strategy and activities to national realities and existing capacities.</p>	<p>-Project documents and reports.</p> <p>Project MTE.</p> <p>FAO, project staff and project partners.</p> <p>Government officials.</p> <p>Beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Documents analysis.</p> <p>Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partners, government officials and beneficiaries.</p> <p>Field visit.</p>
2. Achievement of project results (Effectiveness)	To what extent is the project effective in achieving its expected outcomes and objectives?	<p>2.1 To what extent have project outcomes and objectives been achieved?</p> <p>- <i>SLM best practices mainstreamed into national and/or sub-national agricultural and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies and programmes</i></p> <p>- <i>Up-scaling of SLM best practices catalyzed in countries through targeted actions on the ground and strategic</i></p>	<p>New methodologies, skills and knowledge.</p> <p>SLM relevant changes in national and/or sub-national agricultural and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies and programmes.</p>	<p>National or sub-national plans, investment frameworks, policies, programs.</p> <p>Project documents and reports.</p>	<p>Documents analysis.</p> <p>Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partners, government officials and beneficiaries.</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		<p><i>decision making from local to national level.</i></p> <p><i>Knowledge management and decision support system and tools used to support evidence-based strategy formulation at national level for promoting SLM, and contributing to global processes to address DLDD.</i></p> <p>2.2 Did the project produce any unintended results, either positive or negative?</p> <p>2.3 What are the contributing factors for the results achieved that can be particularly attributed to the project?</p> <p>2.4 To what extent has the global DLDD and SLM decision-support platform been able to develop technical and scientific tools and methods for SLM up-scaling?</p>	<p>Change in capacities for information management.</p> <p>Upscaled SLM methodologies adopted in new agricultural or forestry investments (by investors, companies, communities, farmers).</p> <p>Change in capacities for awareness raising.</p> <p>Change in capacities for policy making and planning.</p> <p>New technical and scientific tools and methods for SLM up-scaling.</p>	<p>Project MTE.</p> <p>FAO, project staff and project partners.</p> <p>Government officials.</p> <p>Beneficiaries.</p>	
3. Efficiency of the project implementation and execution	To what extent is the project making best use of human, technical, technological, financial and knowledge inputs to achieve its desired results?	<p>3.1 How did the project's management and execution contribute to, or impede, the achievement of the project's results and objectives?</p> <p>3.2 How did the project's institutional arrangements and partnerships contribute to, or impede, the achievement of the project's results and objectives?</p>	<p>Change in project implementation approach to improve efficiency.</p> <p>Availability and quality of financial and technical project reports.</p>	<p>Project documents and reports.</p> <p>Project MTE.</p> <p>FAO, project staff and project partners.</p>	<p>Documents analysis.</p> <p>Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partners and government officials.</p>

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		<p>3.3 How did the project's financial and human resources contribute to, or impede, the achievement of the project's results and objectives?</p> <p>3.4 To what extent has the management been able to adapt to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation?</p> <p>3.5 To what extent has the expected co-financing been delivered?</p> <p>3.6 To what extent were the recommendations provided by the MTE addressed in the second phase of the project?</p>	Planned vs. real funds leveraged.	Government officials.	
<p>3. Efficiency Recommendations provided by the Mid Term Evaluation (3.5)</p>	<p>To what extent were the recommendations provided by the MTE addressed in the second phase of the project?</p>	<p>1) Project Implementation Team (PCU)</p> <p>The project implementation team needs to be more responsive to country-based implementation teams' requests. It is suggested for instance that a brief project update should be sent electronically to all once a month. Communication tools such as skype should also be used to increase communications between the PCU and participating countries.</p>	Change in the responsiveness of PCU to requests from countries.	<p>Project documents and reports.</p> <p>FAO, project staff and project partners.</p> <p>Government officials.</p>	

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		<p>2) PCU and PSC A greater focus on sustainability and up-scaling project achievements during the last period of this project is necessary. The assumption that up-scaling SLM practices can be achieved through mainstreaming SLM approaches into sectoral policies is valid but the mainstreaming strategy formulated in the project document is not convincing. Discussions with participating countries on exit strategies are needed to identify what the project could support to improve the likelihood of project achievements to be sustained over the long term.</p>	Existence of an exit strategy in each participating country.		
		<p>3) PCU and PSC More PSC meetings (2-3?) are recommended during the last year of the project, focusing on the project exit.</p>	Number of PSC meetings during the last year.		
		<p>4) PCU Increase the financial transparency of project disbursements and the reliability of information to produce timely and accurate financial reports per project outcome.</p>	Increase in the financial transparency and changes in the quality of financial reports.		
		<p>5) PCU Strengthen the monitoring and reporting on gender disaggregated data and information. Gender disaggregated</p>	Change in the quantity and quality of gender disaggregated reporting.		

