

## 1. Project Data

Summary project data			
GEF project ID		9365	
GEF Agency project ID		Not available	
GEF Replenishment Phase		GEF-6	
Lead GEF Agency (include all for joint projects)		IUCN	
Project name		Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Project	
Country/Countries		Global	
Region		CEX	
Focal area		Land Degradation	
Operational Program or Strategic Priorities/Objectives		LD-EA	
Executing agencies involved		The Global Mechanism of the UNCCD; IUCN	
NGOs/CBOs involvement		Not applicable	
Private sector involvement		Not applicable	
CEO Endorsement (FSP) / Approval date (MSP)		August 2, 2016	
Effectiveness date / project start		November 23, 2016	
Expected date of project completion (at start)		April 30, 2019	
Actual date of project completion		Not available	
Project Financing			
		At Endorsement (US \$M)	At Completion (US \$M)
Project Preparation Grant	GEF funding		
	Co-financing		
GEF Project Grant		2.75	2.75
Co-financing	IA own		
	Government	2.68	4.5
	Other multi- /bi-laterals	.3	.65
	Private sector		
	NGOs/CSOs		
	Other		
Total GEF funding		2.75	2.75
Total Co-financing		2.98	5.15
Total project funding (GEF grant(s) + co-financing)		5.73	7.9
Terminal evaluation/review information			
TE completion date		March 2019	
Author of TE		Ronnie MacPherson	
TER completion date		2/27/2020	
TER prepared by		Laura Nissley	
TER peer review by (if GEF IEO review)		Neeraj Kumar Negi	

## 2. Summary of Project Ratings

Criteria	Final PIR	IA Terminal Evaluation	IA Evaluation Office Review	GEF IEO Review
Project Outcomes	UA	S	--	S
Sustainability of Outcomes		ML	--	ML
M&E Design		MU	--	U
M&E Implementation		MS	--	UA
Quality of Implementation		S	--	MS
Quality of Execution		HS	--	HS
Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report		--	--	MS

## 3. Project Objectives

### 3.1 Global Environmental Objectives of the project:

The objective of the project is to “support/enable countries to establish national voluntary targets for LDN [Land Degradation Neutrality]” (PD pg. 1). The overall goal of the project is “By 2030, countries affected by DLDD [Drought, Land Degradation, and Desertification] achieve LDN by avoiding, minimizing and reversing land degradation trends in such a way that the overall balance of biologically and economically productive land remains stable or increases in relation to the current situation” (PD pg. 25).

### 3.2 Development Objectives of the project:

The project document does not indicate any development objectives separate from the global environmental objective.

### 3.3 Were there any **changes** in the Global Environmental Objectives, Development Objectives, or other activities during implementation?

The original Project Document proposed three project components with three corresponding outcomes: (1) National LDN baselines defined and validated in 76 countries; (2) National LDN targets and associated measures defined in 76 countries; and (3) Country Parties as well as international organizations and stakeholders engage in the LDN target setting process in a synergistic and coherent manner. The TE indicates that the project was reframed around the LDN “building blocks” model, which established four steps for achieving LDN: (1) Leveraging LDN; (2) Assessing LDN; (3) Setting LDN targets and measures; and (4) Achieving LDN. However, it does not appear any of the project’s expected activities or results were changed under the “reframing” of the project. The TE indicates that it considered the original components and outcomes, as well as the building blocks model, in its analysis (pgs. 17-18).

## 4. GEF IEO assessment of Outcomes and Sustainability

Please refer to the GEF Terminal Evaluation Review Guidelines for detail on the criteria for ratings.

