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**Capacity Building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD
CRIC5/COP8/ Project**

Final Evaluation

Final Report

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ACRONYMS

3NR	Capacity Building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC5/COP8/ Project
AHWG	Ad Hoc Working Group
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CEHI	Caribbean Environmental Health Institute
CO	Country Office
COP	Conference of the Parties
COP8	The eighth session of the Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
CRIC-5	The Fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
DEX	Direct Execution
FP	Focal Point
GAC	Global Advisory Committee
GEF	Global Environment Facility
HQ	Headquarters
IA	Implementing Agency
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSP	Medium-Sized Project
NAP	National Action Programme
NCSA	National Capacity Self-Assessment
NFPs	National Focal Points
NGO	Non-governmental Organizations
NR	National Report
SIDS	Small Islands Developing States
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WB	World Bank

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report on the final independent evaluation is to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) *Capacity Building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC5/COP8/ Project* (3NR) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with respect to: (i) the relevance of its approach and design; (ii) the efficiency of its implementation; and, (iii) the effectiveness, impacts and sustainability of the results achieved. The evaluation also presents lessons learned and recommendations.

The final independent evaluation was undertaken between November 1, 2006 and December 15, 2006. The following steps were undertaken to conduct this final evaluation: 1) Documentation identification and review, 2) Development of an evaluation matrix and data collection tools, 3) Missions to New York and Bonn, and telephone interviews with project stakeholders, and 4) Data analysis and reporting. Given time and budget constraints, eight of the 35 countries participating in this project were selected for short case studies. The countries selected were: Belize, Bhutan, Barbados, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Suriname and Timor Leste. The intention was to interview three or four stakeholders in each of the selected countries including government representatives, NGOs and/or representatives from other relevant institutions. However, due to difficulties in identifying relevant stakeholders and their contact information, and due to the complexities related to scheduling a large number of phone interviews with several stakeholders in various time zones in a two-week period, only two interviews were possible in each country.

PROJECT DESIGN

Overall, the project objective is deemed relevant to the objectives of GEF, UNDP, and the UNCCD Secretariat as well as to the needs of the LDC-SIDS Parties. However, the project had a top-down design to ensure that non-African country Parties are on par with those African country Parties that have, in the past, had access to funds to prepare their national reports (NRs). In addition, despite the fact that the relevant government representatives have formally endorsed the requests for funds (sub-project at county level), the level of ownership of UNDP 3NR MSP as assessed through the level of country driven-ness, stakeholder participation and co-financing varies greatly across participating country Parties.

In terms of the appropriateness of the design for achieving the project objective, the implementation arrangements were mostly relevant. The main strengths of the project at this level resided in the following: 1) the strong involvement of UNDP Country Offices, which were natural partners given their presence at the national level; 2) the Global Coordination Unit being set up on the premises of the UNCCD Secretariat, which facilitates communication between UNDP and the UNCCD Secretariat representatives; 3) the possibility to use DEX given the short time frame for completion and submission of 3rd NRs by country Parties, the small scale of individual country requests and the large number of countries to be assisted under this project; and, 4) the fact that the advisory committee for this project was a subset of the Global Advisory Committee of the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project, which was convenient, and cost and time-effective. However, the following weaknesses could be noted: 1) the timeframe for project implementation was not in line with the deadline for NR submission to the UNCCD Secretariat; 2) no formal link was established with the UNCCD Ad Hoc Working Group which was responsible for identifying technical issues

experienced during the national reporting process and making suggestions for improvement; and, 3) no clear criteria or methods for evaluating the quality of national reports have been established, nor have any specific reporting requirements by the UNCCD Secretariat to UNDP been determined.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Project efficiency has been assessed in terms of the following aspects:

- Adequacy of project preparation and start up phases;
- Adequacy of financial resources provided and financial management;
- Level of cost-effectiveness of resource utilization in achieving results;
- Implementation arrangements, communication and cooperation among implementing partners and adequacy of technical assistance;
- Risk management;
- Implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation activities; and
- Implication of the postponement of CRIC-5

As expected, and highlighted in the project document, the limited duration and capacity have been the most important constraints to the project's smooth and successful implementation. Indeed, at the time the project was endorsed, it was already clear that the timely delivery of project output would be a major challenge. Due to the fact that the two processes (the 3NR MSP and the submission of the NRs to the UNCCD Secretariat in view of CRIC-5) were not fully co-ordinated in terms of timing, contradictory messages were sent to eligible country Parties. On the one hand, there was an externally set, theoretically-inflexible deadline for the submission of the 3rd NRs to the UNCCD Secretariat and, on the other hand, there was the *actual* time frame required to implement the UNDP/GEF 3NR MSP. Overall, although it is generally agreed that GEF and UNDP should be making every effort to streamline the processes related to the formulation, approval and inception of MSP, the 3NR MSP has been reasonably satisfactory at this level. However, it also appears that the UNCCD Secretariat made the request for financial assistance to UNDP and GEF sufficiently in advance (June 2005). The lack of consensus on the role that the GEF should be playing in relation to the UNCCD and the enabling/capacity building activities divide have, however, apparently delayed the formulation and the approval of the 3NR MSP. On the one hand, there is a need for a clear consensus regarding the eligibility of UNCCD related capacity building/enabling activities for GEF financing, on the other, the UNCCD Secretariat needs to be aware of the constraints faced by GEF and its implementing agencies and align its expectations accordingly.

Not surprisingly, one of the major challenges facing a project attempting to build capacity is the very lack of capacity. In LDC and SIDS, it is not uncommon that a single person is responsible for several conventions and thus, needs to handle several sets of requirements, manage and meet multiple deadlines and attend various workshops - all at once. At the institutional level, the lack of coordination mechanisms and the absence of established and formal communication channels between the various relevant government agencies and stakeholders have also been reported. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that one of the best ways to deal with this type of capacity constraint is, according to several of the stakeholders interviewed, to allow more time for the implementation (which was not possible in the context of this project because of the deadline set by COP). Another way to deal with the lack of capacity in terms of availability of human resources is to hire the services of external consultants to undertake the required tasks. This, however, as has

been highlighted in many cases, reduces the potential for internal capacity building and the creation of institutional knowledge and memory. Another way to deal with capacity constraints is to capitalize on the synergies between various initiatives – something that needs to be relatively well planned from the start. In several cases, strong synergies existed between the implementation of the 3NR MSP, the preparation of the National Action Program and the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project. More precisely, the information gathered, as well as the consultations and workshops conducted, have served more than one purpose. Nevertheless, experiences have varied considerably across countries. In certain country Parties, an exceedingly low level of basic capacity prevented the maximization of the synergies between various ongoing projects at the national level. In practice, a critical level of co-ordination capacity is needed to exploit these synergies. Generally, to be truly effective, capacity building projects such as this one need to, initially, take better stock of existing capacity and build in implementation strategies that are more in line with these existing constraints.

PROJECT RESULTS

Based on the results presented in this evaluation report, it appears that the project has not performed well in terms of meeting the targets set at project inception. In particular, at the output level, as of November, 30 2006:

In terms of stakeholder participation:

- 12 countries have reported holding validation meetings/workshops, 3 have reported holding validation processes, but not in the form of a formal validation workshop and 3 have made firm plans to do so in early December 2006. This implies that less than 50% of the project target in that regard (35 national workshops were held by September 2006) has been achieved as per the original schedule.
- In terms of achieving the project target set at project design in regard to stakeholders' participation at the regional level, the two Regional Synthesis Workshops had been held by September 2006 as scheduled. However, less than 50% (31 of 70) of the targeted number of participant were able to attend the workshops. Even if we take into account that the targeted number of participants was revised to 35, 11 county Parties (31%) did not send a representative to the workshops.

In terms of countries' capacities to conduct self-evaluation

- At project inception, two targets had been set in relation to preparation of the self -evaluation 1) 35 nationally adapted methodologies validated by stakeholders by July 2006 and 2) 35 national self-evaluations completed by CRIC-5. At the time of this final evaluation, nine (26%) of the self-evaluations have been completed but given the postponement of CRIC-5 to March 2007; a much better performance can be expected.
- Some level of exchange of experiences occurred at regional levels during the Regional Synthesis Workshops. However, given 1) the early status of implementation of the various national reporting processes, 2) the lower-than-expected level of participation in this workshop, and 3) the fact that the methodology for self-evaluation had not been agreed upon by the time of the Regional Synthesis Workshop, results at this level have been lower than expected.

In terms of capacities at the national level to elaborate 3NRs.

- 8 country Parties (23%) have submitted final Country Profiles, 11 country Parties (31%) have submitted draft Country Profiles and the remainder (46%) have yet to submit their Country Profile. The project target for the preparation of Country Profiles was that *at least 60% of the 3rd NRs have detailed Country Profiles by the end of the project.* Given that 54% of the country Parties have already submitted either a draft or a final Country Profile, it is highly likely that the 60% target will be met by CRIC-5.
- As of November 30, 2006, a total of 9 countries (26 %) had submitted official final reports, 16 countries (46%) had submitted draft reports, and 2 countries (6%) had submitted a summary reports. 8 countries have yet to submit any report. Overall, about 25% of the project target in that regard (35 3rd NR available by July 2005) has been achieved as per the original schedule. Given the postponement of CRIC-5, it is possible that additional NRs will be finalized between now and March 2007. At the very least, it can be expected that most of the NRs that are currently in draft form will be finalized on time, in which case about 70% of the project target would have been achieved.

The quality of national reports prepared has been identified as one of the indicators for assessing the change in capacity at the national level to elaborate the 3rd NR. The target was “*At least 60% of 3NRs are evaluated as high quality reports by CRIC-5*”. However, CRIC-5 has not occurred yet and was postponed until March 2007. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, at project inception, it was established that the UNCCD Secretariat would take full responsibility for quality control. However, specific criteria and methods for evaluating the quality of the NRs were not established and no particular agreement on format and timing of the assessment were agreed upon between the UNCCD Secretariat and UNDP. In the absence of any clear indication from the UNCCD Secretariat at this level at the time of the final evaluation, the quality of the 3rd NR could be assessed in various ways: 1) by comparing the quality of the current NRs with the quality of the NRs prepared during the previous reporting cycles, 2) by comparing the content of the NRs with the guidelines provided by the UNCCD Secretariat, and 3) by assessing the usefulness of the content at the national and international levels. On this, the following could be noted:

- As per the guidelines prepared by the UNCCD Secretariat, the recommended format of the 3rd NR differs greatly from the format used in the previous reporting cycles and for this particular reason, any rigorous comparison in the quality of the reports is difficult to make;
- According to the Regional Synthesis Report for LAC and country Parties themselves, almost all of the reporting countries used the appropriate format and complied with most of the recommendations contained in the guide to the preparation of the reports. However, there are still significant differences in length and range of issues covered across the various reports;
- Given the postponement of CRIC-5 from October 2006 to March, 2007, the UNCCD Secretariat is currently proceeding with an update of the two Regional Synthesis Reports and more countries are being included in these analyses. However, it remains that some of the countries are not advanced enough in their national reporting process to contribute to the Regional Synthesis Reports in any significant way. They will, however, have the opportunity to share their progress, needs and concerns during CRIC-5 if they can make significant progress between now and the CRIC-5 meeting. Overall, the use of the 3rd NR at the national level

appears to be mixed but further investigation would be required in order to better assess the relevance of the 3rd NRs for country Parties. This could also allow for the identification of ways in which NRs can better address national priorities while providing relevant information to the UNCCD Secretariat and the global community.

In relation to the targets set at project inception, current results are unsatisfactory. However, it appears that the various targets set for output, outcome and impact levels in the context of this project were over-ambitious given the risks identified at the project design stage and the externally set time constraint. Moreover, given the postponement of CRIC-5, and in light of the continued efforts of the UNDP project coordination unit and COs, of the UNCCD Secretariat and the country Parties themselves to prepare their NRs in time for CRIC-5, a lot more can still be achieved and overall project results might be reassessed as marginally satisfactory or satisfactory. Thus, the postponement of CRIC-5 is positive in many respects, given that delays related to the project preparation and start-up phases would have had strong undermining effects on the project results

Addressing the sustainability of project outcomes can be considered overall as a challenging aspect of this particular project. Significant issues remain to be addressed in order to help ensure sustainable results in terms of capacity to prepare NRs for UNCCD or for any other multilateral environmental agreements by LDC-SIDS. This, however, does not necessarily reflect poorly on the overall performance of the project in particular, given its scope, but rather indicates that further initiatives (such as the UNDP/GEF *Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management* and the UNEP/UNDP/GEF *National Capacity Self-Assessment for Global Environmental Management*) are required to sustain capacity for reporting in several of the LDC-SIDS country Parties.

LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lessons learned in terms of providing assistance in the context of the national reporting process:

- The location of a project coordination unit in a Convention secretariat allows for more effective and efficient project management and better coordination between the IA and the Secretariat.
- Responsibilities for M&E must be clearly assigned and clear criteria and methods for evaluating all results should be established at project inception; when responsibilities are assigned to third parties, specific reporting requirements need to be agreed upon.
- In order to ensure a more timely delivery of higher quality NRs, the reporting cycles of the Convention and the associated capacity-building initiative needs to be fully co-ordinated in terms of timing. Otherwise, there may be contradiction between the time frame for reporting to the convention and the actual and optimal time frame required to implement the associated capacity-building initiative.
- From the financial resources disbursement date, a minimum of six months is required to prepare NRs.

- Self-evaluations are particularly useful in the context of a capacity-building project providing a small amount of financial support to several countries. Although it has its shortcomings, self-evaluation provides a cost-effective means of gathering information on project implementation issues, results achieved and lessons learned.

Lessons learned in terms of capacity building generally:

- Ensuring that a thorough self-assessment of needs has been conducted and that proper consideration is given to the pre-existing capacity at all levels is crucial to the effectiveness of capacity-building activities.
- When faced with deadlines, and other operational pressures, there is danger of losing sight of the capacity development process, and focusing too much on the outcome. By doing so, the long-term gains from the capacity-development outcomes may be reduced, to the advantage of short term reporting outcomes.
- Ensuring national ownership and leadership, as well as multi-stakeholder consultations and decision-making at all stages of an initiative creates a favourable environment for the achievement of results.
- All this in turn requires adequate implementation timelines and tailored approaches, which require flexibility.

Recommendations

- Prior to the coordination unit close-down in December 2006, it is recommended that responsibilities for follow-up interventions be clearly assigned to COs, UNDP Regional Technical Advisors and the UNCCD Secretariat;
- It is recommended that due attention be given to the compilation and analysis of all self-evaluations completed by the country Parties by CRIC-5 and that the main findings be disseminated at CRIC-5 and shared with the AHWG. This could help to ensure a more adequate assessment of the results achieved through the 3NR MSP. Ideally, this responsibility should be given to the project coordinator; alternatively, this could be undertaken as part of the UNDP Portfolio Project;
- Capacity development efforts for national reporting would gain greatly, in impact and sustainability, from being considered, in the future, within the broader framework of capacity development for the implementation of the Convention, rather than as stand-alone interventions. Such an approach requires a longer-term commitment to capacity-development efforts, synergies between conventions, and above all, mainstreaming. These three elements are crucial to ensuring countries' long-term capacity gains and ownership for the implementation of their national and the global agendas.
- It is recommended that sometime in the near future, investigation begin to establish who will pay for the 4th NR to the UNCCD, if there is one. In particular, UNCCD should be informed as to whether the GEF could be financing it and under what conditions

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION AND KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED

1. This final independent evaluation aims to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Capacity Building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC5/COP8/ Project (3NR) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with respect to: (i) the relevance of its approach and design; (ii) the efficiency of its implementation, and; (iii) the effectiveness, impacts and sustainability of the results achieved. The evaluation also presents lessons learned and recommendations.

1.2 EVALUATION APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

2. The final independent evaluation was conducted between November 1, and December 15, 2006. The overall methodology undertaken to evaluate the 3NR Medium-Sized Project (MSP) was the following:

1. Documentation Identification and Review

3. The evaluation process began with a preliminary review of documentation identified in conjunction with the UNDP/GEF. Initially, the evaluator briefly looked at documents, websites and other sources relevant to the mandate. Following this, after the evaluation matrix was submitted and approved by UNDP/GEF, a more thorough review was conducted of all available documentation and literature pertaining to the project, including that on the project context and issues specific to the sector. In particular, the self-evaluations that were completed and submitted to the UNDP by nine country Parties before November 30, 2006, were compiled and analyzed¹. The entire list of documents reviewed in the context of this evaluation can be found in Annex I.

2. Development of an Evaluation Matrix and Data Collection Tools

4. Based on the findings of the preliminary review, the evaluator developed a draft evaluation matrix designed to guide the data gathering and analysis process. In this context, the matrix identifies potential issues to be addressed and sub-questions to be covered, as well as performance indicators, sources of information and information-gathering methods for each issue. The matrix used for this evaluation, as agreed upon between the evaluator and UNDP/GEF, can be found in Annex II.

3. Field Mission and Telephone Interviews

5. Data collection methods included face-to-face interviews during a one-day mission to New York and a three-day mission to Bonn, telephone interviews with various stakeholders and beneficiaries, and questionnaires circulated by email, when suitable. A list of stakeholders interviewed by the evaluator can be found in Annex III.

6. Given time and budget constraints, eight of the 35 countries participating in this project were selected for short case studies. The countries selected were: Belize, Bhutan, Barbados, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Suriname and Timor Leste. The intention was to interview three to four stakeholders in each of the selected countries, including government representatives, NGOs and/or representatives from other relevant institutions. However, due to difficulties in identifying relevant

¹ The nine self-evaluations were submitted by: Afghanistan, Bhutan, St-Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Fiji, Niue and Samoa.

stakeholders and their contact information, and due to the complexities related to scheduling a large number of phone interviews with several stakeholders in various time zones within a two-week period, only two interviews were possible in each country: one with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) National Focal Point (NFP) or its representative and one with the UNDP Country Office (UNDP CO). The NFP representative for Solomon Islands could not be reached (there is currently no appointed UNCCD NFP in Solomon Islands). In order to select a representative sample of the 35 countries, a sample selection matrix was developed using the following criteria: region, 3NR MSP implementation status, previous reporting and availability of stakeholders for phone interviews. The matrix is presented in Annex IV.