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		<p>reporting on related outputs in the indicator tracking table should be made mandatory. Recording the participation of men and women land users in project activities at the land use level should be encouraged so as to get a better understanding of the impact of the project at the local level. Countries that have just started implementing their project should consult with the Gender Focal Points in the FAO country offices in order to promote greater participation by men and women land users.</p>			
		<p>6) PCU Add and monitor the risk “weak coordination and networking hampering the exchange of knowledge and experiences among the Parties” to the project risks log; including the formulation of mitigation actions as needed. Adding this risk log and monitoring it will allow the project implementation team to quicker act upon any deterioration of these critical functions of the project.</p>	<p>Was weak coordination and networking added to the project risk log.</p>		
		<p>7) PCU Focus the global and regional project support on countries with the most needs, including Tunisia, Bosnia,</p>	<p>Amount of global and regional support given to listed countries with the most needs.</p>		

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		Morocco, Thailand, China, Turkey, Philippines, Nigeria, Lesotho and Bangladesh.			
		<p>8) FAO and CDE/WOCAT Conduct an independent assessment of the DS-SLM methodological framework, including the LADA tools, LADA local and the WOCAT knowledge platform. The current focus is more on land use and less on land users. There is a need to assess the implicit objective of this framework that by applying SLM best practices, land productivity and sustainability will increase, and by extension it is assumed that land users will benefit from this and sustain these practices.</p>	Was the independent assessment done?		
		<p>9) FAO and GEF As an implementing agency, FAO needs to find a more efficient way to mobilize project financial resources to a project with a global reach; particularly when these resources are small grants. The result is that "transaction costs" are very high for a limited value added to the project.</p>	Changes in the fund mobilization systems.		
4. Monitoring and evaluation	To what extent the project monitoring and evaluation	4.1 How effective was the functioning of the project results-based M&E system to follow up progress?	Existence, quality and utility of the M&E system.	Project documents and reports.	Documents analysis. Interviews with FAO

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
	system supported timely decision making?	4.2 How was the information from this system used to make timely decisions during project implementation?		Project MTE. FAO, project staff and project partners. Government officials.	and project staff, project partners and government officials.
5. Stakeholder engagement	To what extent stakeholder engagement contributed to project implementation?	5.1 To what extent has the project engaged stakeholders – in particular farmers and herders, in pilot site management? 5.2 To what extent the project developed new and enhanced existing partnerships?	Activities conducted to support cooperative arrangements and partnerships. Degree to which project activities have been taken over by local/national counterparts/organizations.	Project documents and reports. Project MTE. FAO, project staff and project partners. Government officials. Beneficiaries.	Documents analysis. Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partner, government officials and beneficiaries. Field visit.
6. Progress to impact	To what extent and how is the project likely to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in decision making at national and sub-national levels?	6.1 How is the project likely to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in national planning, financing and policy frameworks? 6.2 How is the project likely to contribute to the mainstreaming of SLM in sub-national planning, financing and policy frameworks? 6.3 Is there any evidence of SLM mainstreaming at the decision-making	Activities conducted to support the development of new laws and policies. Evidence of SLM investments by investors, companies, communities, farmers. Evidence of commitments by policy makers to mainstream	Project documents and reports. MTE. FAO, project staff and project partners.	Documents analysis including national policies, strategies and programmes. Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partners and government officials.

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		level that can be attributed to the project?	SLM in national and sub-national planning, financing and policy frameworks.	Government officials. National policies, strategies and programmes.	
		6.4 Are there any barriers or risks that may prevent future progress towards long-term results?			
		6.5 What is the likelihood of longer-term impacts of the project?			
7. Gender	To what extent the project considered gender in its implementation?	7.1 How the project contributed to the empowerment of women and vulnerable groups throughout its implementation? 7.2 How the project mainstreamed gender considerations in its implementation?	Degree to which the project takes into account gender (and vulnerable groups) policies from each country. Gender disaggregated data in project documents.	Project documents and reports. MTE. FAO, project staff and project partners. Government officials,	Documents analysis. Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partners and government officials.
8. Sustainability	To what extent are steps being taken to ensure project sustainability?	8.1 To what extent has the project created ownership among counterparts and stakeholders? 8.2 What is the evidence that project counterparts and stakeholders will continue their activities after the project ends? 8.3 How sustainable are the results achieved at the environmental level?	Evidence that particular partnerships will be sustained. Evidence of steps taken to address sustainability (environmental, social, institutional and financial). Evidence of commitments from	Project documents and reports. MTE. FAO, project staff and project partners.	Documents analysis. Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partner, government officials and beneficiaries.