Relevance can receive either a Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory rating. For Effectiveness and Cost efficiency, a six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess. Sustainability ratings are assessed on a four-point scale: Likely=no or negligible risk; Moderately Likely=low risk; Moderately Unlikely=substantial risks; Unlikely=high risk. In assessing a Sustainability rating please note if, and to what degree, sustainability of project outcomes is threatened by financial, sociopolitical, institutional/governance, or environmental factors.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

4.1 Relevance	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
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The TE provides a rating of **Highly Satisfactory** for project relevance. This TER, which uses a different scale, assesses project relevance as **Satisfactory**. The project was designed to provide the foundation for a multi-donor global initiative on voluntary national target setting for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), as envisioned by the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Diversification (UNCCD). The project is a direct result of the decision taken by the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of Parties (COP) to, among other things, invite all Parties to “formulate [national] voluntary targets to achieve LDN” and to incorporate them in their UNCCD National Action Programs (NAPs) (PD pgs. 12-13). As an enabling activity, the project is also aligned with GEF-6 programming as part of the Land Degradation Focal Area Set-Aside, which provides financing for activities that support the implementation of the UNCCD in “accordance with country obligations to the convention, and based on decisions from the COP” (GEF-6 Programming Directions pg. 144). The TE also indicates that the project was highly relevant to participating countries, as “the process of setting targets improved understanding as to how countries could support delivery of the Convention and —more fundamentally— improved understanding of the Convention itself” (pg. 13).

4.2 Effectiveness	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
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The TE provides a rating of **Satisfactory** for project effectiveness, and this TER concurs. The project was designed to support countries in establishing national voluntary targets for Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). Broadly speaking, each participating country engaged in the following sequence of activities: (1) establishing national LDN working groups; (2) identifying LDN trends and drivers; (3) defining national LDN baselines and targets; and (4) securing political commitments to achieve those targets. Additionally, some countries were supported in identifying opportunities for transformative projects and programs (TPPs) that contribute toward achieving LDN (TE pg. 7). The TE indicates that the project was effective at achieving most of its key results, including establishing national baselines and defining national targets.

By the time of the TE however, some GEF-supported countries had yet to produce high level notes confirming political endorsement of LDN targets, as well as identifying TPPs and financing options. Additionally, the TE indicates that the project fell short of achieving some results under the knowledge management component, including outreach and the facilitation of peer to peer learning (pgs. 16-19).

As noted above, the project's intervention strategy was reframed around the LDN "building blocks" model, which outlines steps for achieving LDN. A summary of the project's achievements, by building block, is provided below:

#### **Building Block 1: Leveraging LDN**

Under this step, it was expected that national LDN leverage plans would be developed; partners would be mobilized; and a multi-stakeholder engagement process would be established. The TE indicates that the project came close to achieving its targets in regard to leveraging LDN. Nearly all of the participating countries had produced LDN leverage plans and established working groups to engage stakeholders by the time of the TE (TE pg. 19).

#### **Building Block 2: Assessing LDN**

Under this step, it was expected that an LDN baseline would be established; legal and institutional analyses would be produced; and LDN trends and drivers would be identified. By the time of the TE, most of the participating countries had established LDN baselines and identified trends and drivers (TE pg. 19). It is unclear from the TE what portion of participating countries produced legal and institutional analyses.

#### **Building Block 3: Setting LDN Targets and Measures**

Under this step, it was expected that LDN targets would be defined; LDN measures would be established; and high-level notes endorsing national targets would be produced. By the time of the TE, 60 of the 76 participating countries had defined LDN targets. On the other hand, the TE indicates that only 40 of the 76 countries had produced high-level notes (pg. 19). The TE does not indicate what proportion of the countries established LDN measures.

#### **Building Block 4: Achieving LDN**

Under this step, it was expected that potential TPPs and associated financing options would be identified, and that final reports would be submitted. The TE indicates that less than two-thirds of participating countries mapped ongoing and potential TPPs, as well as financing options. Approximately 50 of 76 countries had submitted their final reports by the time of the TE (TE pg. 19).

#### **Knowledge Management and Peer Learning**

It is unclear where knowledge management and peer learning falls under the building block model, however it was expected in the Project Document that LDN target setting partnerships would be established; peer-to-peer learning on LDN target setting would be facilitated; and global outreach/advocacy on LDN target setting would be carried out (PD pg. 29). The TE indicates that the project produced extensive technical materials, including a Methodological Note and Technical Guide,

which ensured that the target-setting process was well documented. However, the TE indicates that peer learning and outreach activities were ad hoc in nature and could have been stronger (pg. 20).