4. Data Analysis and Reporting

7. At the data analysis stage, the evaluator compiled and analyzed all of the data collected. To the extent possible, data triangulation was achieved by analyzing information from multiple sources. A first draft report adhering to the evaluation terms of reference and highlighting the principal findings of the evaluation was submitted electronically to the UNDP on December 5, 2006. A one-week peer review process took place between December 5, 2006 and December 12, 2006. A second draft report was submitted to UNDP on December 15, 2006 for further peer review. This report is the final version of the final evaluation report. It incorporates the comments and suggestions made by the UNDP and other stakeholders throughout the review process.

1.3 MAIN CONSTRAINTS TO THE EVALUATION

8. The array of evaluation tools and triangulation methods used ensure the validity of the evaluation results. That being said, however, the depth of the evaluation's findings and conclusions is, to some extent, constrained because of the following challenges faced in conducting this evaluation:

- The Project Document indicated that the independent final evaluation would be undertaken after the UNCCD fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC-5). However, due to the postponement of the CRIC-5 from October 2006 to March 2007, the independent final evaluation had to be carried out prior to CRIC-5. At the time this evaluation was conducted, the implementation of the project was not finalised. Consequently, the capacity to assess the overall results achieved is limited;
- No country specific baseline information on capacity to prepare NR was identified at the time of the project's inception which makes it difficult to assess any changes in capacity in the context of a final evaluation.;
- There were considerable time and resource constraints which meant that it was not possible to undertake field visits to any of the 35 countries involved in the project;
- Additionally, among the eight countries selected for a more in-depth analysis, it was only possible to speak with the NFP or its representative and the UNDP CO during brief telephone interviews. As mentioned above, this was due to the difficulties in identifying stakeholders and their contact information, as well as to the complexities related to scheduling a large number of phone interviews with several stakeholders in various time zones in a within a two-week period. As a result, the depth of analysis is also limited in comparison to having the necessary time and resources to conduct proper field missions.
- At the time this evaluation was conducted, only nine self-evaluations had been completed and submitted to the UNDP project's Global Coordination Unit. Hence, this evaluation report presents statistics based on a relatively small sample of participating countries.

2. THE PROJECT CONTEXT

9. In 2002, the UNCCD identified 47 Least Developed Countries (LDC) and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) that had not yet completed their national action programs to combat desertification as requested by Article 9 of the Convention. All targeted countries lacked general national capacities in environmental and relevant sectors, and awareness of the importance of the Convention as an instrument for sustainable development. The LDC-SIDS project “*Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management*” (LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project) was designed by UNDP in close collaboration with the UNCCD Secretariat and the GEF Secretariat. This umbrella project supports the development and finalization of National Action Programs (NAPs) in the context of wider capacity development for sustainable land management (SLM) through individual MSPs. The GEF contributed US\$29 million and leveraged US\$30.95 million in co-financing from national and international sources.

10. The UNDP 3NR MSP aims to assist 35 LDC-SIDS Parties with capacity building in the preparation of their Third National Reports (NRs) to the UNCCD. The project is financed by the GEF under its Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management (OP#15) and is co-financed by the Government of Norway. The UNDP is the Implementing Agency for this project and also executes the project through direct execution (DEX). At the global and regional levels, UNDP is assisted by UNOPS for the recruitment of the Global Coordinator (hosted by the UNCCD Secretariat) and for administering the operational costs of this position. UNOPS also assists with the travel for country participants to the Regional Synthesis Workshop. This MSP is considered as an “add-on” to UNDP/GEF’s full-size umbrella LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project mentioned above. In principle, the two projects were to be operationally linked at the national level to reduce transaction costs.

11. The goal of the 3NR MSP is to contribute to the development of capacities for strategic planning on sustainable land management. The project objective is to assist 35 country Parties to enhance their capacities for preparation of their 3rd NR for the UNCCD CRIC-5 and for the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 8) in a participatory and self-evaluative manner. More specifically, the project was designed to better enable non-African LDC-SIDS Parties to the UNCCD to improve the quality and timeliness of their national reporting, build capacities for reporting process self-evaluation, and engage in regional knowledge-sharing on Sustainable Land Management. The Project has the following expected outcomes:

- OUTCOME 1: Stronger capacities at the national level to elaborate 3NRs;
- OUTCOME 2: A coalition and consensus exists around the 3NR, through stakeholder participation and validation both at the national and regional levels;
- OUTCOME 3: Stronger capacities for countries to conduct self-evaluation of the process and products of the NR with a view to recommending improvements process; and,
- OUTCOME 4: Adaptive management and monitoring.

12. The project’s original Logical Framework can be found in Annex V.

13. A parallel MSP being managed through the WB and IFAD addresses the needs of a further 55 countries that are not part of the LDC-SIDS Portfolio project. The two MSPs follow the same rationale and procedures, and are expected to have comparable outcomes and outputs.

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

3.1 PROJECT DESIGN

14. This section on the review of the project design presents an analysis of the following: 1) the relevance of the project for the various stakeholders involved, 2) the project country ownership and country driven-ness, and 3) the appropriateness of project design for achieving project objectives.

3.1.1 PROJECT RELEVANCE

15. The relevance of the UNDP 3NR MSP was analyzed by examining the degree of consistency between the project objective, and objectives and priorities of the GEF, UNDP, UNCCD Secretariat and LDC-SIDS Parties.

Relevance to the GEF:

16. In May 2003, the GEF Council approved a new operational program on sustainable land management as a framework to operationalize the land degradation focal area. One of the expected outcomes of GEF-supported activities on Sustainable Land Management as discussed in the OP15 Document includes “*Institutional and Human resource capacity strengthened to improve sustainable land management planning and implementation to achieve global environment benefits within the context of sustainable development.*” In that regard, the UNDP 3NR MSP objective is in line with the expected OP15 outcomes. Moreover, in 2003, the GEF Council explicitly “*recognized that in the framework of capacity building projects to be funded under the operational program, the elaboration of national action programs (NAP), sub-regional action programs (SRAP), regional action programs (RAP) and national reports are considered as components.*”²

17. However, the GEF adheres to the principle of incremental cost in financing projects in the land degradation focal area and it appears that the preparation of NRs for the UNCCD was considered as a baseline/enabling activity not eligible for GEF funding. This has not been clearly specified in the OP15 document or in any other documents studied by the evaluator. However, it was clearly stated in the OP15 document that incremental GEF funding for sustainable land management activities would be based operationally on cost sharing. Consequently, as Norway agreed to finance the activities related to preparation of the actual NRs, the GEF agreed to finance the associated capacity-building components.

18. Overall, despite the fact that some stakeholders interviewed in the context of this final evaluation mentioned that there has been some hesitation on the part of the GEF Council to initially support the project and then to endorse the UNDP 3NR MSP, and that this has significantly delayed project implementation, the final design of the project appears to be in line with GEF objectives and eligibility criteria.

² Joint Summary of the Chairs, GEF Council Meeting, May 14-16, 2003, Decision on Agenda Item 7 *Operational Program on Sustainable Land Management*

Relevance to UNDP:

19. UNDP Resource allocation framework service line 3.4 refers to Sustainable Land Management to combat desertification and land degradation. As such, an intervention in the SLM field in LDC-SIDS appears as a highly relevant area of intervention for the UNDP. Moreover, as highlighted in the project document, the design of the 3NR MSP was in line with the role of UNDP as the GEF Implementing Agency (IA) dealing with capacity development. Finally, UNDP is the GEF IA assisting 47 countries under the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project. Thirty-three countries that are part of this 3NR MSP are also part of the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project³. The development of the 3rd NR can be programmatically closely linked to the NAP development process. Both the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project and the 3NR MSP aim to provide the requisite capacity building to enhance the quality and timeliness of both products, while also enhancing SLM capacities and mainstreaming.

Relevance to UNCCD secretariat:

20. Affected country Parties of regions other than Africa were requested to provide to the UNCCD Secretariat an update of their previous report submitted to the first session of the CRIC, reflecting the COP 6 decisions. The UNDP 3NR MSP is highly relevant to the UNCCD Secretariat in that the UNCCD Secretariat has the responsibility to facilitate the reporting and review process and to ensure timely provision of financial support to eligible affected country Parties for the preparation of their NR which is precisely what the 3NR MSP aimed to do. The Secretariat is also responsible for communicating to eligible affected country Parties how financial support to the reporting exercise will unfold, pending the response from donors and availability of funds. Thus, the UNDP 3NR project is highly relevant to the UNCCD secretariat.

Relevance to LDC-SIDS Parties:

21. In accordance with Article 26 of the UNCCD and relevant COP decisions, particularly decision 11/COP.1, each Party to the Convention is required to report through the UNCCD Secretariat on measures undertaken to implement the UNCCD. As per a decision of the COP, the non-African countries were expected to provide their 3rd NR to CRIC-5/COP 8, which was to be held in October 2006. In the 3NR MSP Project Document, it is mentioned that under the baseline scenario, LDCs and SIDS will continue to lack adequate capacities to actively engage in sustainable land management and that the majority “*will not be able to ensure timely submissions of national reports, with high risk of quality constraints*”. In light of the above, the 3NR MSP objective appears to be highly relevant to LDC-SIDS Parties’ needs pertaining to UNCCD compliance. On the other hand, it is not clear that compliance with UNCCD requirements is very high up in LDC-SIDS priorities. However, while providing information on the status of the UNCCD process, the NR also aims to contribute to strengthening institutional and human capacities of NFPs, and thereby improve LDC-SIDSs’ ability to understand and coordinate the implementation of SLM initiatives.

22. Overall, the project objective is deemed relevant to the objectives of GEF, UNDP, the UNCCD Secretariat and the LDC-SIDS Parties.

³ While Antigua & Barbuda and Cuba are not part of the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project, they were included in the 3NR MSP for cost-efficiency purpose.

3.1.2 COUNTRY DRIVENNESS AND OWNERSHIP

23. Some of the best practices pertaining to ex-ante country ownership in GEF projects can be defined as the following:

1) The project concept is country-driven and has its origin within the national sectoral and development plans

24. The overall assessment of country driven-ness is challenging for various reasons but in particular because the situation varies greatly across countries. In particular, country interest is driven by their willingness to comply with the UNCCD requirement and by the political profile of SLM issues.

25. In the project document, it is mentioned that consultations were held through three sub-regional meetings linked to the LDC-SIDS portfolio in 2005, as well as during the COP7, to identify the country-specific needs for assistance for the 3rd NR process. It is also mentioned that to fulfill their obligations under the UNCCD, the non-African country Parties have requested technical and financial support in order to build their capacities to provide high quality national reports, as well as evaluate the reporting process and products in order to extract lessons learnt for the Fourth NRs. However, the Project Document does not provide sufficient details concerning their more specific needs. It appears that the specific requests by countries for assistance has not been well documented. Overall, the project has a top-down design to ensure that Non-African country Parties are on par with those African country Parties that have, in the past, had access to funds to prepare their NRs. During the final evaluation of this MSP, UNDP representatives highlighted that UNDP normally does not ascribe to a top-down process of project design, and that this was an exception. Given the tight timing, request from the UNCCD Secretariat was used a proxy on behalf of the countries. (i.e. UNCCD Secretariat initial request for GEF assistance was a direct result of a recommendation at CRIC-3). However, a distinction needs to be made between the overall MSP and the 35 sub-projects. In that regard, it should be mentioned that the format of the request for assistance has been set by UNDP Headquarters (HQ) and did not allow for capacity building activities significantly different than the ones proposed in the 3NR MSP. In that sense, the national requests were coherent with the MSP but countries did not have much flexibility as to how to use the funds available to them. Therefore, the individual country participation in project design/components has been limited.

2) Relevant country representatives are participating in project implementation

26. It was expected that the following stakeholder groups would be involved in the national reporting process: national governments, local/regional government officials, communities, resource users, NGOs, the private sector, national and regional research agencies, and donor/development partners. Overall, a wide range of relevant country representatives was expected to participate in project implementation.

3) Appropriate partnerships have been established by the recipient with other donors

27. Cost sharing from national governments was expected to total 242,000 USD, i.e. 7,000 USD per country was requested by UNDP as a prerequisite for grant approval. However co-financing had not been secured at the time of project endorsement. Moreover, co-financing requirements by country parties were subsequently relaxed in that it was no longer a pre-requisite to receive GEF financing.

UNDP had decided that co-financing would be accounted for post-facto in order to reduce in additional potential delays in project implementation.

28. Overall, the fact that all countries requested the funds is in itself an indicator of country driven-ness. Although the MSP was developed by UNDP in consultation with UNCCD Secretariat and the GEF, it was at least to some extent a country driven process. However, despite the fact that the relevant government representatives all formally endorsed the requests for funds, it generally appears that the level of ownership of the UNDP 3NR MSP varies greatly across participating countries. That is, even though all request for funds were endorsed by country Parties, the role of the UNDP COs in the preparation of these requests for funds varies considerably. Base on the interviews conducted in the context of this final evaluation, in some case, the COs were leading the process to a great extend and country representatives were barely involved. However, in other cases, extensive consultations were conducted at the national level before the submission of the request for funds. In addition, as discussed later in this report, the actual level of stakeholders' participation in project implementation and the actual level of co-financing by country Parties also varies considerably by country.

3.1.3 APPROPRIATENESS OF THE DESIGN TO ACHIEVE PROJECT OBJECTIVES

29. In terms of the appropriateness of the design to achieve the project objective, the implementation arrangements were most relevant, in particular, the following can be noted:

- The strong involvement of UNDP COs, which were natural partners given their presence at the national level;
- Several stakeholders mentioned that the location of the UNDP project coordinator in the UNCCD secretariat was an excellent arrangement that permitted close communication and interaction with the secretariat;
- UNDP had proposed to execute this project in accordance with UNDP rules and procedures for direct execution (DEX). DEX by UNDP/GEF HQ was selected as the most flexible and effective mechanism based on (a) the short time frame for completion and submission of Third National Reports by countries, (b) the small size of individual country requests and (c) the large number of countries to be assisted under this project (35 countries). This modality had previously been used in the context of a UNDP project supporting countries in the preparation of their national communication to the UNCCD; and,
- The advisory committee for this project was a subset of the Global Advisory Committee (GAC) of the LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project, which was convenient, cost and time-effective.

30. On the other hand, in terms of project design, the following main weaknesses could be mentioned:

- **Timing.** The 2 processes (3NR MSP and the submission of the NRs to the UNCCD Secretariat in view of CRIC5) were not fully co-ordinated in terms of timing. Consequently, from the outset, it was clear that the timeline for implementation was rather short.

- **AHWG.** No formal link was established with the UNCCD Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG). The AHWG members are requested to prepare and submit to the secretariat documents describing technical issues experienced during the national reporting process, and suggestions for improvement. The secretariats shall compile and categorize these submissions in an official document for consideration at CRIC-5. The UNCCD Secretariat has insisted to maintain official discussion of AHWG as independent as possible from the 3NR MSP activities. At this level, it appears that an opportunity has been missed.

- **M&E.** Overall M&E has been adequately planned given the scope of the project. However, one of the major shortcomings at this level is the lack of country specific description of baseline capacity that makes it difficult to assess any changes in capacity in the context of a final evaluation. Another shortcoming arises due to the fact that the UNCCD Secretariat had the responsibility for the evaluation of the overall quality of the NRs but that no clear criteria or methods for evaluating the quality of national reports have been established and no specific reporting requirements to the UNDP were identified.

3.2 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

31. In this section, a brief analysis of the overall efficiency within which the project was executed is presented. The project efficiency has been assessed in terms of the following aspects:

- Adequacy of project preparation and start up phases;
- Adequacy of financial resources provided and financial management;
- Level of cost-effectiveness of resource utilization in achieving results;
- Implementation arrangements, communication and cooperation among implementing partners and adequacy of technical assistance;
- Risk management;
- Implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation activities; and
- Implication of the postponement of CRIC-5

3.2.1 ADEQUACY OF PROJECT PREPARATION AND START UP PHASES

Project preparation phase

32. UNCCD Secretariat requested assistance from the GEF and the UNDP in the spring of 2005. Consensus to move ahead with this project with UNDP as an implementing agency was reached during COP 7 in October 2005. At which point, the preparation of an MSP through a co-ordinated effort between UNDP and the UNCCD Secretariat was immediately initiated with the submission of the MSP to the GEF occurring on December 16, 2005.

33. Expedited procedures for MSP were used. The shortest amount of time that an MSP can take to be approved is about 1.5 months. However, almost 3 months were necessary to reach consensus on the MSP within the GEF Council and the MSP was endorsed by the GEF Secretariat on March 8, 2006. On March 9, 2006, the invitation to prepare a request for assistance was sent out to the UNCCD NFPs and to the UNDP COs of eligible country Parties by the UNDP HQ.

34. The deadline for the submission of the Non-African 3rd NRs was originally set for May 31, 2006 given that they were scheduled to be discussed at COP 7/CRIC-5 in October 2006. As six months is necessary to process official documents, prepare synthesis reports and undertake the necessary translations, the requests and approval of sub-project proposals, the set up of the project coordination unit, the disbursement of funds to the participating countries and the completion of the greater part of the project activities needed to be concluded in less than 3 months. Indeed, at the time the project was endorsed, it was already clear that the timely delivery of project output would be a major challenge.

35. The fact that the 2 processes (the 3NR MSP and the submission of the NRs to the UNCCD Secretariat in view of CRIC-5) were not fully co-ordinated in terms of timing, contradictory messages were sent to eligible country Parties. On the one hand, there was an externally set theoretically-inflexible deadline for the submission of the 3rd NRs to the UNCCD Secretariat and, on the other hand, there was the *actual* time frame required to implement the UNDP/GEF 3NR MSP. In this respect, given that financial support was expected, most of the countries waited for this support to become available, even though it became quickly apparent that the project could hardly be implemented in the proposed time frame. The danger, when faced with deadlines, and other operational pressures, is to lose sight of the process of capacity development, and focus too much on the output. By doing so, the long-term gains from the capacity development outcomes may be lessened, at the profit of short term reporting outputs.