Evaluation Criteria	Main Questions	Sub Questions (research questions)	Indicators	Sources	Data Collection Method
		8.4 How sustainable are the results achieved at the institutional and financial level?	partners and other stakeholders to financially support relevant actions after the project ends.	Government officials.	
		8.5 How sustainable are the results achieved at the social level?			
9. Lessons learnt	What are the main lessons learnt from the project?	9.1 What lessons can be learned from the project, in terms of its design new approaches (e.g. introduction of the Decision Support Framework) and implementation that may be useful for future and similar FAO interventions particularly funded by the GEF or other donors in general?	Existence, quality and utility of the M&E system, feedback and dissemination mechanism to share lessons learned and recommendations.	Project documents and reports. MTE. FAO, project staff, project partners, government officials.	Documents analysis. Interviews with FAO and project staff, project partner, government officials and beneficiaries.
		9.2 What lessons can be learned from the project, in terms of up-scaling and sustainability that may be useful for future and similar FAO interventions particularly funded by the GEF or other donors in general?			

Appendix 2. People interviewed

Global Conference in Ankara, Turkey from 24 to 27 April 2019	
Ahaduzzaman, Sheikh	FAO SEC
Ali, Sohrab	National Project Coordinator, Bangladesh (provided written replies to evaluation questions)
Bensouiba, Hamid	Project Expert, Morocco
Custovic, Hamid	National Project Coordinator, entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (provided written replies to evaluation questions)
Fetsi, Theodora	FAO CBL
Gonzalez, Hernan	GEF Coordination Unit, FAO
Grandi, Alessandra	FAO CBL
Islam, Sadekul	Project Focal Point, Bangladesh
Koetlisi, Koetlisi	Project Focal Point, Lesotho
Ljusa, Melisa	Deputy National Project Coordinator, entity Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Moshoeshoe, Matoka	National Project Coordinator, Lesotho (provided written replies to evaluation questions)
Moz Christofolletti, Maria	FAO OED
Nongharnpitak, Nuntapon	Project Focal Point, Thailand
Pine, Baldwin	Project Expert, Philippines
Pothinam, Anuwat	Project Expert, Thailand
de la Rosa, Rosalund	FAO Consultant, Thailand
Saadallah, Jamila	Project Expert, Tunisia
Schlingloff, Stefan	Project Manager, FAO
Sun, Tao	National Project Coordinator, China

Appendix 2. People interviewed

Ventigan, Filipina	Project Focal Point, Philippines
Wang, Guosheng	National Project Deputy Coordinator, China (provided written replies to evaluation questions)
Zhang, Deping	Project Expert, China
Face-to-face Interviews	
Argentina	
Rubio, Cecilia	CONICET Miembro de la Comisión Directiva del ONDTyD
Wilson, Marcelo	Coordinador sitio piloto Cuenca Las Estacas
Bosnia and Herzegovina, entity Republic of Srpska	
Mladen, Babic	National Project Coordinator
Milan, Sipka	Project Focal Point
Colombia	
Angel, Manuela	FAO Asistente Representante
Arevalo, Luz Marina	UPRA
Bolaños, Marco Aurelio	MADR
Cardenas, Deyanohora	Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (IGAC)
Olivera, Carolina	FAO Colombia Equipo de proyecto
Otero, Javier	FAO Colombia Coordinador de proyecto
Rivero, Ana María	Cancillería
Rozo, Daniel	Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural (MADR)
Ruiz, Sandra	Consultora
Sanchez, Reinaldo	IDEAM
Ecuador	

Andrade, Soledad	IEE
Calles López, Juan Andrés	FAO Coordinador de proyecto
Flores, Johanna	FAO Ecuador
González, Rosa	MAE
Guzman, Diego	SENAGUA
Loayza, Verónica	MAG
Metzler, Eric	Ministerio de Agricultura (MAG)
Penarreta, Robert Andres Erreis	MAE
Preissing, John	FAO Ecuador Representante
Salinas, Karina	Ministerio del Ambiente (MAE)
Yanez, Misael	Instituto Espacial Ecuatoriano (IEE)
Morocco	
Abdessadek, Hebrih	Sector Chief of Forestry in Tamri
Aduass, Kautar	Regional Directorate of Agriculture, Souss-Massa Region
Ahejam	Network of Associations of Argan Cultivation in the Biosphere Reserve, RARBA
Ahmed, Achour	Studies, DREFLCD-SO
Aissa, Mokader	Service Chief DREFLCD-SO
Barra, Omar - Secretary General	Bismillam Association, Douar Sidi Boushab, Amskroud, Agadir
Boutanga, Ahmed	Bismillam Association, Douar Sidi Boushab, Amskroud, Agadir
Boutouga, Losayn	Bismillam Association, Douar Sidi Boushab, Amskroud, Agadir
Bouziani, Youness	Project Focal Point, DLCDPN / HCEFLCD
Charifi, Mustafa	Resilliance Association