4.3 Efficiency	Rating: <b>Satisfactory</b>
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The TE provides a rating of **Satisfactory** for project efficiency, and this TER concurs. The project was designed to be implemented over 29 months, from late November 2016 until April 2019. There is no indication in the TE that the project experienced any delays in implementation that would have necessitated an extension of the project's end date. Moreover, the TE indicates that "project delivery was cost and time efficient, with the TSP's [the Project's] rapid delivery achieved through a combination of a well-structured, easily replicated process, and a centralized operating model" (pg. 15). The project was centrally managed by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD, which recruited and contracted all regional and national consultants. The project also utilized UNDP country offices to support logistics and disburse payments to national project participants, which the TE indicates was a highly efficient approach. The TE does note that this highly centralized approach was burdensome on the Global Mechanism staff, especially after the regional consultants' contracts ended in December 2017. Additionally, several National Focal Points felt that they did not have sufficient ownership over the national target setting process, given that the recruitment and management of national consultants was handled by the Global Mechanism (pg. 15). It should be noted however, that the project was also able to mobilize significantly more co-financing than anticipated, which allowed the project to provide support to 30 additional countries in addition to the 76 countries whose participation was financed by the GEF. The Project Document had planned for participation of 70 countries – thus in all more 36 countries were covered than envisioned (pg. 17).

4.4 Sustainability	Rating: <b>Moderately Likely</b>
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The TE assesses overall sustainability of project benefits as **Moderately Likely**, and this TER concurs.

#### **Financial Resources**

The TE indicates that securing financial resources as the main barrier to achieving LDN. While the project was able to support some countries in developing transformative projects and programs (TPPs) and securing financing, many countries will have to develop TPPs independently of the project, and it is unclear if the resources are available to do so (TE pg. 25).

#### **Sociopolitical**

The TE indicates that although the majority of participating countries had yet to secure high-level commitment for their LDN targets, the project contributed to building awareness of, and consensus around, long-term LDN goals (pg. 23). However, many country representatives and partner institutions indicated that capacity building is needed to sustain LDN efforts, whether “focused on technical processes such as data management and analysis, or ‘softer’ processes such as building political engagement and facilitating cross-Ministry planning” (TE pg. 26).

### **Institutional Frameworks and Governance**

The TE indicates that while some participating countries have the policies and institutional capacities to manage large LDN investments, others will need to develop the infrastructure before investments can be secured (pg. 25).

### **Environmental**

The TE does not address environmental sustainability.

## **5. Processes and factors affecting attainment of project outcomes**

5.1 Co-financing. To what extent was the reported co-financing essential to the achievement of GEF objectives? If there was a difference in the level of expected co-financing and actual co-financing, then what were the reasons for it? Did the extent of materialization of co-financing affect project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages?

Actual co-financing (\$5.15 million) exceeded expected co-financing (\$2.98) by nearly 73%, which increased the total project outlay by 40 percent (\$7.9 million compared to \$5.7 million). Additionally, a total of ten donors supported the project through co-financing, compared to the 6 potential donors identified in the Project Document. The TE indicates that 30 additional countries were financed by the additional co-financing. (TE pgs. 16-17). This helped in enhancing the coverage of countries.

5.2 Project extensions and/or delays. If there were delays in project implementation and completion, then what were the reasons for it? Did the delay affect the project’s outcomes and/or sustainability? If so, in what ways and through what causal linkages.

The TE does not indicate that there were any delays in project implementation, nor does it indicate that the project received an extension.

5.3 Country ownership. Assess the extent to which country ownership has affected project outcomes and sustainability? Describe the ways in which it affected outcomes and sustainability, highlighting the causal links:

The TE indicates that the highly centralized implementation approach employed by the project did, in some cases, affect a sense of ownership over the project (TE pg. 4). The TE indicates that some participants (including National Focal Points) were highly critical about the lack of control and influence they had over the LDN target setting process (pg. 15). On the other hand, the TE

notes that the establishment of National Working Groups helped to building ownership over the process, although this varied by country (pg. 21).