Project start-up phase

36. Two months were necessary for the UNDP to reach an agreement with UNOPS on the project implementation modalities and to recruit the project coordinator. Recruitment could not formally begin before the project was endorsed by the GEF Secretariat. The coordination unit was set up in May 2006 within the UNCCD Secretariat in Bonn. GEF funds only became available for disbursement on May 12, 2006 and Norway Funds on July 10, 2006. The GEF annual performance report of 2004 highlighted that the average time between GEF project approval and project start up of MSP at UNDP has been evaluated at 146 days which compares fairly well to the WB (183 days) and UNEP (110 days). Overall, the project start-up phase of the 3NR MSP was not unusually long. However, by the time all the necessary arrangements were made to proceed with project implementation, the deadline for submission of the 3rd NRs had passed.

37. The majority of the NFPs interviewed in the context of the evaluation mentioned that the process for requesting funds was straightforward and that the UNDP COs did most of the work. As shown in Table 1 below, the timing of the submission of the request for funding by country Parties was in line with the overall set-up of the project coordination. *i.e.* the majority of requests were received before the end of May.

38. In the face of a longer-than-expected preparation and start up phase, the UNCCD Secretariat proposed new deadlines for the submission of official NRs. The initial May 31, 2006 deadline was postponed to June 30, 2006. In addition, summary and draft NRs were accepted for their inclusion in the Regional Synthesis Reports to be presented at the Regional Synthesis Workshops in July 2006 for the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) country Parties and in August 2006 for the Asia and Pacific country Parties. At the sub-project level, some of the countries started the drafting process with the Government's own financial and human resources prior to the disbursement of the project funds.

Table 1. Number and timing of funding requests by country parties

	Number of funding requests
April	6
May	18
June	8
July	1
August	0
September	1
Funding request not approved as of November 30, 2006	1

39. Overall, although it is generally agreed that GEF and UNDP should be making all efforts to streamline the processes related to the formulation, approval and inception of MSP, the 3NR MSP has not been particularly unsatisfactory at this level. On the other hand, it also appears that UNCCD made the request for financial assistance to UNDP and GEF sufficiently in advance (June 2005). However, the lack of consensus on the role that GEF should be playing in relation to UNCCD and the enabling/capacity building activities divide have apparently delayed 3NR MSP formulation and approval. On the one hand, there is a need for a clear consensus regarding the eligibility of UNCCD related capacity building/enabling activities for GEF financing; on the other hand, the UNCCD needs to be aware of the constraints faced by GEF and its IAs and align its expectations accordingly.

3.2.2 ADEQUACY OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES PROVIDED AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financing plan

40. The total cost of the GEF Alternative was expected to be US\$965,000, which was to comprise US\$513,000 of incremental GEF support and US\$452,000 of co-financing. The GEF funds were available to UNDP upon the approval of the DEX by the UNDP Associate Administrator on May 12, 2006⁴. Table 2 provides details on the status of co-financing at the time of the final evaluation.

41. The UNCCD Secretariat committed to contributing US\$10,000 and this was expected to cover the project coordinator's international telephone calls, computer equipment, office space and office supplies. However, due to financial difficulties, the UNCCD Secretariat could not, in the end, cover international telephone calls and computer equipment and could only contribute US\$1,500. However, it should be mentioned that the UNCCD Secretariat has also contributed to the preparation of the Regional Synthesis Reports and Workshops. Total expenditures related to the latter have not been compiled at the time of this final evaluation and exact figures might only be available in 2007. Therefore, upon the project's completion, the UNCCD Secretariat contribution will need to be re-assessed and re-confirmed.

⁴ The normal procedure between an IA and the GEF Trustee when a project is endorsed by the GEF CEO, is that the IA has to finalize its operational arrangements and notify the Trustee in a Quarterly Report that the Project Document has been signed by all Parties (thereby becoming "effective"). The Project Document was signed by UNDP and UNOPS on May, 23 2006 and therefore, UNDP reported the effectiveness of the project to the GEF Trustee in its July '06 Quarterly Report to the Trustee. Upon receipt of this report, the Trustee committed funds. However, in the case of the 3NR MSP, and given the urgency of channeling the funds to the COs, UNDP did not wait for July. According to the established rules of the GEF Trustee, UNDP can disburse funds as long as it has a "pool" of sufficient quantity at given time. Therefore, as soon as the UNDP Associate Administrator approved the DEX modality on May 12, 2006, we disbursed funds ahead of the official and anticipated commitment from the Trustee.

Table 2. Planned and actual co-financing

Name of Co-financier (source)	Classification	Type	Amount (USD) expected at project endorsement	Status of disbursement (USD) as of November 30, 2006
UNCCD Secretariat	Multi-lateral	In-kind	10,000	1,500
Norway	Donor	Cash	200,000	200,000
35 Governments	Government	In-kind	242,000	152,100
Sub-Total Co-financing			452,000	352,100

42. A US\$200,000 cost-sharing agreement between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and UNDP was signed on June 15, 2006. Norway disbursed its contribution to UNDP on June 16, 2006.

Cost sharing from national governments was expected to total US\$242,000, *i.e.* US\$7,000 per country was requested by UNDP HQ as a prerequisite for grant approval. The letter prepared by UNDP HQ to invite the NFPs to submit their requests for proposal stated as follows: *Please be informed that each government must provide in-kind contribution or co-funding of no less than \$7,000 in order to receive the grant of \$12,000.* However, it was quickly realised that the approval of such co-financing by the respective governments would have significantly slowed the disbursement and implementation processes. Consequently, the request for GEF assistance was approved without letters of commitment from the governments.

43. It was decided by UNDP that the level of government co-financing would be assessed in relation to the total sum of their contributions, *i.e.* sum of all contributions by participating countries at the end of the project. This change was agreed upon with the understanding that the contributions on a country level basis may exceed or remain below, the US\$7,000 initially envisaged. Nevertheless, in an attempt to keep track of the country-specific level of co-financing, countries were requested to fill out a table in their self-evaluation report. Table 3 summarizes the responses provided in the nine self-evaluations that were received by November 30, 2006.

Table 3. Government co-financing reported in self-evaluation

	Grant USD)	In-kind contribution (USD)
Afghanistan	\$0	\$5,100
Bhutan	\$0	\$3,000
St-Kitts and Nevis	\$0	\$25,000
Barbados	\$0	\$7,000
Dominica	\$0	\$5,000
Guyana	\$0	\$2,000
Fiji	\$0	\$3,000
Niue	\$0	\$2,000
Samoa	\$0	\$100,000
Total	\$0	\$152,100

44. Six of the nine countries that had submitted their self-evaluation report by November 30, 2006 did not meet the US\$7,000 prerequisite initially set for GEF financing. However, due to the large contribution of the Samoan government, the current average contribution by country Parties exceeds the targeted amount and is currently US\$16,888.

45. Table 4 below shows the planned and actual expenditures as of November 30, 2006.

Figure 4. Planned vs actual cost by activities and donors

	Description	Planned budget at project inception (USD)	Expenditure estimate as of Nov 30, 2006 (USD)	Balance (USD)
Project Coordination (GEF Funds administered by UNOPS)	Project coordinator	\$43 200	\$73 440	-\$30 240
	Coordinator phone supplies	\$7 650	\$5 400	\$2 250
	Coordinator Travel	\$16 350	\$24 840	-\$8 490
	Short term consultant	\$17 400	\$15 120	\$2 280
	Independent final evaluation	\$7 500	\$19 440	-\$11 940
	Miscellaneous	\$1 000	\$0	\$1 000
Capacity Building activities (GEF Funds administered by UNOPS)	Travel of government officials to Regional Synthesis Workshop (70 participants)	\$167 550,00	\$117 720,00	\$49 830,00
Capacity Building activities (GEF Funds administered by UNDP)	Preparation of the Country Profile, validation workshop and self evaluation	\$252 350,00	\$157 623,00	\$94 727
Sub-total (GEF)		513 000,00 \$	413 583 \$	99 417 \$
Project Coordination (Norway Funds administered by UNOPS)	Project coordinator	\$2 438	\$0	\$2 438,00
	Coordinator Travel	\$7 312	\$0	\$7 312,00
Capacity Building activities (Norway Funds administered by UNDP)	Preparation of the 3 rd NRs:	\$180 250	\$101 418	\$78 832
Sub-total (Norway)		\$190 000,00	\$101 418	\$88 582
Total		\$703 000,00	\$515 001,00	\$187 999,00

Note 1. The UNDP GMS from Norwegian resources is 5% (\$10,000) which is in addition to \$190,000.

Note 2. The above figures include UNDP COs administrative fee (ISS) of 3% and the UNOPS administrative fee (AOS) of 8% as relevant.

46. With respect to finances, it appears that the amount initially budgeted for project coordination was unreasonably low. In particular, the expected cost of the project's co-ordinator salary, travel costs and costs related to the independent final evaluation far exceeded what was planned. However, the actual costs are more in line with what should have been expected in the first place and are not unusually high for these types of services and activities. In the project budget presented in the project document, Norway was to contribute US\$9,750 for project coordination. This amount does not appear in the UNOPS expenditure estimate. It is not clear if/how that amount was used.

47. The cost related to the travel of government officials to the Regional Synthesis Workshop is significantly lower than expected; however, costs for 31 participants was covered. The evaluator has requested details on the breakdown of the expenditures made by UNOPS for the Regional Synthesis Workshop. The amount that was not used for this activity was reallocated to cover the negative balance for project coordination. It is expected that this breakdown will be presented in an annex of the final version of this evaluation report.

48. Expenditure estimates for capacity-building activities related to the preparation of the Country Profile, validation workshop and self-evaluation, and to the preparation of the 3rd NRs includes all commitments/payments in process. Some country Parties used the national execution (NEX) and the entire grant amount was sub-contracted by the CO to the relevant lead national agency (mostly in Pacific countries). Hence, of the US\$157,623 recorded as expenditures related to preparation of the Country Profile, validation workshop and self-evaluation, US\$137,083 are recorded as *Grant to institutions and other benefit*. Similarly, of the US\$101,418 recorded as expenditures related to preparation of the 3rd NRs, US\$91,393 are recorded under this same heading. Also, in other cases, payment requests/purchasing procedures (Purchase Orders etc) have been started, but actual payment has not taken place yet. These are also already shown as expenditures in the table above. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a breakdown of the actual expenditures by project components (i.e: Country Profile, validation workshop and self evaluation) as this type of breakdown does not seem to be available (even for projects executed through DEX).

49. Financial closure of the project will only occur in the first quarter of 2007. A more thorough assessment of expenditures will be required at that time.

Disbursements

50. Although there was no precise disbursement schedule in the project document, the actual timing of the disbursement created some problems. In particular, as mentioned above, most of the participating countries requested funding to implement their sub-projects before June. And while for the majority of countries (25), UNDP necessitated less than 20 days to sign authorization letters to disburse GEF funding, almost as many waited more than 40 days to receive the Norwegian co-financing funds (see Table 5). In particular, the first set of authorizations with respect to GEF financing were signed on May 15, 2006 compared to July 5, 2006 for the activities financed by Norway. It should be noted that in some cases there have been delays between preparation of the authorization letter and the actual disbursement. The first actual disbursement of GEF funds occur on May 16. The requests for Norwegian assistance were received at the same time as the requests for GEF assistance (the same template was used by country Parties to request both), however Norway's funding was not available for disbursement until July 10, 2006. Norway disbursed its contribution to UNDP (on June 16, 2006) quickly after the cost-sharing agreement was signed (on 15 June 2006) but UNDP internal administrative processing caused some further delays. This created an additional

challenge for country Parties since drafting of the NR (financed by Norway) had to be done before the validation workshops, regional synthesis workshop and self-assessments (financed by GEF). Therefore, arrangements had to be made so that the GEF funds could be used to finance preparation of the NRs prior to availability of Norway's co-financing. UNDP has undertaken to reverse the charges between the two sources of funds so as to comply with GEF Council incrementality requirements.

Table 5. Time lapse between the request for funds and signature of authorization letter

	GEF	Norway
Less than 10 days	13	5
10 to 20 days	12	3
20 to 30 days	6	4
30 to 40 days	0	1
More than 40 days	3	21

51. According to stakeholders interviewed in the context of this final evaluation and to the information contained in the self-evaluations prepared by nine country Parties, the reported optimum timeframe from the financial resources disbursement date for the process varied from four to six months.

3.2.3 LEVEL OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN ACHIEVING RESULTS

52. At the time of the final evaluation, given that the project is still under implementation in several countries, it is relatively premature to assess the project's overall cost-effectiveness. Nevertheless, according to the initial schedule, the project did not complete either the planned activities or meet the expected outcomes. Overall, if the CRIC-5 meeting had taken place in October 2006 as originally scheduled, the project would have failed to meet its objective. In particular, this can be demonstrated by the fact that as of September 30, 2006, a progress report prepared by the project coordinator illustrated that as of that date, only seven countries (20%) had submitted official final reports, with 18 countries (51%) having submitted only either summary or draft reports.

53. With respect to overall costs, the project did not explicitly use either a benchmark approach or a comparison approach to ensure that costs would not exceed those of similar projects in similar contexts. However, according to the UNCCD representatives interviewed in the context of this final evaluation, the amount allocated for the preparation of NRs was comparable to the amount allocated to undertake this task during the previous reporting cycle. In addition, it is clear that a certain level of synergy has been achieved, in particular with respect to consultation and information sharing. For example, several countries benefited from the information sharing that existed between the SLM Portfolio Project MSP, 3NR, NAP and NCSA. Although it would be difficult to accurately estimate, it can be assumed that the implementation of this MSP was more cost-effective, given the various projects currently being implemented in the same areas. Synergies with, and negative impacts of projects conducted simultaneously are further discussed below.

54. With respect to the project overall, cost-effectiveness would most likely be slightly lower than expected. This is due, in part, to the fact that attendance at the Regional Synthesis Workshop was much lower than initially planned. Originally, UNDP's 3NR MSP was to finance two government participants per country, for a total of 70 participants. However, the Asia and LAC Unit of the

UNCCD Secretariat requested UNDP to fund one participant per country and to reallocate the remaining balance to cover other expenses related to the workshop. In the end, 3NR MSP supported the participation of eight LDC-SIDS delegates and four NGO representatives in the LAC synthesis workshop; for the Asia synthesis workshop, 3NR MSP supported the participation of 16 LDC-SIDS delegates and three NGO representatives. As a result, the 3NR MSP supported the participation of 31 participants overall, rather than 70. And as shown in Table 4, although the entire amount spent comes in under budget for this particular activity, the remaining resources were reallocated to co-ordination activities which were initially underestimated and not to any additional capacity building activities.

55. The CRIC-5 meeting should provide a better opportunity to assess the project's overall cost-effectiveness in relation to the quality and overall usefulness of the NRs.

3.2.4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS, COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION AMONG IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS AND ADEQUACY OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Implementation arrangements, communication and cooperation among implementing partners

56. The establishment of a coordination unit in Bonn to supervise the implementation of the project has been highly successful and greatly appreciated by the parties involved. Several representatives from the UNCCD Secretariat, the UNDP COs and the NFPs interviewed in the context of this evaluation mentioned the relevance, usefulness and resourcefulness of the coordination unit.

57. However, it appears that the implementation arrangements did not spur ownership of the project by the UNCCD Secretariat due to the fact that the project timeline could not be aligned with the requirements set by COP. Although the roles of the various institutions were agreed upon in principle at the outset of the project's design, tensions existed between the UNCCD Secretariat and UNDP, as highlighted by several stakeholders. On the one hand, the UNCCD Secretariat was responsible for the timely delivery of NRs, but as per project design had only limited control of the pace at which the 3NR project was implemented; on the other hand, UNDP, was responsible for the delivery of high quality project outputs but had to deal with externally set time constraints, which created some frustrations. It was suggested that better and more formal communication channels be established between UNDP and the UNCCD Secretariat not only during the preparation phase, but during the implementation phase, as well. In particular, it appears that implementing partners need to agree on priorities (timely submission of NRs vs high quality project outputs and capacity building for the preparation of NRs), especially when it is clear from the outset that everything cannot be achieved.

58. UNDP COs have been involved in the delivery of funds for preparing NRs during the previous reporting cycles and their presence at the national level makes them natural partners. Overall, interactions between UNDP COs and the NFPs appear to have been relatively straightforward. In many cases, UNDP COs provided significant assistance, such as in identifying and hiring consultants, but also in providing general technical assistance during all phases of the project. Overall, as expected, the proximity of UNDP COs to NFPs facilitated sub-project coordination. Some of the NFPs interviewed in the context of this evaluation highlighted that the DEX, through which COs could directly execute the project, has truly expedited implementation of the project.

59. However, GAC was relatively inactive throughout the implementation phase of the project. In fact, the committee met only once before the agreement with Norway was confirmed. Indeed, the GAC has not been as responsive as it might have been with respect to the coordination unit's requests. The GAC structure was, however, borrowed from the UNDP SLM Portfolio Project, and therefore no additional resources or effort were wasted.

Adequacy of the technical assistance provided to participating countries

60. In the self-evaluations, the country Parties were asked whether the technical assistance provided by UNDP/GEF and the UNCCD Secretariat was adequate. Six out of nine respondents answered that the technical assistance provided by UNDP/GEF was sufficiently or highly adequate while only three out of nine responded that the technical assistance provided by UNCCD was sufficiently or highly adequate (the other responses indicated that the technical assistance was somewhat or not adequate).

61. The usefulness of the UNDP CO offices and the UNDP Coordination Unit was frequently mentioned by the NFPs interviewed in the context of the mandate. In most cases, the NFPs interviewed mentioned that they did not have direct interaction with the UNCCD Secretariat but that the guidance document provided was very helpful in the reporting process.

3.2.5 RISK MANAGEMENT

Capacity constraints

62. Not surprisingly, one of the major challenges facing a project attempting to build capacity is the lack of capacity itself. In LDC and SIDS, it is not uncommon that a single person is responsible for several conventions and thus, needs to handle several sets of requirements, manage and meet multiple deadlines and attend various workshops - all at once. At the institutional level, the lack of coordination mechanisms and the absence of established and formal communication channels between the various relevant government agencies and stakeholders have been reported. It should be mentioned in this regard that not every country has well functioning NCBs.