Choulli,	Director, Regional Administration, Souss-Massa Region
Eddaif, Nadia	GIS Expert, ANDZOA
El Qorchi,, Mbarak	
Elmrabet, Said	Forest Engineer, DPEFLCD-Ag
Endichi, Mohamed	Director of Fight Against Desertification and Protection of Nature, Department of Water, Forests and Fight Against Desertification (DLCDPN / HCEFLCD)
Farkas, Bosnia and Herzegovina	Bismillam Association, Douar Sidi Boushab, Amskroud, Agadir
Farouki, Ahmad	Tirogza Rural Development Association
Foughali, Boubker	Provincial Director, Directorate of Water, Forests and Fight Against Desertification, Agadir (DPEFLCD-Ag)
Hajibi	DLCDPN / HCEFLCD
Itohar, Mohamed	Association Igra for the Development and Environment
Jer, Mohamed	Tirogza Rural Development Association
Karima	Social Development Agency
Karra, Youssef	Principal Engineer, National Institute of Agriculture Research (INRA)
Laaouichi, Salah	Sector Chief of Forestry in Amskroud
Laiti, Abdelhak	Assistant FAO Representative (Program)
Mohamed, Ouassas	Regional Environmental Directorate, Souss-Massa Region
Moqodoh, Omar	Association Igra for the Development and Environment
Naitamar, Asif	Banana Producers Cooperative, Bioproduction with certification
Nonna, Touani	Member of the Project Coordination Unit, DREFLCD-SO
Ouchia, Hmed	
Oulammou, Mohamed	Director, Development of Environment Projects, National Agency for the Development of Oasis Zones and Argan Areas (ANDZOA)

Rochdi, Ouchna	National Project Coordinator, Regional Directorate of Water, Forests and Fight Against Desertification of South-West (Agadir) (DREFLCD-SO)
Wahmane, Mohamed	President, Bismillam Association, Douar Sidi Boushab, Amskroud, Agadir
Zaza, Lmsen	Vice President, Bismillam Association, Douar Sidi Boushab, Amskroud, Agadir
Panama	
Beernaerts, Ines	FAO SLM
Bravo, Edgar	Instituto Panameño Técnico Agropecuario de Tonosi
Bustavino, Alcibiades	MinAmbiente Director Regional
Cedeño, Dimas	Productor cuenca Parita
De Gracia, Keisy	Instituto Panameño Técnico Agropecuario de Tonosi
Franceschi, Luigi	Fundación PANAMA (Consultor)
García, Catalina	Productora cuenca Tonosi
García, Eduard	Proyecto Ecológico Azuero
Hernández, Tamara	FAO Panamá
Jaramillo, Joshua	MinAmbiente equipo de proyecto
Lince, Karima	MinAmbiente Coordinadora de proyecto
Martinez, Isaías	Fundación PANAMA (Consultor)
Mitre, Hipolita	Productora cuenca Parita
Morales, David	FAO SLM
Peraci, Adoniram Sanches	
Ruiz, Ma. del Carmen	FAO SLM
Saénz, Valentín	Productor cuenca Tonosi

Sánchez, Yerania	FAO SLM
Vásquez, Sandra	Proyecto Ecológico Azuero
Villareal, Gladys	Ministerio de Ambiente (MinAmbiente)
Wing, Kevin	MinAmbiente equipo de proyecto
Thailand	
Bunjirtluk, Jintaridth	National Project Coordinator, Thailand
Tunisia	
Sahli Attia, Rafla	National Project Coordinator, Tunisia
Turkey	
Engin, Gem	Communication Expert
Erpul, Gunay	FAO SEC, Ankara University
Fatih, Berber	NPC Expert
Özlem, Yavuz	National Project Coordinator, Turkey
Uzbekistan	
Gulchekhra, Khasankhanova	Project Focal Point
Nadejda, Manuyk	
Umid, Abdullaev	National Project Coordinator
Others	
Nicole, Harari	WOCAT
Rima, Mekdaschi	WOCAT
Soledad, Bastidas	FAO CBL
Skype Interviews	

Abdourahman ,Maki	Project Contact Point at FAO Tunisia
Agrosavia, Martha Bolaños,	Corpoica, Colombia
Aguilar, Bernardo	Fundación Neotropica (Consultor), Panama
Braun, Genevieve	GEF Unit, FAO
Bunning, Sally	FAO RLC
Camardelli, Cristina	Coordinadora sitio piloto Cacho Semiárido, Argentina
Chavez, Gabriel	FAO Colombia Coordinador portafolio GEF, Colombia
Corso, María Laura	SADS Coordinadora de proyecto, Argentina
de la Rosa, Rosalund	FAO Consultant, Thailand
Galizzi, Flavio	Bolsa de Cereales Provincia Entre Ríos, Argentina
Hammond, Thomas	Lead Technical Officer, CBD, FAO
Maggi, Alejandro	Coordinador de la Comisión de Buenas Practicas, Argentina
Mansur, Eduardo	Budget Holder, CBD, FAO
Mathieu, Henry	Project Contact Point at FAO Bangladesh
Metzel, Ruth	Proyecto Ecológico Azuero, Panama
Ochoa, Maria Isabel	FAO GEF Proyecto Conexión Biocaribe, Colombia
Ospina, Olga Lucía	Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible (MADS), Colombia
Picot, Maude Veyret	GEF Unit, FAO
Rubio, Fernanda	Consultora para la estrategia de mainstreaming, Argentina
Rubio, Jorge	Ex coordinador de proyecto, Ecuador
Sammy, Contreras	National Project Coordinator, Philippines
Sanchez, Eusebio	FAO Colombia Equipo de proyecto, Colombia