## 6. Assessment of project's Monitoring and Evaluation system

Ratings are assessed on a six point scale: Highly Satisfactory=no shortcomings in this M&E component; Satisfactory=minor shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Satisfactory=moderate shortcomings in this M&E component; Moderately Unsatisfactory=significant shortcomings in this M&E component; Unsatisfactory=major shortcomings in this M&E component; Highly Unsatisfactory=there were no project M&E systems.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

6.1 M&E Design at entry	Rating: <b>Unsatisfactory</b>
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The TE provides a rating of **Moderately Unsatisfactory** for M&E Design at entry, which this TER downgrades to **Unsatisfactory**. The TE indicates that the project's original results framework was "underdeveloped, with insufficient delineation (and some duplication) across results" (pg. 30). For example, Outcome 2 and Output 2.1 are nearly identical: "National LDN targets and associated measures defined" (Outcome 2) and "National LDN targets and associated measures established" (Output 2.1). The TE also indicates that many of the indicators and targets provided in the results framework are not SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and timely), and this TER concurs. At the objective level, the indicators provided are not specific or measurable. For example, indicators include: "The extent to which countries undertake action to achieve national LDN targets" and "The extent to which investments in LDN action increase." At the outcome level, the indicators provided in the results framework are simply the project's expected outputs rather than SMART indicators. Overall, the results framework is an ineffective tool for monitoring and evaluating the project's results. The Project Document does include an M&E plan, however, a dedicated budget for M&E is not provided.

6.2 M&E Implementation	Rating: <b>Unable to Assess</b>
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The TE provides a rating of **Moderately Satisfactory** for M&E implementation, noting that "Monitoring systems were robust and well-aligned with the project's reframed focus on the 'building blocks' model" (pg. 30). The TE does indicate that the project's knowledge management activities were not monitored sufficiently, which "may have contributed to the knowledge work slipping down the project's agenda" (pg. 20). Overall, however, the TE does not provide enough evidence to properly assess M&E implementation.

## 7. Assessment of project implementation and execution

Quality of Implementation includes the quality of project design, as well as the quality of supervision and assistance provided by implementing agency(s) to execution agencies throughout project implementation. Quality of Execution covers the effectiveness of the executing agency(s) in performing its roles and responsibilities. In both instances, the focus is upon factors that are largely within the control of the respective implementing and executing agency(s). A six point rating scale is used (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory), or Unable to Assess.

Please justify ratings in the space below each box.

7.1 Quality of Project Implementation	Rating: <b>Moderately Satisfactory</b>
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The TE provides a rating of **Satisfactory** for quality of project implementation, which this TER downgrades to **Moderately Satisfactory**, largely due to deficiencies in the project's design. The implementing agency for this project was the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The TE indicates that IUCN's role included project design; strategic advice; day-to-day oversight, and management of GEF funds. The TE notes that overall, the quality of implementation "met expectations" (pg. 30). It does appear that the project's centralized management structure was an effective approach for delivering on project results (pg. 15). Additionally, ICUN was able to offer a "gender helpdesk" service, which provided project participants with advice on gender considerations during implementation on an ad-hoc basis (pg. 22). As noted above however, the project's design, while relevant, was not well articulated in the project's results framework. The executing agency had to rework the framework during implementation to better reflect the project's approach to achieving LDN (pg. 9; 18).