63. With this in mind, it is important to acknowledge that one of the best ways to deal with this type of capacity constraint is, according to several of the stakeholders interviewed, to allow more time for implementation (which was not possible in the context of this project because of the deadline set by the COP). Another way to deal with the lack of capacity in terms of availability of human resources is to hire the services of external consultants to undertake the require tasks. This, however, as has been highlighted in many cases, reduces the potential for internal capacity building and the creation of institutional knowledge and memory.

64. Other ways to deal with capacity constraints is to capitalize on the synergies between the various initiatives – something that needs to be relatively well planned from the start. In several cases, strong synergies existed between the implementation of the 3NR MSP and the preparation of the NAP and the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project. More precisely, the information gathered, as well as the consultations and workshops conducted, have served more than one purpose. Nevertheless, experiences have varied considerably across countries. However, it appears in certain country parties that an exceedingly low level of basic capacity prevented the maximization of the synergies between various ongoing projects at the national level. In practice, it appears that a critical level of co-

ordination capacity is needed to exploit these synergies. Generally, capacity-building projects such as this one, to be truly effective, need to, initially, take better stock of existing capacity and build in implementation strategies that are more in line with these existing constraints.

65. Like many development endeavours, and in contrast with recognized capacity-development principles (including those endorsed by UNDP itself), this initiative has not sufficiently recognized in its design and implementation arrangements, the time element involved in building basic capacities. Clearly, it appears that it has been the time implementation constraints, rather than the capacity needs, that have driven the design and implementation approach for this project. The issue might be that the project capacity-building targets were too ambitious in the context of the strict deadlines set by UNCCD. However, such high targets had to be set in order for the project to be eligible for GEF funding and for the GEF Council members to reach an agreement in this regard. In this particular case, it appears that meeting externally set deadlines and achieving high capacity-building targets were more of less irreconcilable but that given the rigidity of the GEF eligibility criteria, there was no other option than *trying* to make it work.

66. Moreover, the project did not provide enough of a tailored approach to capacity building in terms of both its design and implementation, especially in a way that would adequately take into account the varying capacity levels of the various partner countries. This, in turn, has seemingly had a negative impact on the process meant to build further ownership of the initiative by the local actors (in terms of co-financing, adequate consultation, etc). This, of course, is likely to have an impact on the sustainability of project outcomes, as will be discussed later.

Impacts of projects conducted simultaneously

67. As mentioned above, at the national level, several stakeholder consultations for the 3rd NR were conducted in coordination with the consultation for the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project and the NAP process. In a few cases, the consultation process for the 3rd NR was integrated into an even larger process, including the NCSA and other initiatives undertaken in focal areas other than SLM. For example, joint consultation for NAP, MSP & 3NR was reported by several country parties such as Kiribati, Samoa, Belize, Tuvalu and Suriname. In these cases, apart from being cost-effective, the conducting of stakeholder consultation for several initiatives was also deemed necessary in some cases to prevent consultation fatigue. For instance, it was mentioned that in Suriname, the same stakeholders were constantly asked to participate in consultations and workshops. In this context, linking together the consultation exercises of several projects minimized the need for workshops, which are to some extent, taking people away from their regular responsibilities. In addition, the fact that consultations for the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project could be used for the 3rd NR process enabled some of the countries to start the national reporting process before the funds were available by using the funds of the other projects to proceed with stakeholder consultations or hiring a consultant.

68. However, some of the NFPs interviewed mentioned that despite obvious synergies among the various initiatives being implemented, the constraints in terms of human resource availability are so significant that the actual reporting or drafting of the 3rd NR or of the UNDP Portfolio Project MSP could not be handled all at once. Even when consultants are hired to undertake the drafting, there are often very few consultants that have the technical abilities to make a significant contribution and in any case, it is more cost-effective to have the same consultant working on the related initiatives. In a few cases, it was clearly mentioned that the priority had been given to drafting the MSP under

the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project and that this had caused delays in the preparation of the 3rd NR.

Implementation issues in countries facing special circumstances

69. To some extent, all of the countries involved in the project have been confronted with various internal circumstances during the course of the project implementation. However, the challenges faced by some have prevented them from proceeding in an efficient manner with project implementation.

70. Haiti, Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands, in particular, have been facing serious security issues that have prevented wide stakeholder consultations and, as such, have placed the preparation of the 3NR low on their priority list. Moreover, in these countries, UNDP COs and other government agencies have not been operational for an extended period of time during the last six months. The self-evaluation process has also been disrupted by security concerns. It is important to recognize that when dealing with LDC-SIDS Parties, security issues will often restrict the extent to which stakeholder consultations can take place and thus affect the implementation of the projects. However, as correctly pointed out in the Project Document, these are exogenous factors and there is not much that can be done besides monitoring the situation during the implementation and being as flexible as possible, which the project was.

71. Cuba is the only country for which, at the time of the final evaluation, the funds requested had still not been approved by UNDP. The GEF Focal Point in Cuba, which is also the UNCCD Focal Point, requested the funds for 3NR on March 24, 2006. However, because of a new resolution issued by the Cuban government in early 2006, any endorsement letter or funding request requires the approval by the Ministry of Investment and Economic Cooperation (MINVEC). This Ministry is also the government entity responsible for all international co-operation within Cuba and is the national counterpart of UNDP. Therefore, MINVEC needs to authorize any financial request and until it does so, UNDP cannot process any funding request. The UNDP CO has been in communication with MINVEC regarding the status of the request since March 2006, but a formal response from MINVEC is still pending. Given that the 3NR project's Global Coordination Unit is closing down in mid-December, UNDP will be advising the Government of Cuba that the request will be processed if their official response is received prior to the end of January 2007. If the request is not received by this date, UNDP will consult with the two donors (GEF and Norway) on how best to proceed and allocate the remaining funds. The situation with Cuba is rather particular and it was impossible to anticipate the situation in the context of the project. All efforts are currently being made to accommodate the situation.

3.2.6 IMPLEMENTATION OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

72. An inception report was prepared in June 2006 and a progress report prepared at the end of September 2006 by the project coordinator. These reports provided very useful information in terms of assessing the status of the project and also identified areas where further efforts were needed and where decisions needed to be taken. A table for monitoring the implementation status of each activity in every country Party was also prepared⁵. This allowed for the monitoring of the overall progress made at any point during the course of the project. Moreover, it should be mentioned that

⁵ A simplified version of this table can be found in annex VI.

the evaluator had easy access to the individual proposals prepared by the country Parties, endorsement and authorization letters, financial database etc.

73. While a need has been identified to fully integrate a self-evaluation procedure between the UNDP 3NR MSP and the WB/IFAD 3NR MSP, differences between UNDP and the UNCCD Secretariat (which has undertaken most of the project activities of the WB/IFAD MSP) in interpreting the objectives and scope of the self-evaluation persist. In an effort to harmonize the self-evaluation exercise between the two MSPs, a short questionnaire with a minimum set of questions was jointly developed to be used and completed by the participants during the two Regional Synthesis Workshops. Ten of the country Parties under the UNDP MSP completed and submitted the questionnaire. However, the timing of the self-evaluation was somewhat premature for the LDC-SIDS, given that many countries were still in the process of drafting the 3NRs, and that not many countries had held validation workshops. In line with project design, a more comprehensive self-evaluation questionnaire was developed by UNDP. The final document on methodology and guidelines for self-evaluation was sent to the 35 country Parties on September 14, 2006.

74. Overall, some of the information contained in the self-evaluations is highly relevant for assessing various aspects of the national reporting process and its effect on capacity building. Notably, it provides valuable information in preparing the final evaluation presented here and, for this reason, is a critical tool in terms of gathering lessons learned in implementation of the projects. Moreover, consolidation of the questionnaire at CRIC-5 could increase the impact and significance of the self-evaluation exercise.

75. Finally, it should be mentioned that the timing of this final evaluation is less than ideal and does not allow for a complete and fair assessment of all aspects of the project, particularly in terms of the results achieved.

3.2.7 IMPLICATION OF THE POSTPONEMENT OF CRIC-5

76. In August 2006, as per the request of Argentina (the host government), the CRIC-5 was postponed from October 4-13, 2006 to March 2007. The CRIC-5 postponement has a number of impacts at various levels, in particular on project activities, monitoring and evaluation, and on project coordination/management.

77. The postponement, however, is positive in many respects, given that as discussed in the next section of this report, delays related to the project preparation and start-up phases would have had strong undermining effects on the project results and their sustainability. In light of the postponement of CRIC-5, the UNCCD Secretariat has not set a new official deadline for the submission of the NRs but has requested the country Parties to submit their NRs as quickly as possible and pressure on the country Parties was not relaxed. They are still to make every effort to rush through the reporting process as quickly as possible. However, the postponement of CRIC-5 has allowed for more NRs to be integrated in a revised version of the Regional Synthesis Reports which are to be used as information documents for CRIC-5. In addition, in reality, country Parties also have the opportunity to take advantage of the postponement to enhance the quality of their 3rd NRs and to further involve stakeholders in the consultation and validation process to ensure wider participation in producing the NRs, if they wish. As a result, it can be expected that more results will be achieved, in particular at the output level, but also in terms of outcomes.

78. Overall, the results that can be expected given the postponement of CRIC-5, are not equivalent to what could have been expected if CRIC-5 had been originally scheduled for March 2007. In the case of some country Parties, the postponement of CRIC-5 will not compensate for the fact that they were initially rushed through the reporting process. For instance, Barbados mentioned that they would not have hired a consultant to prepare the NR but prepared the report internally, and several country Parties mentioned that wider consultation would have been organized.

79. According to various stakeholders, the close-down of the coordination unit before CRIC-5 will not have much implication, given the implementation status of the various sub-projects. The UNDP COs and UNCCD Secretariat can continue to support country Parties in their respective national reporting process until CRIC-5. However, it appears that a proper follow up on the self-evaluation is needed in order to better understand the national reporting process and extract further lessons.

80. As expected, and highlighted in the Project Document, the limited duration and capacity have been the most important constraints to the smooth and successful implementation of the project.

3.3 PROJECT RESULTS

81. Below is an overview of the key results achieved by the UNDP 3NR project. The following assessment of effectiveness focuses on the general progress being made towards expected results as well as on early signs of results achieved, given that the project is still operational at the time of this final evaluation. In this section, three of the four expected outcomes formulated in the project document will be assessed:

- A coalition and consensus exists around the 3NR, through stakeholder participation and validation both at the national and regional levels;
- Stronger capacities for countries to conduct self-evaluation of the process and products of the NR with a view to recommending improvements process;
- Stronger capacities at the national level to elaborate 3NRs

82. The fourth project outcome pertaining to adaptive management and monitoring has been discussed in section 3.2 above.

3.3.1 OUTCOME 1. A COALITION AND CONSENSUS EXISTS AROUND THE 3NR, THROUGH STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION AND VALIDATION BOTH AT THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS

83. It was expected that a broad range of national stakeholder groups would be involved in the preparation and validation of the 3rd NR at the national and regional levels including GEF and UNCCD NFPs, national, state and local government officials, NGOs, community organizations, academic institutions, women's groups, and youth organizations.

Output 1. Stakeholder participation at national level:

84. Based on the information shared by the stakeholders in the interviews conducted for this final evaluation and on the information reported in the two self-evaluation questionnaires⁶, it appears that that the experiences in terms of stakeholder participation, *i.e.* the extent and manner in which they were involved in the preparation of the 3rd NR, varied considerably across countries. According to some country respondents, very few stakeholders participated in a significant way compared to other countries where major stakeholders were fully involved in a systematic manner. As mentioned above, at the national level, several stakeholder consultations for the 3rd NR were conducted in coordination with the consultation for the SLM Portfolio Project and the NAP process.

85. At project design, it was expected that a three-day national validation workshop of the first draft of the national report would be organized to permit discussions among all stakeholders. Experts from several agencies including multilateral and bilateral donors, international NGOs and foundations were expected to participate in this exercise.

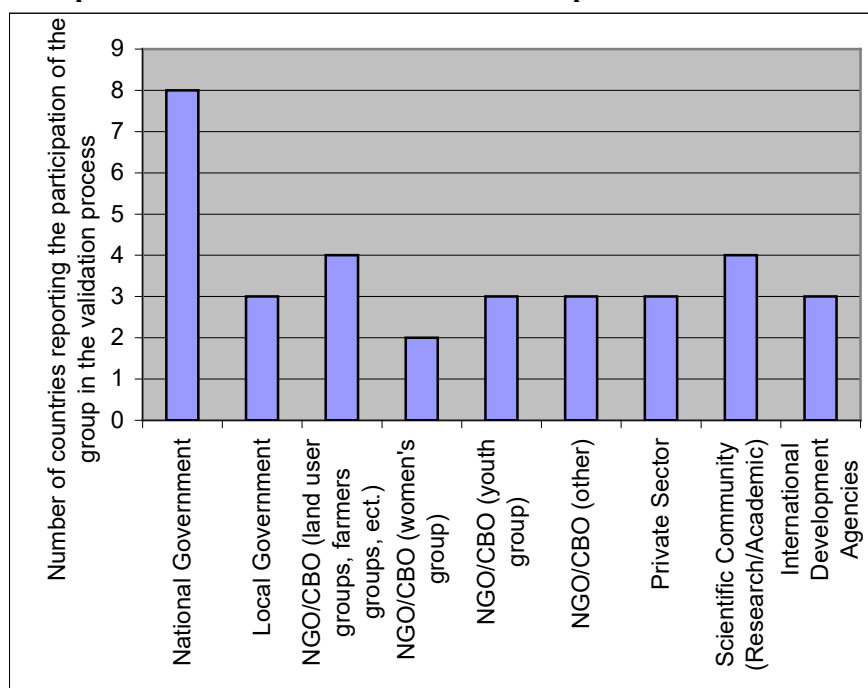
86. As of November 30, 2006, 12 countries have reported holding validation meetings/workshops, three have reported holding a validation process, but not in the form of a formal validation workshop, and three have made firm plans to do so in early December 2006. This implies that less than 50% of the project target in that regards (35 national workshops had been held by September 2006) has been achieved as per the original schedule. Given the postponement of CRIC-5, it is possible that additional validation workshops will take place in the first quarter of 2007; however, it is unlikely that all countries will hold validation workshops in time for CRIC-5 in March 2007 since some countries are still at a very early stage in the national reporting process.

87. In the self-evaluation questionnaire, some of the questions pertained to the nature of the stakeholder participation in the NR validation process. A majority of the respondents to the self-evaluation felt that major stakeholders sufficiently participated in the national validation process (four of nine) or that stakeholders fully participated in the process in a systematic manner (one of nine). Nevertheless, two out of nine mentioned that only some stakeholders participated in the validation process and one other reported that no stakeholders participated. In the latter case, the validation workshop consisted only of presenting the report to the coordinating body. Among the NFPs interviewed that stated that no validation workshop was held, it was mentioned that the report was sent or presented to major stakeholders and that their comments had been integrated in the final report.

88. In the self-evaluation questionnaire, country parties were also asked to specify which stakeholder groups were involved in the validation process. National governments, as illustrated in Figure 1 below, have been engaged the most among all stakeholder groups, followed by NGO/CBO (land user groups, farmers' groups, etc.) and the scientific community. On the other hand, women's groups have the lowest rate of participation among stakeholder groups. Generally, there has been a relatively high level of diversity in stakeholder group participation with, on average, five groups participating per country. Only one country reported that all stakeholder groups participated in the validation process.

⁶ See 3.3.2 below for more information regarding the two self-evaluation questionnaires

Figure 1. Participation of the Various Stakeholder Groups in the 3rd NR Validation Process¹



1. The validation process might include validation workshops, email circulation or telephone interviews and/or one-on-one meetings. One of the nine countries did not respond to the question.

89. Overall, the challenges faced by the NFPs in terms of involving stakeholders in the reporting process and achieving a consensus for validating the draft national reports stemmed from constraints at various levels, ranging from the individual level to institutional and systemic levels. At the individual level, the main recurring challenges highlighted by respondents has been the lack of human resources and the lack of availability of certain stakeholders due to their respective high volumes of work. At the institutional level, the lack of coordination mechanisms and the absence of established and formal communication channels between the various relevant government agencies and stakeholders have been reported. It should be mentioned in this regard that not every country has well functioning NCBs. On the other hand, some countries, such as St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and others, have reported that it was mainly the short time-frame provided for completing the 3rd NR that hindered the full participation of all stakeholders. In addition, the low level of awareness, the complexity of bringing people together in certain SIDS and the low priority given by national authorities to national reporting and to the UNCCD in general, were also mentioned. Finally, factors such as national security issues also prevented full participation by stakeholders in some countries.

Output 2: Stakeholder participation at the regional level

90. As per project design, the UNDP 3NR MSP contributed to the two Regional Synthesis Workshops (LAC/Caribbean and the Pacific/Asian SIDS) that were conducted in coordination with the WB/IFAD 3NR project by financing the participation of national government and NGO representatives. The UNCCD Secretariat was responsible for the overall coordination of the Regional Synthesis Workshop and prepared the Regional Synthesis Reports presented at these meetings. As mentioned previously in this report, the Asia and LAC Unit of the UNCCD Secretariat requested UNDP to fund one government representative per country rather than 2 as originally

planned, and to reallocate the remaining balance to cover other expenses related to the workshop. In the end, the UNDP 3NR MSP supported the participation of 31 participants (24 government representatives and 7 NGOs representatives) rather than 70 government representatives. Eleven of the country Parties eligible for funding were not been able to send any representative due mainly to the fact that the relevant individuals (mostly the NFP) had other responsibilities to attend to. In many LDC-SIDS country Parties, the NFP and other government personnel responsible for the UNCCD also have responsibility for several other files and thus, were not available to participate in the workshop. For example, the Belize NFP was not able to attend the synthesis workshop because of a scheduling conflict; the Solomon Islands does not have an official NFP at the moment and their environment department is extremely small. The UNCCD Secretariat also reported that some government representatives could not attend for logistical reasons, *i.e.* given the short amount of time between the nomination to participate and the workshop, proper arrangements to attend could not be made by UNOPS. However, this could not be followed-up on with country Parties.

91. In terms of achieving the project target set at project design in terms of stakeholders' participation at the regional level, the two Regional Synthesis Workshops were held by September 2006 as scheduled. However less than 50% (31 of 70) of the targeted number of participant was able to attend the Workshops. Even if we take into account that the targeted number of participants was revised to 35, 11 country Parties (31%) did not send a representative to the Workshops.