Appendix 2. People interviewed

Schlingloff, Stefan	Project Manager, CBD, FAO
Segarra, Pool	Consultor, Ecuador
Stamati, Mariana Victoria	SADS, Argentina
Vega, Luisa	Colombia

Appendix 3. FAO-GEF Evaluation Criteria Rating Table and Rating Scheme

Each criterion receives a rating derived from the evaluative assessment in the main document.

GEF - FAO criteria/sub criteria	Rating	Summary Comments
E. ASSESSMENT OF PROJECT RESULTS		
6. Overall quality of project outcomes		
6.1 Relevance		
6.2 Effectiveness		
6.3 Efficiency		
F. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION RATING		
7. Quality of project implementation		
8. Quality of project execution		
G. MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) RATING		
9. Overall quality of M&E		
9.1 M&E Design		
9.2 M&E Plan Implementation		
H. SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT OUTCOMES		
10. Overall likelihood of risks to sustainability		
10.1 Financial risk		
10.2 Socio-political risk		
10.3 Institutional risk		
10.4 Environmental risk		

Rating Scheme

A. Overall Outcome ratings

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	<i>"Level of outcomes achieved clearly exceeds expectations and/or there were no short comings."</i>
Satisfactory (S)	<i>"Level of outcomes achieved was as expected and/or there were no or minor short comings."</i>
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	<i>"Level of outcomes achieved more or less as expected and/or there were moderate short comings."</i>
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	<i>"Level of outcomes achieved somewhat lower than expected and/or there were significant shortcomings."</i>
Unsatisfactory (U)	<i>"Level of outcomes achieved substantially lower than expected and/or there were major short comings."</i>
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	<i>"Only a negligible level of outcomes achieved and/or there were severe short comings."</i>
Unable to Assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the level of outcome achievements.

B. Project Implementation ratings (Assess Implementation and Execution separately)

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of implementation or execution somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe shortcomings in quality of implementation or execution .
Unable to Assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of implementation or execution .

C. Monitoring and Evaluation Design or Implementation Ratings (Overall M&E design, Assess Design and Implementation separately)

Rating	Description
Highly Satisfactory (HS)	There were no shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation exceeded expectations.
Satisfactory (S)	There were no or minor shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation meets expectations.
Moderately Satisfactory (MS)	There were some shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation more or less meets expectations.
Moderately Unsatisfactory (MU)	There were significant shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation somewhat lower than expected.
Unsatisfactory (U)	There were major shortcomings and quality of M&E design or M&E implementation substantially lower than expected.
Highly Unsatisfactory (HU)	There were severe short comings in M&E design or M&E implementation .
Unable to Assess (UA)	The available information does not allow an assessment of the quality of M&E design or M&E implementation

D. Sustainability

Rating	Description
Likely (L)	There is little or no risk to sustainability.
Moderately Likely (ML)	There are moderate risks to sustainability.
Moderately Unlikely (MU)	There are significant risks to sustainability.
Unlikely (U)	There are severe risks to sustainability.
Unable to Assess (UA)	Unable to assess the expected incidence and magnitude of risks to sustainability.

Appendix 4. Project expected results and planned activities

1. The table below was compiled from the list of expected results and planned activities as anticipated in the project document. It will be used during the assignment by the Evaluation Team as a succinct summary of what is expected from this project. Progress made against these expected results and expected targets will be assessed during the evaluation and reported in the MTE report.
2. Global Environmental Objective: Contribute to combating desertification land degradation and drought (DLDD) worldwide through scaling up sustainable land management best practices based on evidence based and informed decision making.
3. Project Development Objective: To increase the provision of ecosystem goods and services and enhance food security in countries and regions affected by DLDD through the promotion of SLM and integrated management and efficiency in the use of natural resources.