7.2 Quality of Project Execution	Rating: <b>Highly Satisfactory</b>
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The TE provides a rating of **Highly Satisfactory** for quality of project execution, and this TER concurs. The executing agency for the project was the Global Mechanism for the United Nations Convention to Combat Diversification (UNCCD). The TE indicates that the Global Mechanism executed the project efficiently and effectively, ultimately reaching more countries than anticipated in the project design (pg. 30). This was in part due to the fact that the Global Mechanism was able to mobilize considerably more co-financing than anticipated (TE pg. 16). Additionally, by utilizing a centralized approach, the TE indicates that the Global Mechanism "supported the consistent application of standardized business practices and afforded the core project team strong oversight of progress within each country." The Global Mechanism also utilized UNDP country offices to support logistics and disburse payments to national project participants (TE pg. 15). After the regional consultants' contracts ended in December



2017, the Global Mechanism took on their roles and responsibilities. The TE indicates that this did not affect project delivery, and “country representatives interviewed during the evaluation did not report any post-2017 decline in the quality of TSP [Project] support” (pg. 15). The TE does note that the centralized approach employed by the project did, in some cases, affect a sense of ownership over the project, particularly the LDN target setting process (pg. 15). Overall, however, the TE indicates that the Global Mechanism exceeded expectations (pg. 30).

## 8. Assessment of Project Impacts

***Note - In instances where information on any impact related topic is not provided in the terminal evaluations, the reviewer should indicate in the relevant sections below that this is indeed the case and identify the information gaps. When providing information on topics related to impact, please cite the page number of the terminal evaluation from where the information is sourced.***

8.1 Environmental Change. Describe the changes in environmental stress and environmental status that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

Not applicable because the project is primarily related to supporting countries in target setting and planning.

8.2 Socioeconomic change. Describe any changes in human well-being (income, education, health, community relationships, etc.) that occurred by the end of the project. Include both quantitative and qualitative changes documented, sources of information for these changes, and how project activities contributed to or hindered these changes. Also include how contextual factors have contributed to or hindered these changes.

Not applicable because the project is primarily related to supporting countries in target setting and planning. 8.3 Capacity and governance changes. Describe notable changes in capacities and governance that can lead to large-scale action (both mass and legislative) bringing about positive environmental change. “Capacities” include awareness, knowledge, skills, infrastructure, and environmental monitoring systems, among others. “Governance” refers to decision-making processes, structures and systems, including access to and use of information, and thus would include laws, administrative bodies, trust-building and conflict resolution processes, information-sharing systems, etc. Indicate how project activities contributed to/ hindered these changes, as well as how contextual factors have influenced these changes.

### a) Capacities

Nearly all of the participating countries supported by the GEF had produced LDN leverage plans by project end (TE pg. 19). Additionally, most of these countries had established LDN baselines and identified trends and drivers (TE pg. 19). 60 participating countries supported by the GEF

had also defined LDN targets by project end. Less than two-thirds of the participating countries supported by the GEF mapped ongoing and potential TPPs, as well as financing options (TE pg. 19). Lastly, the project produced extensive technical materials, including a Methodological Note and Technical Guide (TE pg. 20).

#### b) Governance

The TE indicates that nearly all of the participating countries supported by the GEF established National Working Groups to engage stakeholders in the LDN target setting process (pg. 19). Additionally, 40 of these countries produced high-level notes endorsing national LDN targets (TE pg. 19).

8.4 Unintended impacts. Describe any impacts not targeted by the project, whether positive or negative, affecting either ecological or social aspects. Indicate the factors that contributed to these unintended impacts occurring.

The TE does not indicate any unintended impacts that occurred by the end of the project.

8.5 Adoption of GEF initiatives at scale. Identify any initiatives (e.g. technologies, approaches, financing instruments, implementing bodies, legal frameworks, information systems) that have been mainstreamed, replicated and/or scaled up by government and other stakeholders by project end. Include the extent to which this broader adoption has taken place, e.g. if plans and resources have been established but no actual adoption has taken place, or if market change and large-scale environmental benefits have begun to occur. Indicate how project activities and other contextual factors contributed to these taking place. If broader adoption has not taken place as expected, indicate which factors (both project-related and contextual) have hindered this from happening.

In terms of the adoption of GEF initiatives at scale, it should be noted that 106 countries participated in the project; 36 more than anticipated in the Project Document (TE pg. 17). However, the extent to which participating countries undertake concrete activities to achieve the established targets will be known only in the future.