92. In terms of stakeholders' participation at the regional level, it should be mentioned that various regional organizations namely the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Environmental Health Institute (CEHI) provided some assistance to the participating country Parties in preparing their 3rd NR. According to the project coordinator, all three organizations pushed the countries to submit funding request at the beginning of the project. SPREP was also involved in the drafting & editing of the 3rd NR and in organizing national level consultation/validation workshops in several countries in the Pacific. SPREP and CEHI also organized regional meetings in the context of the LDC-SIDS Portfolio project where 3NR MSP process, methodology and key items of self-evaluation was discussed.

Outcome: Level of awareness about land degradation issues

93. It was expected that stakeholders' participation in the preparation and validation of 3NR would raise awareness about the land degradation issues in the participating countries. However, the effect of the 3NR MSP on awareness raising cannot be assessed in a rigorous manner. In particular, as no baseline data are available, measuring change in awareness at the national level would have required extensive field visits and direct contact with stakeholders. Moreover, given that several projects are being implemented at the same time, the 3NR MSPs' contribution to any measured changed would be difficult to determine. Nevertheless, it can be mentioned that some of the NFPs and UNDP COs interviewed stated that the consultations held relating to the national reporting process have clearly raised awareness among stakeholders to the land degradation issues. Other countries reported that broad consultation of stakeholders at the national level would not have been very useful, due to the low level awareness to these issues. In other cases, it was mentioned that it has been easier to organize stakeholder consultations for this particular reporting cycle and that to some extent, the input from stakeholders was of higher quality compared to previous reporting cycles because of an increased awareness of the land degradation issues over the last few years. It appears, thus, that a high level of awareness to land degradation issues benefits the national reporting process as participation in the national reporting processes raises awareness to land degradation issues.

3.3.2 OUTCOME 2. STRONGER CAPACITIES FOR COUNTRIES TO CONDUCT SELF-EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS AND PRODUCTS OF THE NR WITH A VIEW TO RECOMMENDING IMPROVEMENTS PROCESS

94. The COP7/CRIC-4 process highlighted the need for a thorough evaluation of the national reporting process of the UNCCD by the affected country Parties in order to recommend improvements for the 4th and subsequent national reports. Self-evaluations were undertaken to enhance the capacity of NFPs to conduct an NR self-evaluative process and thereby contribute effectively to the related deliberations at CRIC-5.

95. Originally, the self-evaluation process was to be done through a two-pronged approach. First, a participatory evaluation process was to be conducted during the national validation workshop. Second, the national government representatives participating in the Regional Synthesis Workshops were to conduct a thorough analysis of their reporting process by sharing their respective experiences.

Output 1: Preparation of self-evaluation at the national level

96. While a need has been identified to fully integrate a self-evaluation process between the UNDP 3NR MSP and the WB/IFAD 3NR MSP, there have been differences between UNDP and the UNCCD Secretariat (which has undertaken most of the project activities of the WB/IFAD MSP). In particular, differences emerge in terms of interpreting the objectives and scope of the self-evaluation. In an effort to harmonize the self-evaluation exercise between the two MSPs, a short questionnaire was jointly developed and was to be used and filled out by participants during the two Regional Synthesis Workshops. Ten of the LDC-SIDS country parties under the UNDP 3NR MSP completed and submitted the questionnaire. In the context of this final evaluation, the responses to the questionnaire were compiled and analyzed. Overall, it appears that the answers to the questionnaire provided only a limited amount of useful information for assessing how the national reporting process was carried out. In particular, given the level of information provided, it is difficult to assess to what extent its objectives have been met and to provide lessons and recommendation that can be integrated into future exercises. In addition, the timing of this self-evaluation was somewhat premature for the LDC-SIDS, due to the fact that many countries were still in the process of drafting their 3NRs, and that, at the time, several countries had not conducted important consultation or their validation workshops. In addition, since this questionnaire was to be completed by the Regional Synthesis Workshop participant, it appears that, at the national level, this tool's potential was insufficient for increasing capacity building to conduct self-assessment. In addition, this self-evaluation was not in line with the self-assessment component described in the proposal submitted by country Parties, which included a US\$1000 budget for this exercise.

97. In line with project design, a more comprehensive self-evaluation questionnaire was developed by UNDP. The final document on methodology and guidelines for self-evaluation was sent to the 35 country Parties on September 14, 2006. It was originally expected that the self-evaluation would be completed in a participatory manner during the national validation workshop. However, for some countries, the questionnaire came after their validation workshop had been conducted. Nevertheless, it was recommended that the self-evaluation take place with the participation and contributions of the NFPs, NCB and other relevant stakeholders. The 35 country Parties were advised to adapt the methodology, complete their self-evaluations and submit a completed comprehensive questionnaire

to UNDP by September 30, 2006. Although it is clear why the information contained in the self-evaluation was wanted so soon (mainly in order to aggregate the information in time for it to be used in the final evaluation of the project), it was probably unfair and counterproductive to set such a deadline. In order to be useful and informative, the self-evaluations must be conducted after the main activities related to the preparation of the NR have been completed, *i.e.* during the validation period. Self-evaluations completed in haste during the national reporting process would not be as relevant, useful, or rich in terms of lessons learned.

98. As of November 30, 2006, nine self-evaluations were completed by the country Parties and submitted to UNDP. The results of these nine self-evaluations were compiled and some of the relevant findings are presented in this final evaluation. The nine country Parties that submitted their self-evaluations have either submitted their final NR to the UNCCD Secretariat or the final drafts of their NR is awaiting Government endorsement. Four countries which have submitted their final NR (including Cuba) have yet to submit their self-evaluation. And, given that many countries have not finalized their NR, several self-evaluations have yet to be conducted and submitted to the UNDP.

99. With very few exceptions, stakeholders interviewed in the context of this evaluation demonstrated relatively low interest in the self-evaluation process. Several stakeholders interviewed said that they perceived the self-evaluation as an additional burden and did not find it particularly useful. However, contradictory information has been found in the self-evaluation questionnaires themselves. Among the 9 country Parties that submitted their self-evaluation by November 30, 2006, when asked if the self-evaluation had been an effective tool for monitoring the 3rd national reporting process to the UNCCD, seven out of nine felt that the self-evaluation was an effective tool and two out of nine felt it was highly effective. It may be relevant to mention, however, that the respondents were not given the option to answer that the tool was “marginally” or “somewhat” effective as the choices were: *Most effective, Highly effective, Effective, Not effective* and *Don't know*.

100. From the interviews conducted with some of the NFPs and from the information reported in the self-evaluation questionnaires, it can also be concluded that the self-evaluations were not systematically conducted in a participatory manner. Only one country (Samoa) completed the self-evaluation during the validation workshop and stated that a survey was carried out in order to aggregate the view of the main stakeholders to evaluate the 3rd national reporting process. In place of conducting surveys, some countries mentioned that in-person and telephone interviews were conducted with relevant stakeholders. Guyana reported that a meeting of the National Steering Committee for UNCCD was convened to discuss the self-evaluation of the 3NR. In at least one case (Bhutan), the self-evaluation was not been completed in a participatory manner and the self-evaluation questionnaire was filled out by the NFP without any significant consultations with other stakeholders. In general, in the answers to the self-evaluation questionnaire there was some level of confusion regarding the consultations for and oversight of both the reporting process and the self-evaluation process and, as a consequence, the information regarding the latter is limited.

101. At project inception, two targets had been set in relation to the preparation of the self-evaluation 1) 35 nationally adapted methodologies validated by stakeholders by July 2006, and 2) 35 national self-evaluations completed by CRIC-5. The proposed self-evaluation methodology was only sent to country Parties in September. At the time of this final evaluation, nine (26%) of the self-evaluations have been completed but given the postponement of CRIC-5 to March 2007, a much better performance can be expected, especially if appropriate efforts are made by UNDP COs and Technical Regional Advisors to encourage and guide the country Parties in this process.

Output 2: Self-evaluation at the regional level through the sharing of experiences

102. It was expected that the Regional Synthesis Workshops organized in the context of this project would be an important vehicle for capacity building through the sharing of experiences, considering regionalism, and obtaining technical assistance and policy advice from the UNCCD Secretariat and other interested parties to ensure high-quality national reporting content and process.

103. Some level of experience sharing occurred at regional levels during the Regional Synthesis Workshops; however, given 1) the early status of implementation of the various national reporting processes, 2) the lower-than-expected level of participation in this workshop, and 3) the fact that the methodology for self-evaluation had not been agreed upon by the time the Regional Synthesis Workshop took place, results at this level have been lower than expected. Overall, the timing of the Regional Synthesis Workshops was not ideal for promoting the exchange of information and reflection on the national reporting process. As mentioned above, SPREP and CEHI have organized regional meetings in the context of the LDC-SIDS Portfolio project where 3NR MSP self-evaluation was discussed. Again, however, given the postponement of CRIC-5 to March 2007, there will be an opportunity for the countries to reflect on the process then. It would also be useful to ensure that the self-evaluations are completed by CRIC-5 despite the closing down of the UNDP 3NR coordination unit in December 2006. Results from the self-evaluation should be compiled and discussed in the context of a side event at CRIC-5. Indeed, these results would constitute valuable input to the reflection of the AHWG.

Outcome: Capacities of NFPs for conducting self-evaluative process

104. At this point, it is not clear to what extent the self-evaluation component of the 3NR MSP has actually helped to build capacity with regards to self-evaluation, particularly given the timing constraints faced during implementation of the project. However, when they were asked whether NFPs' and NCBS' capacity had been enhanced with regards to monitoring and evaluating the national reporting process to UNCCD, six of the nine respondents to the self-evaluation questionnaire felt that this capacity had been sufficiently enhanced, two said that it had been enhanced to some extent and one stated that it had not been enhanced much. Six of the nine respondents also felt that the self-evaluation was a sufficiently (five) or highly (one) useful tool for evaluating similar national reporting processes for other MEAs, while three felt it was useful only to some extent in that regards.

105. As stated earlier, it should be mentioned that some of the information contained in the self-evaluations is highly relevant for assessing various aspects of the national reporting process and its effect on capacity building. Notably, it provides valuable information in preparing the final evaluation presented here and, as such, is a critical tool in terms of gathering lessons learned in project implementation. Moreover, consolidation of the questionnaire at CRIC-5 could increase the impact and significance of the self-evaluations exercise.

3.3.3 OUTCOME 3. STRONGER CAPACITIES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL TO ELABORATE 3RD NRS

106. This particular project outcome overlaps with the overall project objective. The outcomes under this outcome included the preparation of Country Profiles and drafting of the NR, which were both required by UNCCD.

Output 1. Country profiles

107. According to several of the NFPs interviewed in the context of this evaluation and based on the responses provided in the self-evaluation questionnaires, the format of the Country Profile presented a real challenge. It was mentioned that a lot of time was required to undertake adequate research and validation of the information in order to duly respond with accurate figures. Several respondents mentioned that they did not have access to all of the required data. As of November 30, 2006, eight country Parties (23%) have submitted final Country Profile, 11 country Parties (31%) have submitted draft Country Profile and the reminder (46%) have yet to submit their Country Profile. The project target for the preparation of Country Profile was “*at least 60% of the 3rd NRs have detailed Country Profiles by the end of the project*”. Given that 54% of the country Parties have already submitted either a draft or a final Country Profile, it is highly likely that the 60% target will be met by CRIC-5. However, it is not clear what was understood by *detailed* Country Profile and how this would be assessed.

Output 2. Draft 3rd NR

108. This component was financed through co-financing provided by Norway. As of November 30, 2006, a total of nine countries (26 %) had submitted official final reports, 16 countries (46%) had submitted draft reports and 2 countries (6%) a summary report. Eight countries have yet to submit any report. Of the 20 Asia and Pacific countries, four (20%) have submitted a final official report, 11 countries (55%) a draft report and one a summary report (5%). Of the 15 LAC countries, five (33%) have submitted final official reports; five others (33%) draft reports and one country (7%) has submitted a summary report. Four countries in each region have yet to submit any report.

109. Overall, about 25% of the project target in that regard (35 3rd NRs were available by July 2005) has been achieved as per the original schedule. Given the postponement of CRIC-5, it is possible that additional NRs will be finalized between now and March 2007. It is unlikely that all countries will finalize their NRs by CRIC-5, however at the very least, it can be expected that most of the NRs that are currently in draft form will be finalized on time, in which case about 70% of the project target will have been achieved.

Outcome: Capacity at the national level to elaborate the 3rd NR

110. Among the 35 country Parties participating in this MSP, 17 did not submit their 1st NR. However, six had only ratified the Convention after the year 2000 so only 29 countries could have been expected to submit their 1st NR at this stage. In addition, nine of the 35 country Parties did not submit their 2nd NR, however three had only ratified the Convention after 2002 so only 32 countries could have been expected to submit their 2nd NR. As mentioned above only nine country Parties have submitted the official final 3rd NR as of November 30, 2006. However, if the 16 countries that have submitted draft 3rd NR are included, a total of 25 have actually prepared their 3rd NR. It can be expected that even if the draft NRs submitted are not significantly modified, the majority will be moved out of draft status and will be endorsed as they are by the national authorities as this occurred in the previous reporting cycles. Overall, among the country Parties participating in this

MSP 62% (18 of 29) submitted their 1st NR, and 81% (26 of 32) submitted their 2nd NR. It can be expected that approximately 71% (25 of 35) of the country Parties will have actually submitted their 3rd NR at the time of CRIC-5, which would represent a slightly worse performance than during the second reporting cycle. However, this will need to be reassessed at the time of CRIC-5.

111. As stipulated in the project LFA, the quality of national reports prepared has been identified as one of the indicators for assessing the change in capacity at the national level to elaborate the 3rd NR. The target was *At least 60% of 3NRs are evaluated as high quality reports by CRIC-5*. However, CRIC-5 has not occurred yet and was postponed to March 2007. As mentioned earlier, at project inception, it was established that the UNCCD Secretariat would take full responsibility for quality control. However, specific criteria and methods for evaluating the quality of the NRs were not established and no particular agreement on format and timing of the assessment were agreed upon between the UNCCD Secretariat and UNDP.

112. In the absence of any clear indication from the UNCCD Secretariat at this level, the quality of the 3rd NR could be assessed in various ways: 1) by comparing the quality of the current NRs with the quality of the NRs prepared during the previous reporting cycles, 2) by comparing the content of the NRs with the guidelines provided by the UNCCD Secretariat, and 3) by assessing the usefulness of the content at the national and international levels.

1. Comparing the quality of the current NRs with the quality of the NRs prepared during the previous reporting cycles

113. As per the guidelines prepared by the UNCCD Secretariat, the recommended format of the 3rd NR differs greatly from the format used in the previous reporting cycle and for this particular reason, any rigorous comparison in the quality of the reports is difficult to make. When they were asked to compare the quality of the previous reports with the 3rd NRs, most stakeholders interviewed in the context of this final evaluation abstained from answering and, while some stakeholders felt that the 3rd NRs were of lower quality, others said that they were of higher quality.

2. Comparing the content of the NRs with the guidelines provided by the UNCCD Secretariat

114. According to the Regional Synthesis Report for LAC, almost all of the reporting countries used the appropriate format and complied with the recommendations contained in the guide to the preparation of reports. However, there are still significant differences in length and range of issues covered across the various reports. Previously, the recommendations and decisions contained in decision 1/COP.5 were not integrated in the 2002 guide. This partly accounts for the variation in the content of the reports, the lack of attention that has been paid to the Bonn Declaration Guidelines and recommendations by the committee on Science and Technology. According to the UNCCD Secretariat, the updated guide that includes the latest recommendations and decisions, allows for more flexibility in the drafting of the report and therefore does not facilitate comparison.

115. Among the country Parties that have submitted their self-evaluations, five of the nine respondents felt that the current “format” of their national reports and Country Profile sufficiently addressed the seven key thematic topics defined by Decision 1./COP5 of the UNCCD, while three respondents felt that only some of the topics were addressed.

116. More importantly, however, the NRs need not necessarily be of high quality. Whether they are better than the previous NRs and whether they fully address all that is recommended does not

say everything about the potential and actual usefulness of the information they contain. Hence, it appears that the value of the report can be assessed based on the actual use that stakeholders can make of it.

3. Use of the NR at the regional international and national levels

117. The Regional Synthesis Report prepared for the Asia Pacific Regional Synthesis Workshop on the national reporting process was based on information from 30 NRs (23 from the 25 countries funded by the World Bank/IFAD, 4 from the 20 countries funded by the UNDP/GEF, and three unfunded countries) submitted to the Secretariat as of June 30, 2006. Similarly, the Regional Synthesis Report prepared for the LACc Regional Synthesis Workshop on the national reporting process covered 27 NRs (23 from the 25 countries funded by the World Bank/IFAD, 10 from the 15 countries funded by the UNDP/GEF, and three unfunded countries) submitted to the Secretariat as of June 30, 2006. In light of that, it would appear that concerns and issues faced by the LDC-SIDS supported by the UNDP/GEF 3NR MSP may be under-represented in documents to be presented at CRIC-5, and as a consequence, it might be more difficult to convey their particular progress, needs and challenges to COP.

118. The Regional Synthesis Report for LAC mentions: *“The majority of countries submitted their third country reports late and / or in an unfinished state. This is retrograde step compared to 2000 and 2002.”* However, given the postponement of CRIC-5 from October 2006 to March 2007, the UNCCD Secretariat is currently proceeding with an update of the two Regional Synthesis Reports and more countries are being included in the analysis. However, it remains that some of the countries are not advanced enough in their national reporting process to contribute to the Regional Synthesis Reports in any significant way. They will, however, have the opportunity to share their progress, needs and concerns during CRIC-5 if they can make significant progress between now and the CRIC-5 meeting.

119. In accordance with article 26 of UNCCD and Decision 11/COP.1, each country Party shall communicate to COP reports on the measures it has taken for the implementation of the Convention for consideration at its ordinary sessions. As mentioned earlier, the formulation of such reports is itself an essential part of the Convention implementation. Although they are providing information on the status of the UNCCD process, the NRs should also contribute to the strengthening of country Parties’ institutional and human capacities, thereby improving their ability to coordinate the work related to SLM.