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
<p>Outcome 1.1. SLM best practices mainstreamed into national and/or sub-national agricultural and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies and programs.</p>	<p>Output 1.1.1. Countries delivering reliable DLDD and SLM assessments and information on SLM best practices suitable for mainstreaming at national or sub-national levels.</p>	<p>GEF: USD 2 485 788 Co-financing: USD 16 662 090</p>	<p>In each country:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Land-use/management systems (LUS/LMS) will be characterized and mapped at subnational and, to the extent possible, national levels taking into account administrative units and landscape components. ii. National training/assessment workshop (15) will be organized to build capacity of key sectors/stakeholders in the conduct of a participatory assessment and use of analytical tools and methods as well as selection of sites and SLM interventions. iii. A multidisciplinary team will be set up and trained in each priority/demonstration area to conduct local field diagnostic and DPSIR analysis, to assess and document SLM best practices on the ground. iv. A mechanism will be put in place for facilitating uploading into national and global databases of the data on assessed SLM practices, using simplified QT, QA and selected modules.
	<p>Output 1.1.2. DLDD and SLM assessments findings mainstreamed into planning and investment processes at national and sub-national levels.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A report for each country (15) summarizing the results of the assessment and analysis, with supporting communicative maps, statistics and photographs. ii. National review/planning workshops will be organized to prepare an operational strategy and targeted action plan (national/subnational and local) for SLM up-scaling and mainstreaming in each country. iii. Development and dissemination of attractive and targeted communication and capacity development tools. iv. In country training of decision-makers and supporting staff involved in SLM mainstreaming and up-scaling strategies will be provided.
	<p>Output 1.1.3. Strengthened regional and inter-regional capacity development and experience sharing for DLDD and SLM.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Identification of capacity building needs of national partner institutions and design of training modules and sessions. i. Development of training materials on assessment, data collection, mapping, analysis and decision support. ii. Training will subsequently be conducted in the four regions on assessment, data collection, mapping and analysis for decision support.

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
<p>Outcome 1.2. Up-scaling of SLM best practices catalyzed in countries through targeted actions on the ground and strategic decision making from local to national level.</p>	<p>Output 1.2.1. Strengthened delivery mechanisms for SLM demonstration, awareness raising and training.</p>	<p>GEF: USD 2 466 581 Co-financing: USD 14 807 267</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. A training needs assessment will be carried out of the SLM delivery capacities of various extension and technical bodies including a review of existing training processes and materials. ii. Compilation and updating of training material with competent national and/or regional research and extension institutions on the design and adaptation of SLM technologies targeting extension agents and other service delivery mechanisms. iii. Production and dissemination of training materials through extension, training and education services. iv. Training of trainers/facilitators in national institutions.
	<p>Output 1.2.2. Implementation of SLM best practices leading to adoption and progressive up- scaling of cost effective and innovative SLM technologies covering a spectrum of LUS.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Identify local demonstration areas for testing and dissemination of SLM practices. ii. Selection of SLM practices that will be implemented at demonstration areas. iii. DLDD and SLM impacts and adoption rates will be monitored at the demonstration areas together with bottlenecks/barriers to up-scaling.
	<p>Output 1.2.3. Strengthened country and regional capacity for DLDD and SLM scaling up delivered by FAO-WOCAT and through regional and inter- regional capacity development and experience sharing processes.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Briefs, case studies and available training materials will be collected, where possible with the help of National Lead Agencies covering: creation of enabling environment for SLM; monitoring and assessment of SLM; capacity development for the spread and wide adoption of SLM technologies; capacity development of service providers in effective scaling out approaches; and mobilizing adequate, predictable and timely financial resources.
<p>Outcome 2.1. Knowledge management and decision-support system and tools used to support evidence-based strategy formulation at national level for promoting SLM, and</p>	<p>Output 2.1.1. A federated FAO-WOCAT, online and open access DLDD and SLM decision-support platform established that links technical and scientific information and data, networks, country partners and 2-5 global/(sub)regional partners and programs (FAO, UNCCD CST, IPCC, WOCAT partners, etc.).</p>	<p>GEF: USD 450 005 Co-financing: USD 6 217 991</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Capacity development support and backstopping will be provided to countries on the use of the global platform that will facilitate knowledge sharing, learning and informed decision making on SLM. ii. Update and validation of global data sets, through FAOStats, GeoNetwork, GLADIS and Soilgrid, for regional and global analyses and modelling on land resources status and trends. iii. Exchange of knowledge and data between global land degradation and SLM components and between global and national platforms.