## 9. Lessons and recommendations

9.1 Briefly describe the key lessons, good practices, or approaches mentioned in the terminal evaluation report that could have application for other GEF projects.

The TE does not explicitly discuss lessons. However, its recommendations are based on the implicit lessons from the project experience.

## 9.2 Briefly describe the recommendations given in the terminal evaluation.

The TE provides the following recommendations (pgs. 5-6):

1. **Develop a more systematic approach to knowledge management, learning and outreach.** This should include scanning for and identifying knowledge gaps faced by countries working towards LDN, and developing products to address those gaps, including the facilitation of regular peer-to-peer learning events. For many countries, a priority knowledge gap to address is how to identify, develop and secure finance for transformative projects and programs, including how to build a sufficient enabling environment within their countries for LDN investment.
2. **Make preparations to advise on capacity building and development options.** TSP partners cannot be expected to address every country's capacity needs, but it is highly likely that countries will be looking to TSP partners for – at the least – signposting towards appropriate support. A strategy should be developed for responding to such requests from countries, to include, for example, guidance on undertaking national capacity gap analyses, the development of a database on capacity building and development opportunities, and the identification of potential funding sources for capacity building and development.
3. **Develop guidance on integrating gender and co-benefits into LDN strategies and targets.** While gender was not initially addressed by the TSP, the emphasis on gender has increased, not least through the TSP's recent Checklist for LDN Transformative Projects and Programs, which has the potential to be highly influential on the design of upcoming LDN activity. Consequently, guidance should be developed for countries looking to mainstream gender within their national LDN efforts. Consideration should also be given to extending this work to explore stronger integration of livelihoods and other co-benefits within LDN strategies and targets.
4. **Explore options for closer harmonization across the Rio Conventions.** The TSP and the LDN concept have generated considerable momentum and political capital: right now, the UNCCD Secretariat and GM are in a comparatively strong position to drive forward and advocate for closer harmonization across the three Rio Conventions. Practical options should now be identified for closer working with the CBD and UNFCCC Secretariats.
5. **Revise some administrative procedures in advance of future project delivery.** While day-to-day administration of the TSP was robust and efficient, applying a similarly centralized operating model in the future would benefit from clearer communication of 'business standards' to participants (particularly around eligible expenditure), and strengthening relationships with any UNDP Country Offices that are supporting in-country administration.

## 10. Quality of the Terminal Evaluation Report

A six point rating scale is used for each sub-criteria and overall rating of the terminal evaluation report (Highly Satisfactory to Highly Unsatisfactory)

Criteria	GEF IEO comments	Rating
To what extent does the report contain an assessment of relevant outcomes and impacts of the project and the achievement of the objectives?	Assessing project effectiveness using two models was confusing, especially as the “building blocks” model was not sufficiently articulated. Additionally, while the “milestones” graph was helpful for getting a sense of the proportion of countries achieving outputs, a table with exact figures would have been appreciated. The report’s assessment of project relevance and efficiency was satisfactory.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent is the report internally consistent, the evidence presented complete and convincing, and ratings well substantiated?	More evidence was needed in the implementation and execution sections to justify ratings.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent does the report properly assess project sustainability and/or project exit strategy?	The TE should have provided more information on the risks to sustainability of institutional frameworks and governance.	<b>MS</b>
To what extent are the lessons learned supported by the evidence presented and are they comprehensive?	The TE does not include a lessons learned section, although the recommendations are built on implicit lessons.	<b>MU</b>
Does the report include the actual project costs (total and per activity) and actual co-financing used?	The report includes detailed co-financing data, however actual projects costs by activity are not included in the report.	<b>MS</b>
Assess the quality of the report’s evaluation of project M&E systems:	The TE does not include a section on M&E; a couple of sentences are written about M&E design and implementation in the GEF ratings section. This is insufficient to assess the project’s M&E system.	<b>MU</b>
<b>Overall TE Rating</b>		<b>MS</b>

## 11. Note any additional sources of information used in the preparation of the terminal evaluation report (excluding PIRs, TEs, and PADs).

GEF-6 Programming Directions