120. During the interview conducted in the context of this final evaluation, when they were asked how their NRs would be used at the national level, different answers were provided by the NFPs. In some cases, they reported that preparation of NR is generally perceived as an obligation that has little relevance to the specific country situation. They stressed that the format of the report would need to be based on what would be useful at the national level and that guidelines should be more flexible. The relationship between the guidelines proposed and the situation in the country was not always clear for some country Parties. Consequently, in the end, it is not clear that all the information gathered is relevant at the national level. However, it should be mentioned that it is stated in the guidelines that the format is a suggestion, not prescriptive, and that it can be adapted to national realities and priorities. Ironically, it should also be mentioned that countries have previously asked for better, more specific guidelines for the preparation of NRs.

121. Some NFPs highlighted, however, that the NR constitutes a good reference document for national researchers, students and civil society groups, others mentioned that it constitutes a baseline and that it is useful in term of taking stock of the land degradation-related issues at the national level and that it will inform the design of the NAP and consequently of future projects related to SLM.

122. Overall, the use of the 3rd NR at the national and international level appears to be mixed but further investigation would be required in order to better assess the relevance of the 3rd NRs for country Parties. This could also allow for the identification of ways in which these report can better address national priorities while providing useful information to the UNCCD Secretariat and the global community.

3.3.4 PROJECT IMPACTS

123. The project's long-term goal was to contribute to the development of capacities for strategic planning on SLM. It is obviously premature to attempt to assess project impact at this level, however, early signs of project impact can be identified:

In terms of capacity building at the individual level:

124. When they were asked whether capacity was built throughout the national reporting processes, NFPs interviewed mentioned that their own capacity had been increased, as well as that of the government's representatives from various agencies; NCB members' capacity has also been enhanced in some cases. However, the majority of the NRs were prepared by local or regional consultants because of shortage human resources in some cases, and in technical capacity in others. However, even though consultants were hired to assist in preparation of the 3rd NR, the sub-projects could have contributed to:

- Building the capacity of local consultants themselves;
- Strengthening the capacity of the NFPs and relevant ministry representatives closely involved in the process;
- Some consultants had the explicit mandate to build the capacity of some of the government representatives and other stakeholders for participation in production of the NR.

In terms of capacity building at the institutional level:

125. It was mentioned that the 3rd national reporting process permitted the creation of synergies among parties involved in SLM issues at the national level. In other cases, it has at the very least permitted the identification of national weaknesses in terms of processes and relationships between the various institutions and agencies involved with SLM.

In terms of capacity building at the systemic level:

126. The 3rd national reporting process is not likely to have any significant direct effect on the availability of human or financial resources for the preparation of NRs. However, in some cases, NFPs interviewed mentioned that the information gathered through the NRs actually permitted the country Parties to take stock of the situation in terms of land degradation and that this information will inform the design of the NAP and accordingly, of future SLM-related projects.

3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

127. Good prospects for project sustainability are typically revealed by the presence of factors that influence the continuation of project benefits after completion of project implementation, within and/or outside the project domain. Relevant factors affecting sustainability can include: financial support; institutional arrangements and organizational capacity; policy and regulatory frameworks; and, other environmental and social aspects. Considering that some of the sub-projects examined in this evaluation have not reach completion, the sustainability and replicability assessment focused on the quality of sustainability strategies and replication plans, and on the degree of integration of related aspects from the outset.

128. The sustainability strategy underlying the 3NR MSP did not address all the relevant factors affecting sustainability; financial support, institutional arrangements and organizational capacity, and policy and regulatory frameworks were not directly addressed in the context of this MSP. However, it is mentioned in the Project Document that the financial capacity should come about from implementing the larger UNDP Portfolio MSP, through the financial sustainability mechanisms that will be put in place, such as CCD Funds, dedicated government budgets, etc. It is also in the context of the larger UNDP Portfolio MSP that the institutional arrangements and organizational capacity, and policy and regulatory frameworks would be addressed. Hence, it is only in the context of this other UNDP Portfolio MSP that in the future, the UNCCD NFPs would have the technical and financial capacity to undertake the preparation of future NRs on their own in a timely and efficient manner, without the need for additional outside assistance.

129. It was mentioned earlier in this report that some NFPs highlighted that the NR constitutes a good reference document for national researchers, students and civil society groups, others mentioned that it constitutes a baseline and that it is useful in terms of taking stock of the land degradation-related issues at the national level and that it will inform the design of the NAP and consequently of future SLM related projects. In that sense, the information contained in the NR can constitute a point of departure rather than a point of arrival at the local, national, regional or global level. However, as the quality and relevance of the NRs prepared varies, this potential will in turn differ from country to country.

130. In terms of sustaining the technical capacity that could be used in the context of future reporting processes, the 3NR MSP also probably achieve mix results. At this level also, the prospect for sustainability of the outcomes achieved varies greatly across countries and depends largely on the results actually achieved. Although a more thorough assessment should be done at a later stage, it is clear that the development of capabilities at the national level has been limited due to the lack of human resources of the national counterparts. The project's extensive use of consultants, as opposed to government professional resources, further limited the potential for sustainability of the NFP and other relevant national stakeholder capacities as well as of the institutional knowledge (institutional memory) that was sought by the project. However, even though consultants were hired to assist in preparation of the 3rd NR, the fact that all the consultants were local or regional should be taken into account. Capacity development does not only involve building up a civil service (government), but also as in this case, building private sector capacity. Moreover, if the NFPs and relevant ministry representatives were closely involved in the process, their capacity was also strengthened. Finally, some consultants had the explicit mandate to build the capacity of some of the government representatives and other stakeholders for participation in NR production. It should also be mentioned that given their involvement and interest in the process, regional organizations

have to some extent potentially increase the potential for sustainability of project outcomes by contributing to their own knowledge and capacities in this area which could be useful in future reporting cycles.

131. Addressing the sustainability of project outcomes can be considered overall as a challenging aspect of this particular project. Significant issues remain to be addressed in order to help ensure sustainable results in terms of capacity to prepare NRs for the UNCCD or for any other MEAs by LDC-SIDS. This, however, does not necessarily reflect poorly on the overall performance of the project in particular, given its scope, but rather indicates that further initiatives (such as the UNDP SLM Portfolio Project and NCSA) are required to sustain capacity for reporting in several of the LDC-SIDS country Parties.

4. CONCLUSIONS

132. Overall, the project objective is deemed relevant to the objectives of GEF, UNDP, and the UNCCD Secretariat as well as to the needs of the LDC-SIDS Parties. However, the project had a top-down design to ensure that non-African country Parties are on par with those African country Parties that have, in the past, had access to funds to prepare their national reports (NRs). In addition, despite the fact that the relevant government representatives have formally endorsed the requests for funds (sub-project at county level), the level of ownership of UNDP 3NR MSP as assessed through the level of country driven-ness, stakeholder participation and co-financing varies greatly across participating country Parties.

133. In terms of the appropriateness of the design for achieving the project objective, the implementation arrangements were mostly relevant. The main strengths of the project at this level resided in the following: 1) the strong involvement of UNDP Country Offices, which were natural partners given their presence at the national level; 2) the Global Coordination Unit being set up on the premises of the UNCCD Secretariat, 3) the possibility to use DEX and, 4) the fact that the advisory committee for this project was a subset of the Global Advisory Committee of the UNDP/GEF LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project. However, the following weaknesses could be noted: 1) the timeframe for project implementation was not in line with the deadline for NR submission to the UNCCD Secretariat; 2) no formal link was established with the UNCCD Ad Hoc Working Group which was responsible for identifying technical issues experienced during the national reporting process and making suggestions for improvement; and, 3) no clear criteria or methods for evaluating the quality of national reports have been established, nor have any specific reporting requirements by the UNCCD Secretariat to UNDP been determined.

134. As expected, and highlighted in the project document, the limited duration and capacity have been the most important constraints to the project's smooth and successful implementation. Indeed, at the time the project was endorsed, it was already clear that the timely delivery of project output would be a major challenge. Due to the fact that the two processes (the 3NR MSP and the submission of the NRs to the UNCCD Secretariat in view of CRIC-5) were not fully co-ordinated in terms of timing, contradictory messages were sent to eligible country Parties. On the one hand, there was an externally set, theoretically-inflexible deadline for the submission of the 3rd NRs to the UNCCD Secretariat and, on the other hand, there was the *actual* time frame required to implement the UNDP/GEF 3NR MSP. Overall, although it is generally agreed that GEF and UNDP should be making every effort to streamline the processes related to the formulation, approval and inception of MSP, the 3NR MSP has been reasonably satisfactory at this level. However, it also appears that the

UNCCD Secretariat made the request for financial assistance to UNDP and GEF sufficiently in advance (June 2005). The lack of consensus on the role that the GEF should be playing in relation to the UNCCD and the enabling/capacity building activities divide have, however, apparently delayed the formulation and the approval of the 3NR MSP. On the one hand, there is a need for a clear consensus regarding the eligibility of UNCCD related capacity building/enabling activities for GEF financing, on the other, the UNCCD Secretariat needs to be aware of the constraints faced by GEF and its implementing agencies and align its expectations accordingly.

135. Not surprisingly, one of the major challenges facing a project attempting to build capacity is the very lack of capacity. In LDC and SIDS, it is not uncommon that a single person is responsible for several Conventions and thus, needs to handle several sets of requirements, manage and meet multiple deadlines and attend various workshops - all at once. At the institutional level, the lack of coordination mechanisms and the absence of established and formal communication channels between the various relevant government agencies and stakeholders have also been reported. Generally, to be truly effective, capacity building projects such as this one need to, initially, take better stock of existing capacity and build in implementation strategies that are more in line with these existing constraints.

136. Based on the results presented in this evaluation report, it appears that the project has not performed well in terms of meeting the targets set at project inception. In relation to the targets set at project inception, current results are unsatisfactory. However, it appears that the various targets set for output, outcome and impact levels in the context of this project were over-ambitious given the risks identified at the project design stage and the externally set time constraint. Moreover, given the postponement of CRIC-5, and in light of the continued efforts of the UNDP project coordination unit and COs, of the UNCCD Secretariat and the country Parties themselves to prepare their NRs in time for CRIC-5, a lot more can still be achieved and overall project results might be reassessed as marginally satisfactory or satisfactory. Thus, the postponement of CRIC-5 is positive in many respects, given that delays related to the project preparation and start-up phases would have had strong undermining effects on the project results

137. Significant issues remain to be addressed in order to help ensure sustainable results in terms of capacity to prepare NRs for UNCCD or for any other multilateral environmental agreements by LDC-SIDS. This, however, does not necessarily reflect poorly on the overall performance of the project in particular, given its scope, but rather indicates that further initiatives are required to sustain capacity for reporting in several of the LDC-SIDS country Parties.

5. LESSONS LEARNED AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lessons learned in terms of providing assistance in the context of the national reporting process:

- The location of a project coordination unit in a Convention secretariat allows for more effective and efficient project management and better coordination between the IA and the Secretariat.
- Responsibilities for M&E must be clearly assigned and clear criteria and methods for evaluating all results should be established at project inception; when responsibilities are assigned to third parties, specific reporting requirements need to be agreed upon.

- In order to ensure a more timely delivery of higher quality NRs, the reporting cycles of the Convention and the associated capacity-building initiative needs to be fully co-ordinated in terms of timing. Otherwise, there may be contradiction between the time frame for reporting to the convention and the actual and optimal time frame required to implement the associated capacity-building initiative.
- From the financial resources disbursement date, a minimum of six months is required to prepare NRs.
- Self-evaluations are particularly useful in the context of a capacity-building project providing a small amount of financial support to several countries. Although it has its shortcomings, self-evaluation provides a cost-effective means of gathering information on project implementation issues, results achieved and lessons learned.

Lessons learned in terms of capacity building generally:

- Ensuring that a thorough self-assessment of needs has been conducted and that proper consideration is given to the pre-existing capacity at all levels is crucial to the effectiveness of capacity-building activities.
- When faced with deadlines, and other operational pressures, there is danger of losing sight of the capacity development process, and focusing too much on the outcome. By doing so, the long-term gains from the capacity-development outcomes may be reduced, to the advantage of short term reporting outcomes.
- Ensuring national ownership and leadership, as well as multi-stakeholder consultations and decision-making at all stages of an initiative creates a favourable environment for the achievement of results.
- All this in turn requires adequate implementation timelines and tailored approaches, which require flexibility.

138. Overall, according to the documents reviewed and the interviews conducted for this evaluation, the most relevant guidelines for effective capacity building for the national reporting process are the following:

- Capacity-building activities should be based on existing capacity and self-assessments of needs;
- National ownership and leadership must be promoted;
- Multi-stakeholder consultations and decision-making must be ensured; and,
- The development of partnerships and networks must be promoted.

139. Disregarding one or several of these elements may lead to challenges in achieving results. Several NFPs surveyed and interviewed in the context of this final evaluation mentioned that the most important challenge or barrier to the effectiveness of capacity-building activities was the lack of capacity to implement them, particularly in terms of availability of human resources and data, awareness of degradation issues, partnerships, network and formal communication channels. This indicates that capacity-building activities are more likely to be effective if they are implemented in an

incremental manner and if proper consideration is given to existing capacity. This confirms the need for the NCSA process and the UNDP LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project.

Recommendations

- Prior to the coordination unit close-down in December 2006, it is recommended that responsibilities for follow-up interventions be clearly assigned to COs, UNDP Regional Technical Advisors and the UNCCD Secretariat;
- It is recommended that due attention be given to the compilation and analysis of all self-evaluations completed by the country Parties by CRIC-5 and that the main findings be disseminated at CRIC-5 and shared with the AHWG. This could help to ensure a more adequate assessment of the results achieved through the 3NR MSP. Ideally, this responsibility should be given to the project coordinator; alternatively, this could be undertaken as part of the UNDP LDC-SIDS Portfolio Project;
- Capacity development efforts for national reporting would gain greatly, in impact and sustainability, from being considered, in the future, within the broader framework of capacity development for the implementation of the Convention, rather than as stand-alone interventions. Such an approach requires a longer term commitment to capacity-development efforts, synergies between conventions, and above all, mainstreaming. These three elements are crucial to ensuring countries' long-term capacity gains and ownership for the implementation of their national and the global agendas.
- It is recommended that sometime in the near future, investigation begin to establish who will pay for the 4th NR to the UNCCD, if there is one. In particular, UNCCD should be informed as to whether the GEF could be financing it and under what conditions.

ANNEX I – LIST OF DOCUMENT CONSULTED

UNDP and GEF M&E Guidelines

GEF. 2006. *The GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy*.

UNDP. 2002. *Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluating for Results*. UNDP Evaluation Office. New York.

UNDP. *Results Management User Guide* : <http://content.undp.org/go/userguide/results/>

UNDP/GEF. 2005. *Resource Kit Measuring and Demonstrating Impact (No.2)*.

UNDP/GEF. 2006. *Resource Monitoring, Evaluation & Reporting for Sustainable Land Management in LDC & SIDS Countries*.

Project related documents

UNDP. 2006. Inception Report of the *UNDP-GEF Medium-Size Project (MSP) 'Supporting Capacity building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC5/COP8 (PIMS 3713)* (internal documents).

UNDP. 2006. Progress reports of the *UNDP-GEF Medium-Size Project (MSP) 'Supporting Capacity building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC5/COP8 (PIMS 3713)* (internal documents).

UNDP. 2006. Project Document for the *UNDP-GEF Medium-Size Project (MSP) 'Supporting Capacity building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC5/COP8 (PIMS 3713)* (internal document).

UNDP. 2004. Project Document for the *LDC and SIDS Targeted Portfolio Approach for Capacity Development and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management (PIMS No. 3130)* (internal document).

World Bank/IFAD. 2006. Project Proposal for the *World Bank/IFAD Medium-Size Project (MSP) Supporting Capacity building for the Third National Reporting to CRIC-5/COP 8* (internal document).

Self-evaluation of *UNDP-GEF Medium-Size Project (MSP) 'Supporting Capacity building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC5/COP8* prepared by Afghanistan, Bhutan, St-Kitts and Nevis, Barbados, Dominica, Guyana, Fiji, Niue and Samoa

UNOPS Expenditure Estimate as of November 13, 2006.

Project proposals by countries to the *UNDP-GEF Medium-Size Project (MSP) Supporting Capacity building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC-5/COP8*.

UNCCD CRIC-5 documents

Regional synthesis reports [ICCD/CRIC\(5\)/2/Add.1](#) and [ICCD/CRIC\(5\)/3/Add.1](#) .

ICCD/CRIC. 2005. National reporting process of affected Country parties: Explanatory Note and Help Guide. [ICCD/CRIC\(5\)/INF.3](#).