Intended Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Budget per Outcome	Indicative Activities
contributing to global processes to address DLDD.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Links and collaboration will be established with other existing databases and platforms. v. To inform up-scaling of SLM at global level, SLM experiences will be summarized and synthesized into key messages and case studies for different LUS, countries, etc.
	<p>Output 2.1.2. Guidelines for harmonized approaches and standardized methods and tools to assess land management systems in terms of DLDD and SLM available and supporting informed decision making for up-scaling of SLM best practices.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Finalized guidelines for the conduct of a rapid and reasonably accurate identification and mapping of the status and the trends of the quality of land resources and of applied land management practices, their impacts and effects. ii. Following the implementation of the rapid national assessment countries will carry out more detailed subnational and local assessments during the course of the overall project. iii. A survey will be undertaken to monitor the uptake and use of methods, tools, and knowledge gained under the project and the overall usefulness of the knowledge management and decision support platform iv. To the extent possible the global database will be updated and simplified through co-funding; additional resources will be mobilized for developing an offline version for use by countries that have poor internet access in rural areas and templates will be improved.
<p>Outcome 3.1.Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management.</p>	<p>Output 3.1.1. Project web-based monitoring system established.</p>	<p>GEF: USD 350 000</p> <p>Co-financing: USD 210 000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. M&E and communication activities to ensure a systematic results-based monitoring and evaluation of project progress towards achieving project outputs and outcome targets as established in the Project Results Framework as well as promote the wider dissemination of project results.
	<p>Output 3.1.2. Midterm and terminal evaluation carried out.</p>		
	<p>Output 3.1.3. Communication and dissemination of project results.</p>		
<p>Project Management</p>		<p>GEF: USD 364 356 Co-financing: USD 200 000</p>	
Total Budget		<p>GEF: USD 6 116 730 + Co-financing: USD 38 097 348 = Total: USD 44 214 078</p>	

Source: Project Document

Appendix 5. FAO-GEF co-financing table

Name of the co-financer	Co-financer type	Type of co-financing	Co-financing at project start (amount confirmed at GEF CEO endorsement/approval by the project design team) (in USD)			Materialized co-financing by the end of July 2019 (according to the information received by the evaluation Team) (in USD)		
			In-kind	Cash	Total	In-kind ²³	Cash	Total
Argentina	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	270 318		270 318	113 539		113 539
Bangladesh	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	610 000		610 000	40 099		40 099
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	990 000		990 000	1 319 951		1 319 951
China	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	700 000		700 000	200 000		200 000
Colombia	Nat. Gov.	In-kind/cash	224 000	336 000	560 000	669 304		669 304
Ecuador	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	300 000		300 000	345 483		345 483
Lesotho	Nat. Gov.	In-kind/cash	950 000		950 000	946 000		946 000
Morocco	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	950 000		950 000	29 000		29 000
Nigeria	Nat. Gov.	In-kind/cash	18 400 000		18 400 000			
Panama	Nat. Gov.	In-kind/cash	1 440 000	600 000	2 040 000	750 400		750 400
Philippines	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	181 394		181 394	338 394		338 394
Thailand	Nat. Gov.	In-kind/cash	1 131 898	2 853 737	3 985 635	3 271 659		3 271 659
Tunisia	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	430 000		430 000	142 000		142 000

²³ All the project countries reported only In-kind co-financing, although at GEF-CEO endorsement/approval three countries had indicated cash contribution.

Name of the co-financer	Co-financer type	Type of co-financing	Co-financing at project start (amount confirmed at GEF CEO endorsement/approval by the project design team) (in USD)			Materialized co-financing by the end of July 2019 (according to the information received by the evaluation Team) (in USD)		
			In-kind	Cash	Total	In-kind ²³	Cash	Total
Turkey	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	200 000		200 000	200 000		200 000
Uzbekistan	Nat. Gov.	In-kind	150 000		150 000	193 120		193 120
WOCAT	Educ. & Research Inst.	In-kind/cash	1 500 000		1 500 000	1 500 000		1 500 000
FAO	GEF Agency	In-kind/cash	1 060 000	4 820 000	5 880 000	1 253 042	4 820 000	6 073 042
Grand Total (in USD)			29 487 610	8 609 737	38 097 347	11 311 991	4 820 000	16 131 991

Appendix 6. List of performance indicators

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
<p>Global Environmental Objective: Contribute to combating desertification land degradation and drought (DLDD) worldwide through scaling up sustainable land management best practices based on evidence based and informed decision making.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage increase in vegetative cover (and hence protection from erosion). 2. Number of ha of productive land by LUS with increased (agro) biodiversity at species and habitat levels. 3. Percentage carbon sequestration (estimated through EX ACT or GCB tools). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • xx% increase in vegetation cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10% cropland - 25% pasture land - x% forest land • xx ha of productive land by LUS with increased (agro) biodiversity at species and habitat level (#of species grown; proportion of annual to perennial species; area of forest/ grazing land under regeneration). • xx% carbon sequestration increase by LUS.
<p>Project Development Objective: To increase the provision of ecosystem goods and services and enhance food security in countries and regions affected by DLDD through the promotion of SLM and integrated management and efficiency in the use of natural resources.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage increase in productivity in demonstration areas by Land Use System (LUS). 2. Percentage increase in population with improved access to water in demonstration areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 % increase in productivity by LUS. • 10% of population with improved access to water in demonstration areas.
<p>Outcome 1.1. SLM best practices mainstreamed into national and/or sub-national agricultural and environmental plans and investment frameworks, policies and programs.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of countries mainstreaming DLDD and SLM practices into relevant national policies, plans and programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15.
<p>Output 1.1.1. Countries delivering reliable DLDD and SLM assessments and information on SLM best practices suitable for mainstreaming at national or sub-national levels.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Number of countries delivering reliable assessments and having selected cost-effective and adapted SLM best practices for various LUS suitable for mainstreaming into policies and programmes. 3. Number of persons in key institutions per country (gender disaggregated) using assessment and best practices tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15. • 50/country at least 40% women.
<p>Output 1.1.2. DLDD and SLM assessments findings</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of countries and policy/ planning processes in which 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least two policy/ planning processes