Other documents

GEF. 2006. *Legal, Operational and Financial Implications of an Amendment Of The GGEF Instrument To Reflect the Designation Of The GEF as A Financial Mechanism Of the UNCCD GEF/C.30/7*. November 3, 2006

GEF Evaluation Office. 2005, *Annual Performance Report 2004*. Evaluation Report No. 29

ANNEX II – EVALUATION MATRIX

Issues for evaluation	Original Indicator(s)	Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	Examples of indicator(s) proposed	Means of data collection	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-Matrix I. Project Design Level 					
A. Relevance of the project objective and design in view of country needs	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support the sustainable development objectives of benefiting countries? Is the project country-driven? How? What measures were taken to ensure the inclusion of national stakeholders in the project design? Does the project adequately take into account the national realities, both in terms of institutional framework and other programming, in the design and implementation of the project? To what extent were national partners involved in the design of the projects? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between the project objective and sustainable development objectives of benefiting countries. Existence of a clear relationship between focus of the project and expressed needs by the countries Adequacy of recipient country government commitment to this project in terms of amount of financial and in-kind support, percentage of local experts used, etc Number, type and level of effort of national stakeholders involved in the design of the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of literature Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project proposals submitted by participating countries National Sustainable development plans and needs assessments National stakeholders Self-evaluation reports Project management
B. Relevance of the project objective and design in view of GEF and UNCCD objectives	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support GEF objectives for OP 15? How does the project support GEF 3 objectives specifically? Is the GEF incremental cost principle being respected? How does the project support the objectives of the UNCCD? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between the project objective and global environmental objectives of GEF. Existence of a clear relationship between the project objective and strategic objective of GEF 3. Adequacy of incremental cost reasoning. Existence of a clear relationship between the project objective and UNCCD objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of literature Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GEF 3 Strategic objectives UNDP/GEF representatives GEF representatives UNDDC representatives
C. Relevance of the project objective and design in view of UNDP objectives	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the project support UNDP objectives in this sector? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of a clear relationship between the project objective and sustainable development objectives of UNDP. Existence of a clear relationship between the project objective and UNDP Strategic Results Framework. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of literature Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNDP Strategic Results Framework UNDP/GEF representatives
D. Quality of design in view of delivery of planned	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project LFA clearly show the link between the activities and the various levels of project's 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall coherence of the LFA Use of SMART indicators in the LFA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of documentation Interviews with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document UNDP/GEF

Issues for evaluation	Original Indicator(s)	Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	Examples of indicator(s) proposed	Means of data collection	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-Matrix I. Project Design Level 					
outputs and outcomes		results? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the project design include adequate monitoring and evaluation arrangements? Does the project design clearly integrate lessons learned from other past or ongoing relevant projects? Does the project design include an information dissemination plan? Are there formal or informal linkages with other projects and interventions? Are the main implementation arrangements for the implementation of this project clearly defined? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of an adequate project M&E plan in project document Number and relevance of lessons learned from past or ongoing project mentioned in the project document and/or referred to by project proponents Clear description of the project information dissemination plan in the project document References to linkages with other projects and interventions in project document Clear description of the project implementation arrangements (partners, resources, timeline etc) in the project document 	key informants	representatives
E. Quality of design in terms of risk/assumptions identified and mitigation strategies		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were risks and mitigation strategies adequately identified at project design stage? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequacy of risk and assumptions that have been identified Adequacy and realism of mitigation measures proposed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of documentation Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project document UNDP/GEF representatives UNCCD representatives National stakeholders
F. Lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to project design	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of documentation Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Project's related documents All project's stakeholders

Issues for evaluation	Original Indicator(s)	Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	Examples of indicator(s) proposed	Means of data collection	Source
• Sub-Matrix II. Project Implementation Level					
A. Quality and Responsiveness of project management during implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project delivery rate ▪ Final Report ▪ Project coordination unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was there any discrepancy between actual and planned management structure and role played by the various parties involved in the project management/implementation? ▪ Was there any shortcoming in terms of technical capacity/resources of the parties involved in the project management? ▪ What is the overall quality of information management and sharing? ▪ What are the main issues or changing conditions, if any, that have affected implementation of this project and what adaptive measures were taken to manage those at all levels (UNDP HQ, UNOPS, UNCCD Secretariat, National UNDP Offices, GAC and National Counterpart)? ▪ Were the project activities and output delivered in a timely manner? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and importance of discrepancy between actual and planned management structure and role played by the various parties involved in the project management/implementation? ▪ Number and importance of shortcomings in terms of technical capacity/resources of the parties involved in the project management? ▪ Clear and common understanding of definition of roles and responsibilities during implementation of project activities ▪ Quality of and attendance to coordination activities by parties ▪ Frequency of communication between project partners ▪ Complementarities of project partners ▪ Quality of information recording formats and sharing processes ▪ Number and importance of issues or changing conditions that have affected implementation of the project ▪ Evidence of effectiveness of adaptive measures taken to manage arising issues during implementation ▪ Number and importance of discrepancies between actual and planned schedule of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress reports ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representatives ▪ National stakeholders ▪ UNOPS representatives
B. Stakeholder participation	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Was the participation of key stakeholders in project implementation adequate at all levels (UNDP, UNCCD, UNOPS, Country level etc)? ▪ Were the modalities used to promote the participation of different key stakeholders under the project adequate? ▪ How flexible were stakeholder participation activities in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and range of stakeholders involved at each level ▪ Evidence of lack of adequate stakeholder involvement reported in project related documents and or by project partners. ▪ Evidence of link between modalities used to promote stakeholders participation and level and quality of stakeholder participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Document Review ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress reports ▪ Self evaluations ▪ Validation Workshop reports ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representatives ▪ National

Issues for evaluation	Original Indicator(s)	Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	Examples of indicator(s) proposed	Means of data collection	Source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sub-Matrix II. Project Implementation Level 					
		implementation?			stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNOPS representatives
C. Financial management	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the project's actual financing plan (including costing by activity, disbursement plan, expenditure pattern, co-financing commitments, and financing instruments) changed since project endorsement? Are there financial issues that affect project implementation (i.e. slow disbursement, low absorptive financial capacity, exchange rate, etc.)? Could progress towards this project's objectives have been achieved in a more cost-effective manner? Is the implementation of the project as cost effective as originally proposed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature, number and magnitude of discrepancies between actual and planned cost Timeliness of disbursement Quality of financial reporting Quality of co-financing tracking Difference between actual project cost and the cost to achieve comparable objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial reports UNDP/GEF representatives UNOPS representatives
D. Monitoring and Evaluation	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which monitoring and evaluation arrangements have been implemented as part of this project? Were the project findings from M&E activities used as a tool in support of adaptive management? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number and importance of discrepancies between M&E activities planned and implemented Evidence that findings from project M&E activities have been used to identify project implementation issues and to select appropriate corrective measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document Review Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress reports UNDP/GEF representatives UNOPS representatives
E. Lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to project implementation	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of documentation Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Project's related documents All project's stakeholders

▪ Issues for evaluation	▪ Original Indicator(s)	▪ Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	▪ Examples of indicator(s) proposed	▪ Means of data collection	▪ Source
Sub-Matrix III. Project Results Level					
A. Impact - Project contribution to the development of capacities for strategic planning on sustainable land management	▪ None		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in capacity at the national level for preparation of NR at the systemic, institutional and individual levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	
B. Outcome 1: Stronger capacities at the national level to elaborate 3NRs.	▪ Quality of National Reports		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in capacity at the national level to elaborate 3NRs at systemic, institutional and individual levels. ▪ Change in number and quality of National Reports prepared by parties eligible to the project since the First National Report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Third National Report ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
Output 1.1 Stocktaking and Country Profile (x35)	▪ Consolidated information on land degradation trends and actions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and quality of Country Profiles prepared ▪ Change in knowledge of/level of awareness to Country Profile at national level ▪ Existence of a clear link between the activities undertaken under the Portfolio project, the NAP and the stocktaking exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Third National Report ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
Output 1.2 Third National Report elaborated (x35)	Third National Reports		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and quality of Third National Reports prepared ▪ Change in knowledge of/level of awareness to 3NR at national level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self evaluations ▪ Third National Report ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
C. Outcome 2: Stakeholder participation and validation	Range of stakeholders involved		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number, range and level of participation of relevant stakeholders in the elaboration of the 3NR ▪ Number, range and level of participation of relevant stakeholders in the elaboration of the validation workshop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self evaluations ▪ Third National Report ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative

▪ Issues for evaluation	▪ Original Indicator(s)	▪ Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	▪ Examples of indicator(s) proposed	▪ Means of data collection	▪ Source
Sub-Matrix III. Project Results Level					
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change in knowledge of/level of awareness to 3NR at national level 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National stakeholders
Output 2.1 National validation workshop (x35)	Number of workshops successfully held		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and quality of validation workshops conducted ▪ Number of relevant stakeholders participating in the National validation workshop ▪ Change in number stakeholders involved in the NR process between NR1, NR2 and NR3 ▪ Overall level of satisfaction with workshops by the participants ▪ Quality of material produced, logistics, presentations and website ▪ Use made of workshop findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self evaluations ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders ▪ Workshop participant
Output 2.2 Regional synthesis and exchange workshops (x2)	Number of workshops successfully held		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of regional synthesis and exchange workshops conducted ▪ Level of participation of relevant stakeholders in the national validation workshop ▪ Change in capacity related to the preparation of NR of workshop participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Workshop synthesis ▪ Workshop material and reports ▪ Self evaluations ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
D. Outcome 3: Self-Evaluation	National CCD focal points perceptions of 3NRs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and quality of self-evaluations conducted ▪ Level of participation of relevant stakeholders in completion of the self evaluation ▪ Quality of methodology and approach to self-evaluation at national level ▪ Number of participating country using the methodology ▪ Usefulness of the self-evaluation according to participating countries ▪ Relationship between the use of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self evaluations ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders

▪ Issues for evaluation	▪ Original Indicator(s)	▪ Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	▪ Examples of indicator(s) proposed	▪ Means of data collection	▪ Source
Sub-Matrix III. Project Results Level					
			self evaluation and the quality of the Third National Report		
Output 3.1 Methodology and approach to self-evaluation at national level	Nationally adapted methodology		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quality of methodology and approach to self-evaluation at national level ▪ Number of participating countries using the methodology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self evaluations ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
Output 3.2 National self-evaluation (x35)	National self-evaluations of NR process and product		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and quality of self-evaluations conducted ▪ Level of participation of relevant stakeholders in completion of the self evaluation ▪ Relationship between the use of the self evaluation and the quality of the Third National Report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self evaluations ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
Output 3.3 UNCCD Regional synthesis report	Regional Synthesis report		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number of UNCCD Regional synthesis reports prepared. ▪ Use of regional synthesis reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regional synthesis report ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative
E. Outcome 4: Adaptive management	Project delivery rate	Please see Sub-Matrix II above: Project Implementation Level			
Output 4.1 Comprehensive report on GEF project M&E and lessons learnt	Final report	This output will not be available at the time of the Terminal evaluation			
Output 4.2 Project management and coordination	Project coordination unit	Please see Sub-Matrix II above: Project Implementation Level			
F. Lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All Project's related documents ▪ All project's

▪ Issues for evaluation	▪ Original Indicator(s)	▪ Examples of Sub-Questions/Comments	▪ Examples of indicator(s) proposed	▪ Means of data collection	▪ Source
Sub-Matrix III. Project Results Level					
achievement of projects objective					stakeholders

Issues for evaluation	Original Indicator(s)	Example of Sub-Questions/Comments	Examples of indicator(s) proposed	Means of data collection	Source
• Sub-Matrix IV. Replicability and Sustainability					
A. Relevance of design in view of replicability and sustainability	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does the project design include a sustainability and replication plan? ▪ What are the key elements of the project replication and sustainability work plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Description of an adequate project sustainability and replication plan in the project document in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial and Economic Support - Organizational Arrangements by public and/or private sector: - Policies and Regulatory Frameworks: - Institutional Capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc...): - Identifying and involving champions (i.e. individuals in government or civil society who can take the lead in securing sustainability of project outcomes) - Social Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project document ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
B. Use of an implementation approach promoting sustainability of project outcomes and replicability	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the key elements of the project replication and sustainability work plan progress in implementation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adequacy of the steps actually taken to help ensure sustainability of project outcomes in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial and Economic Support - Organizational Arrangements by public and/or private sector: - Policies and Regulatory Frameworks: - Institutional Capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc...): - Identifying and involving champions (i.e. individuals in government or civil society who can take the lead in securing sustainability of project outcomes) - Social sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress report ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders

Issues for evaluation	Original Indicator(s)	Example of Sub-Questions/Comments	Examples of indicator(s) proposed	Means of data collection	Source
• Sub-Matrix IV. Replicability and Sustainability					
C. Achievement in terms of likelihood of securing continuation of project outcomes and impacts after completion of GEF funding	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What are the project likely achievements in terms of project replication and sustainability of project results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Number and quality of building blocks of sustainability actually in place at the national and international level in terms of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial and Economic Support - Organizational Arrangements by public and/or private sector: - Policies and Regulatory Frameworks: - Institutional Capacity (systems, structures, staff, expertise, etc...): - Identifying and involving champions (i.e. individuals in government or civil society who can take the lead in securing sustainability of project outcomes) - Social Sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Progress report ▪ UNDP/GEF representatives ▪ UNCCD representative ▪ National stakeholders
D. Lessons learned and recommendations pertaining to sustainability and replicability of project results.	N/A	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review of documentation ▪ Interviews with key informants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All Project's related documents ▪ All project's stakeholders

ANNEX III – LIST OF RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED

NAME	DESIGNATION	REPRESENTING
1) Maryam Niamir-Fuller	Principal Technical Advisor for Land Degradation	UNDP-GEF
2) Carline Jean-Louis	Program Associate	UNDP-GEF
3) Margaret CHI	Portfolio Manager, Environment Cluster North America Office	UNOPS
4) Yoko Hagiwara	Project Coordinator Capacity-building for 3rd National-Reporting to UNCCD	UNDP-GEF
5) Gregoire De Kalbermatten	Deputy Executive Secretary	UNCCD Secretariat
6) Rui Zheng	Coordinator - Asia Programme	UNCCD Secretariat
7) Loredana Profeta	Programme Officer, LAC Unit	UNCCD Secretariat
8) Arnaud De Vanssay	Associate Expert, Committee on Science and Technology (CST)	UNCCD Secretariat
9) Hans Eschweiler	Project Coordinator SLM, Portfolio Project, UNDP-GEF (Global Support Unit)	UNDP-GEF (GSU)
10) Sergio A. Zelaya- Bonilla	Coordinator - LAC unit	UNCCD Secretariat
11) Richard Cox	Program Officer, LAC unit	UNCCD Secretariat
12) Mr. Goodspeed Kopolo	Project Coordinator WB/IFAD Capacity-building for 3rd National-Reporting to UNCCD	UNCCD Secretariat
13) Chencho Norbu	Program Director, National Soil Services Center	Ministry of Agriculture of Bhutan CCD Focal Point
14) Doley Tshering	Program Officer	UNDP Country Office, Bhutan
15) Andrea Kutter	Senior Natural Resources Management Specialist	GEF Secretariat
16) Tariq-ul-Islam	Joint Secretary	Min. of Environment and Forests, Bangladesh GAC Member Asian Region
17) Yang Youlin	Coordinator Asia Regional coordination unit	UNCCD Secretariat
18) Martin Rokitzki	Associate Expert, Asia Unit	UNCCD Secretariat
19) Easter Galuvao	Assistant Resident Representative	UNDP Multi-Country Office, Samoa
20) Meapelo Maiiai	Program officer environment	UNDP Multi-Country Office, Samoa

NAME	DESIGNATION	REPRESENTING
21) Filipe Jose A. Mesquita	National Program Officer	UNDP Country Office, Timor Leste
22) Evaristo Avella	Member of the consultancy team to draft the 3rd national report	Engaged by the government of Belize
23) Christine de Rooil	Programme Manager	UNDP Sub-Office, Suriname
24) Shelly Soetosenojo	Official environment section	Ministry of Labour, Technological Development and Environment for the For the Suriname UNCCD NFP
25) Paula Caballero	Regional Technical Advisor for LAC	UNDP GEF, Regional Coordination Unit Panama
26) Carole-Ann Partoredjo-Feurich	Dean, University of Suriname. Consultant hired to draft the 3rd national report	Engaged by the government of Suriname
27) Jon Heikki Aas	Senior Adviser (GAC Member)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
28) Robert Aisi	Ambassador, (GAC member)	Pacific Representative Permanent Representative to the UN
29) Christopher Braeuel	Senior Policy Advisor,	Environment Division. Policy Branch, CIDA, CANADA
30) Ramon Frutos	Deputy Chief Meteorologist	National Meteorological Service, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, Belize UNCCD NFP
31) Reynold Murray	Programme Manager, Environment	UNDP Barbados Multi Country Office
32) Garfield Barnwell	Director (GAC member)	Caribbean Representative Sustainable Development, CARICOM Secretariat, Guyana
33) Osea Bolawaqatabu	Principal Research Officer	Ministry of Agriculture, Fiji, UNCCD NFP

NAME	DESIGNATION	REPRESENTING
34) Randall Purcell	Regional Technical Advisor for Asia	UNDP GEF, Regional Coordination Unit Bangkok
35) Diane Wade-Moore	Environmental Programme Officer	UNDP Country Office, Belize
36) Nicole Scholar-Best	Environmental Officer	Environment Unit, Ministry of Energy and the Environment, Barbados, UNCCD NFP
37) Alvin Chandra	Environment Associate	UNDP Multi- Country Office, Fiji
38) Mick Saito	Environment Programme Manager	UNDP sub-office, Solomon Islands
39) Moses Rouhana	Environment Concerns Action Network of Solomon Islands (ECANSI)	Solomon Islands, Local ENGO
40) Mario Godinho (e-mail exchange only)	Chief of Agroforestry	National Directorate for Coffee and Forest, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries, Timor Leste UNCCD NFP
41) Faainoino Laulala	Principal Land Development Officer/UNCCD Project Coordinator	Government of Samoa, Representative for Samoa UNCCD NFP

ANNEX IV – SAMPLE SELECTION MATRIX FOR SHORT CASE STUDIES

Region	Country	Project Outputs as of Nov 1 st 2006					Previous reporting	
		Country Profile	Summary/ Draft 3NR	Final 3 rd NR	Validation	Self evaluation	Final 1 st NR and 2 nd NR	NAP
Asia								
1	Afghanistan		X		X	X	None	
2	Bangladesh	X	X	X	X		Both	
✓ 3	Bhutan	X	X	X	X	X	None	
4	Cambodia	Draft	X				Both	
5	Maldives						None	
✓ 6	Timor Leste	Draft	X				None	
Pacific								
1	Cook Islands	Draft	X		X		2nd	
✓ 2	Fiji	Draft	X	X		X	Both	
3	Kiribati		X				None	
4	Marshall Islands						2nd	
5	Micronesia		X				None	
6	Nauru						2nd	
7	Niue	Draft	X		X	X	Both	X
8	Palau		X				Both	X
9	Papua New Guinea		X				2nd	
✓ 10	Samoa	Draft	X		X		2nd	
✓ 11	Solomon Islands						2nd	
12	Tonga						2nd	
13	Tuvalu	Draft	X				Both	
14	Vanuatu						2nd	
LAC								
1	Antigua and Barbuda		X		X		both	Draft
✓ 2	Barbados	Draft	X		X	X	both	Draft
✓ 3	Belize						1st	
4	Cuba	X		X	X		both	X
5	Dominica	X	X	X	X	X	both	Draft
6	Dominican Republic		X				both	
7	Grenada	X	X	X	X		both	
8	Guyana	X	X	X	X	X	both	
9	Haiti		X				both	
10	Jamaica						2nd	Draft
11	St. Kitts/Nevis		X				1st	
12	St. Lucia						both	
13	St. Vincent & Grenadines	X	X	X	X		both	
✓ 14	Suriname		X				2nd	
15	Trinidad and Tobago						None	

ANNEX V – PROJECT LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Activities	Indicators	Target values
Outcome 1: Stronger capacities at the national level to elaborate 3NRs.	Quality of National Reports	At least 60% of 3NRs are evaluated as high quality reports by CRIC-5
1.1 Stocktaking and Country Profile (x35)	Consolidated information on land degradation trends and actions	At least 60% of 3NRs have detailed Country Profiles by end of project
1.2 Third National Report elaborated (x35)	Third National Reports	35 Third National Reports are available by July 2006
Outcome 2: Stakeholder participation and validation	Range of stakeholders involved	A wide range of stakeholder involvement in both national and regional validation processes
2.1 National validation workshop (x35)	Number of workshops successfully held	35 national workshops held by September 2006
2.2 Regional synthesis and exchange workshops (x2)	Number of workshops successfully held	2 regional workshops held by September 2006
Outcome 3: Self-Evaluation	National CCD focal points perceptions of 3NRs	At least 60% of NFPs produce high quality self-evaluations by CRIC-5
3.1 Methodology and approach to self-evaluation at national level	Nationally adapted methodology	35 national adapted methodologies validated by stakeholders by July 2006
3.2 National self-evaluation (x35)	National self-evaluations of NR process and product	35 national self-evaluations by CRIC-5
3.3 UNCCD Regional synthesis report	Regional Synthesis report	2 regional synthesis reports by CRIC-5
Outcome 4: Adaptive management	Project delivery rate	Delivery rate of 70% by July 2006
4.1 Comprehensive report on GEF project M&E and lessons learnt	Final report	Final report available one month prior to end of project
4.2 Project management and coordination	Project coordination unit	Project coordination unit established and functioning by March 2006

ANNEX VI – PROGRESS OF THE UNCCD THIRD NATIONAL REPORTING

Date: 29/11/2006

	Country	Funds Requested (DD/MM/YY)	Date authorized (GEF - US\$7,210 Norway - US\$5,150)	Expenditure as of 29 Nov (incl. Commitment)	Participation in the Regional Synthesis Workshop	National validation workshop	Country Profile	3 rd NR	National self-evaluation
Asia									
1	Afghanistan	27/04/06	GEF 15/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 4500 Norway \$ 3300 Total \$ 7800	YES	YES		YES	YES
2	Bangladesh	14/05/06	GEF 31/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 1900.17 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 1900.17	YES	YES	YES	YES	
3	Bhutan	24/04/06	GEF 15/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 1274.62 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 1274.62	YES	Validation process but no workshop	YES	YES	YES
4	Cambodia	24/04/06	GEF 15/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 0 Norway \$ 1130 Total \$ 1130	YES	Scheduled on Dec. 5. 06.	Draft	Draft	
5	Maldives	14/06/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 449.85 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 449.85	YES				
6	Timor Leste	04/05/06	GEF 17/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 3473.07 Norway \$4761.90 Total \$ 8234.97	YES	YES	Draft	Draft	
Pacific									
1	Cook Islands	17/05/06	GEF 22/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360		YES	Draft	Draft	
2	Fiji	24/05/06	GEF 05/06/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360	YES		YES	YES	YES
3	Kiribati	09/05/06	GEF 22/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7000 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12150	YES			Draft	

	Country	Funds Requested (DD/MM/YY)	Date authorized (GEF - US\$7,210 Norway - US\$5,150)	Expenditure as of 29 Nov (incl. Commitment)	Participation in the Regional Synthesis Workshop	National validation workshop	Country Profile	3 rd NR	National self-evaluation
4	Marshall Islands	13/05/06	GEF 22/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360			Draft	Draft	
5	Micronesia	27/06/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360	YES			Summary	
6	Nauru	13/07/06	GEF & Norway 17/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360	YES				
7	Niue	11/05/06	GEF 19/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360	YES		Draft	Draft	YES
8	Palau	12/05/06	GEF 16/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7200 Norway \$ 5000 Total \$ 12200	YES			Draft	
9	Papua New Guinea	30/05/06	GEF 30/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 1989.03 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 1989.03				Draft	
10	Samoa	01/05/06	GEF 19/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360	YES	YES	draft	Draft	YES
11	Solomon Islands	14/09/06	GEF & Norway 18/09/06	GEF \$ 1621.32 Norway \$ 515.85 Total \$ 2137.17		YES	Draft	Draft	
12	Tonga	06/06/06	GEF 06/06/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360					
13	Tuvalu	23/05/06	GEF 26/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7014.37 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12164.37	YES		Draft	Draft	
14	Vanuatu	29/06/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12360	YES				

	Country	Funds Requested (DD/MM/YY)	Date authorized (GEF - US\$7,210 Norway - US\$5,150)	Expenditure as of 29 Nov (incl. Commitment)	Participation in the Regional Synthesis Workshop	National validation workshop	Country Profile	3 rd NR	National self-evaluation
Latin America & Caribbean									
1	Antigua and Barbuda	23/05/06	GEF 31/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 0 Norway \$ 2412.52 Total \$ 2412.52	YES	YES		Draft	
2	Barbados	09/06/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 6000 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 6000	YES	Validation process but no workshop	Draft	Draft	YES
3	Belize	26/04/06	GEF 15/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 6874.94 Norway \$ 5150 Total \$ 12024.94		Scheduled on Dec. 1. 06.			
4	Cuba	Letter from MINVEC is awaited.			YES	Done (date not Known)	YES	YES	
5	Dominica	19/06/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7111.16 Norway \$ 492.48 Total \$ 7603.64		Validation process but no workshop	YES	YES	YES
6	Dominican Republic	08/05/06	GEF 19/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7120.13 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 7120.13	YES	Scheduled on Dec. 1. 06.	Draft	Draft	
7	Grenada	20/06/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 2790 Total \$ 10000		YES	YES	YES	
8	Guyana	04/05/06	GEF 17/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 4319.40 Norway \$ 5000 Total \$ 9319.40		YES	YES	YES	YES
9	Haiti	17/04/06	GEF 15/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 4560.82 Norway \$ 5028.36 Total \$ 9589.18	YES			Draft	

	Country	Funds Requested (DD/MM/YY)	Date authorized (GEF - US\$7,210 Norway - US\$5,150)	Expenditure as of 29 Nov (incl. Commitment)	Participation in the Regional Synthesis Workshop	National validation workshop	Country Profile	3 rd NR	National self-evaluation
10	Jamaica	25/05/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 0 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 0					
11	St. Kitts/Nevis	25/05/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 7210 Norway \$ 2762.07 Total \$ 9972.07	YES	YES	Draft	Draft	YES
12	St. Lucia	26/06/06	GEF & Norway 12/07/06	GEF \$ 0 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 0					
13	St. Vincent & Grenadines	26/04/06	GEF 17/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 6693.94 Norway \$ 3775 Total \$ 10468.94	YES	YES	YES	YES	
14	Suriname	18/05/06	GEF 23/05/06 Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 0 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 0				Summary	
15	Trinidad and Tobago	04/05/06	GEF & Norway 05/07/06	GEF \$ 0 Norway \$ 0 Total \$ 0	YES				

Notes/Comments

1. 'Date of the request of funds' indicates the date when the official request with the signature of either GEF Focal Point and/or UNCCD FP was received by UNDP.
2. The majority of the countries started the drafting process with the Government's own financial and human resources prior to the disbursement of GEF grants.
3. The indicated amount includes UNDP's cost recovery (ISS fee).
4. Disbursement of the funds from UNDP Country Office to UNCCD Focal Point is either the form of transfer of the funds or recruitment of consultant and procurement of goods and services by UNDP on behalf of the government.

ANNEX VII – EVALUATION TERMS OF REFERENCE

Terms of Reference for Independent Final Evaluation of the UNDP-GEF Medium-Size Project (MSP), Supporting Capacity-building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC-5/COP 8 (PIMS 3713)

INTRODUCTION

This UNDP/GEF umbrella project, ‘Supporting Capacity building for the Third National Reporting to the UNCCD CRIC-5/COP 8’, aims to assist 35 Least Developed Countries and Small Islands Developing States (LDC-SIDS) with capacity building in the preparation of their Third National Reports (3NRs) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The project is financed by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under its Operational Programme on Sustainable Land Management (SLM) (OP#15), and is co-financed by the Government of Norway. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the Implementing Agency for this project. UNDP also executes this project through direct execution (DEX) modality. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) assists UNDP with executing some of the specific project activities.

The project was designed to contribute to enabling non-African LDC-SIDS Parties to the UNCCD to improve the quality and timeliness of their national reporting, build capacities for self-evaluation of the reporting process, and engage in regional knowledge sharing on SLM.

This MSP project is regarded as ‘add-on’ to UNDP/GEF’s full-size umbrella project ‘LDC-SIDS Targeted Umbrella Project for Capacity Building and Mainstreaming of Sustainable Land Management (the SLM Portfolio Project).’ The two projects are operationally linked in order to provide expedited assistance to countries, and reduce transaction costs. The project activities are coordinated by Project Coordinator who is based in Bonn, Germany (hosted by the UNCCD Secretariat).

(1) UNDP/GEF Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy⁷

UNDP-GEF’s M&E policy is available on-line at:
<http://www.undp.org/gef/05/monitoring/policies.html>

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) policy at the project level in UNDP/GEF has four objectives: i) to monitor and evaluate results and impacts; ii) to provide a basis for decision making on necessary amendments and improvements; iii) to promote accountability for resource use; and iv) to document, provide feedback on, and disseminate lessons learned. A mix of tools is used to ensure effective project M&E. These might be applied continuously throughout the lifetime of the project – e.g. periodic monitoring of indicators -, or as specific time-bound exercises such as mid-term reviews, audit reports and final evaluations.

140. Final evaluations are intended to assess the relevance, performance and success of the project. It looks at early signs of potential impact and sustainability of results, including the contribution to capacity development and the achievement of global environmental goals. It will also identify/document lessons learned and make recommendations that might improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects.

(2) Project goal and objectives

⁷ [UNDP-GEF Measuring and Demonstrating Impact](#) (March 2005).

The goal of the project is to contribute to development of capacities for strategic planning on sustainable land management. The objective of the project is to assist 35 LDC-SIDS to enhance their capacities to prepare their 3NRs to the UNCCD CRIC5⁸ and COP8⁹ in a participatory and self-evaluative manner.

The four expected outcomes of the project are:

- Outcome 1: Stronger capacities at the national level to elaborate 3NRs.
- Outcome 2: A coalition and consensus exists around the 3NR, through stakeholder participation and validation both at the national and regional levels.
- Outcome 3: Stronger capacities for countries to conduct self-evaluation of the process and products of the NR with a view to recommending improvements process.
- Outcome 4: Adaptive management and monitoring.

Objectives of the Independent Final Evaluation

As one of the M&E requirements during this project cycle, an independent final evaluation will focus on the effectiveness, efficiency and timeliness of project implementation; will highlight issues requiring decisions and actions; and will present lessons learned about project design, implementation and management. Findings of this evaluation will be incorporated as recommendations to improve design and implementation of other UNDP/GEF projects for the future.

The project document indicated that the independent final evaluation would be undertaken after CRIC5. However, due to the postponement of the CRIC5 from October 2006 to March 2007, the independent final evaluation will be carried out prior to CRIC5.

The evaluation will specifically assess the following items¹⁰;

(1) Project Design:

- Relevance of the project: the extent to which the original objectives and project activities are suited to national needs for convention reporting;
- Appropriateness of the project design for ensuring delivery of the planned activities and outputs. Specific focus will be made on the role of the GEF to achieve the objectives of the project; and
- Country ownership/drivenness.

(2) Project implementation:

- Project implementation arrangements: effectiveness of the project implementation arrangement between various institutions (e.g., UNDP Headquarters, Global Support Unit for SLM Portfolio Project, 3NR Project Coordination Unit, UNDP/GEF Regional Coordination Units, UNDP Country Offices, UNOPS, the UNCCD Secretariat and Global Advisory Committee);
- Assess the contribution and role of UNDP in the project against the requirements set out in the UNDP Handbook on Monitoring and Evaluation for Results as well as UNDP User Guide
- Partnership arrangement with co-financing partners (Norway and national governments);
- Quality and timeliness of outputs and activities;
- Financial contribution, disbursement and delivery;
- Cooperation and coordination between various institutions mentioned above;

⁸ CRIC5: Fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

⁹ COP8: Eighth session of the Conference of the Parties

¹⁰ Ref: GEF Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (February 2006)

- Involvement of the beneficiaries and main stakeholders in the project implementation (e.g., UNCCD Focal Points of the 35 LDC-SIDS, NGOs and UNDP Country Offices);
- Gender perspective: how gender considerations were mainstreamed into project interventions.
- Risk Management; how the risks specified in the project documents were handled (e.g., lack of capacity of the LDC-SIDS, lack of political will, time constraints);
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E): effectiveness of the M&E plan and responsiveness of project management to adapt to any unexpected changes in consultation with relevant project partners; and
- Cost-efficiency and effectiveness of the project: the extent to which results have been delivered with the least costly resources possible.

(3) Project outcomes and impacts:

- Effectiveness: the extent to which the project objectives have been achieved or how likely it is to be achieved with specific reference to the logical framework matrix and the indicators stipulated in the project document. Specific reference will be made to the linkages, synergies and coordination with the “sister” MSP managed through WB and IFAD, SLM Portfolio Project and other relevant CCD related initiatives including the formulation of National Action Programmes (NAPs) and National Capacity Self-Assessment (NCSA);
- Results and findings: the positive and negative, and foreseen and unforeseen, changes and effects produced through the project implementation. In GEF terms, results include direct project outputs, short- to medium term outcomes, and longer-term impact including global environmental benefits, replication effects and other, local effects; and
- Sustainability: the likely ability of an intervention to continue to deliver benefits (e.g., sustainability for the next CCD national reporting cycle) for an extended period of time after completion.

Products Expected From The Evaluation

The following outputs are expected from the independent final evaluation;

- Final independent evaluation report (with the outline specified in the Annex 1): The report should not be more than **35 pages** in total excluding all attachments. It should be submitted electronically and in hard copies to the 3NR Project Coordinator, UNDP-GEF.
- A Powerpoint presentation of the findings of the evaluation that UNDP can present to its partners and stakeholders. (Maximum 15 slides)

The draft report will be submitted to the 3NR Project Coordinator by **4 December 2006** (e.g., within two weeks of completion of the mission). After the review of the main project partners and key stakeholders, a final report will be prepared and submitted to the 3NR Project Coordinator by **14 December 2006**. The 3NR Project Coordinator will circulate the final report to UNDP Headquarters (PTA on LD), UNOPS, UNCCD Secretariat and other GAC members and any other stakeholders.

If there are discrepancies between the impressions and findings of the evaluator and the aforementioned parties these will be explained in a “management response” prepared by the 3NR Project Coordinator.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology will be used by the evaluator will be:

- Documentation review (desk study); please see the minimum list of documentation to be reviewed (Annex 2)

- Interviews with CCD Focal Points, UNDP Regional Technical Advisors, and Global Coordinator for the LDC-SIDS Portfolio project (by telephone, by emails)
- Visits to (UNCCD Secretariat and 3NR Project Coordination Unit (UNDP) in Bonn Germany, and UNDP Headquarters and UNOPS in New York, USA)
- Review of the findings of the self-evaluation of 3NRs
- Participatory techniques and other approaches for the gathering and analysis of data.

QUALIFICATIONS

The final evaluation will be undertaken by a consultant with the following areas of expertise.

The evaluator should have;

- Good understanding of the UNCCD and GEF
- Good understanding of capacity development issues in developing countries
- Familiarity with the logical framework approach and other strategic planning approaches;
- Knowledge on general M&E methods and approaches (including quantitative, qualitative and participatory);
- Knowledge on the standard UNDP and GEF M&E procedures is an asset
- Data and information analysis skills
- Excellent writing and oral communication skills in English. Knowledge of French and Spanish languages is an asset.

141. Implementation Arrangements

MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FINAL EVALUATION

- 3NR Coordinator will be responsible for the briefing of the overall scope of the final independent evaluation to the evaluator, ensuring the access to necessary background documents and getting prior approval from relevant UNDP country offices for conducting interviews with relevant staff.
- UNOPS will be responsible for the contract and payments for the evaluator (including reimbursement of the mission cost (DSA, Terminal and Air Ticket)

TIMEFRAME AND DUTY STATION

The total duration of this evaluation is **26 days**.

- Telephone briefing about the project, preliminary documentation review, development of detailed work plan, evaluation matrix and other project specific data collection tools – **4 days** (home based)
- Desk review of background documents - **3 days** (home based)
- Visits to the Project Coordination Unit and UNCCD Secretariat (Bonn, Germany) and UNDP HQ and UNOPS (New York, USA) - **5 days** (including travel time)
- Phone interviews with project stakeholders - **4 days** (home based)
- Preparation of draft evaluation report – **7 days** (home based)
- Review of the draft report by stakeholders for comments through circulation of the report– (7 days)
- Preparation of final evaluation report – **3 days** (home based)

ANNEX VIII – DETAILED EVALUATION SCHEDULE

TIME & DATE	Duty station and Tasks
November 6-10, 2006	Montréal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparation work and desk review
Nov 12-13, 2006	New York <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arrival in New York (Nov 12 – 20:30) ▪ Meetings in New York (Nov 13) ▪ Departure for Montreal (Nov 13 – 19:30)
Nov 15-18, 2006	Bonn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Arrival Bonn (Nov 15 – 11:00) ▪ Meetings in Bonn (Nov 15-17) ▪ Departure for Montreal (Nov 18 – 10:25)
Nov 20-28, 2006	Montréal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Finalize data collection through phone interviews and desk review
Nov 28-Dec 4, 2006	Montréal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft report writing
Dec 5- 19, 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peer review
DEC 20-21, 2006	Montréal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final report writing