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
mainstreamed into planning and investment processes at national and sub-national levels.	DLDD and SLM assessment findings have been substantively integrated.	in at least 12 countries (e.g. NAP-UNCCD and agriculture and/or SLM Strategy +).
Output 1.1.3. Strengthened regional and inter-regional capacity development and experience sharing for DLDD and SLM.	1. Number of South-South Cooperation events held and leading to concrete actions and recommendations (subject to co-funding).	• 4.
Outcome 1.2. Up-scaling of SLM best practices catalyzed in countries through targeted actions on the ground and strategic decision making from local to national level.	1. Improved SLM technologies/best practices applied on xx ha. 2. See also indicators and targets for biophysical changes and improved ecosystem services in the objective high-level outcome table above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up-scaling to at least 500,000 ha under SLM. • 5 million ha SLM mainstreamed in plans for implementation during next 10 years after project end.
Output 1.2.1. Strengthened delivery mechanisms for SLM demonstration, awareness raising and training.	1. Number of facilitators, extension workers and technical staff with acquired skills in SLM demonstration, awareness raising and training.	• At least 900 (60 per each of 15 countries, at least 30% women).
Output 1.2.2. Implementation of SLM best practices leading to adoption and progressive up-scaling of cost effective and innovative SLM technologies covering a spectrum of LUS.	1. Number of landscape plans and sub-national Action Plans for up-scaling of SLM best practices in each LUS developed and implementation initiated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 30 landscape plans. • At least 15 sub-national plans.
Output 1.2.3. Strengthened country and regional capacity for DLDD and SLM scaling up delivered by FAO-WOCAT and through regional and inter-regional capacity development and experience sharing processes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of capacity development events held with FAO-WOCAT expertise. 2. Number of regional experience sharing events held with S-S cooperation. 3. Numbers of persons trained and able to conduct DLDD and SLM assessments and document SLM best practices in competent institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 national and 15 sub-national. • 4 regional experience sharing. • 50 persons in all countries (additional to those already trained in the 3 LADA project countries).
Outcome 2.1 – Knowledge management and decision-support system and tools used to support evidence-based strategy formulation at national level for promoting SLM, and contributing to global processes to address DLDD.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of countries enabled to assess land area under SLM and the benefits generated. 2. Number of countries able to report quantitatively and qualitatively on progress in addressing DLDD. 3. Number of institutions in participating country using the federated knowledge platform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15. • 15. • 45 institutions.

Expected Results	Indicators	Targets
<p>Output 2.1.1. A federated FAO-WOCAT, online and open access DLDD and SLM decision-support platform established that links technical and scientific information and data, networks, country partners and 2-5 global/ (sub)regional partners and programs (FAO, UNCCD CST, IPCC, WOCAT partners, etc.).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of countries using the SLM best practices database for informed decision making (UNCCD, agriculture, INRM etc.). 2. Number of countries uploading datasets in the Global WOCAT databases on technologies, approaches and mapping. 3. Number of countries reporting on SLM data and findings into scientific and technical decision-making processes. 4. Number of decision-making processes informed on DLDD trends and SLM results (FAO Governing bodies e.g. GSP-ITPS, UNCCD-CST and SPI, UNFCCC-IPCC and CBD-IPBES and COPs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15. • 15 country datasets. • 5. • 3.
<p>Output 2.1.2. Guidelines for harmonized approaches and standardized methods and tools to assess land management systems in terms of DLDD and SLM available and supporting informed decision making for up-scaling of SLM best practices.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Consolidated technical Guidelines with supporting case studies developed, validated and updated for wider uptake by countries for improved decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final guidelines and case studies published.
<p>Outcome 3.1. Project implementation based on adaptive results-based management.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. M&E system is in place to support adaptive results-based management and monitoring of SLM up-scaling resulting from the project.. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes.
<p>Output 3.1.1. Project web-based monitoring system established.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baseline and targets for global project indicators refined. 2. Annual project implementation review (PIR) reports submitted to GEF Secretariat. 3. Six monthly project progress reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - • 3. • 6.
<p>Output 3.1.2. Mid-term and terminal evaluation carried out.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mid-term and terminal evaluations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation recommendations included in lessons learned.
<p>Output 3.1.3 Communication and dissemination of project results.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Global project website developed and regularly updated. 2. Project newsletters and outreach materials developed and disseminated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project website fully up to date with all project results. • 4 project newsletters and/ or targeted briefs for DM bodies.

Source: Project Document and PIRs

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