

Drylands SCCE:

First Reference Group Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: June 29, 2022

Main topic: official launch of the evaluation and discuss reference group member feedback on the draft approach paper circulated on June 15 2022.

Participant list	
Maria Leichner	GEF CSO Network
Ydidiya Abera	FAO
Chris Magero	IUCN
Christopher Brett	WORLD BANK
Heike Lingertat	WWF-US
Guadalupe Duron	STAP
Ulrich Apel	GEF Secretariat
Geeta Batra	GEF IEO
Carlo Carugi	GEF IEO
Malac Kabir	GEF IEO
Gabriel Sidman	GEF IEO
Anupam Anand	GEF IEO
Juha Uitto	GEF IEO

Juha Uitto (GEF IEO) - Introduced the evaluation and gave an overview of the setup (with one representative per institution), role and responsibilities of the reference group.

Ulrich Apel (GEF Secretariat) – Expressed concern with the large scope of the evaluation due to the diversity of issues in each country. Suggested providing more background information on the scope and rationale of the evaluation, wondering if defining the scope through clustering would be helpful.

Christopher Brett (World Bank) – Echoed Ulrich’s comments on the scope being broad. Asked if the evaluation will seek out lessons learned that can be transferrable to GEF-8 programming.

Ydidiya Abera (FAO) – Raised concern over GEF-7 projects in the portfolio as being too new, or too recent even though they are listed as ‘under implementation’.

Guadalupe Duron (STAP) – Referenced paragraph 41 asking which STAP resilience methodology will be used. Echoing comments from Ulrich and Christopher, mentioned the diversity of ecosystems in dryland

areas, and asked whether there was any intention to better understand the drivers and connections that affect drylands restoration/management. Emphasized how understanding those underlying variables would be useful to the development of future GEF projects. Mentioned land-use conflicts related to challenges between herders and farmers. Suggested looking at STAP's recent papers on ecosystems and policy coherence (...).

Carlo Carugi (GEF IEO) – Aware of large scope, but we want to be comprehensive and representative of GEF interventions in various dryland settings. Next step is clustering by dryland ecoregion/biome grouping (i.e., West Africa savannas; Miombo and Mopane ecosystems in Southern Africa; Central Asia grasslands, savannas and shrublands, among others) and aridity typology (arid, semi-arid, dry sub-humid). The STAP resilience methodology is referenced in the approach paper and was used in GEF-7 SCCEs. Will take into consideration the comment raised on conflict between herders and farmers, and land tenure by possibly looking at some of these issues under the performance and sustainability questions.

Geeta Batra (GEF IEO) – A way to narrow the scope could be to look at performance as rated in the available terminal evaluations. Another idea could be to focus on 4-5 main issues in drylands. Noted that sustainability has been covered previously and could pose overlap. Emphasized that Council often asks for evidence that policy coherence has worked and if the GEF has been well placed to do it. Suggested that policy coherence could be assessed in case studies, given that it affects different ministries/sectors.

Carlo Carugi (GEF IEO) – Explained the SCCE methodology, which starts from aggregate analysis to identify cases of positive and negative change to deep dive in. Referenced to the detailed description of the application of the SCCE methodology published in the GEF IEO book on Transformational Change.

Juha Uitto (GEF IEO) – Commented on factors of sustainability in earlier SCCEs, and perhaps this may not need to be a major area of enquiry for the Drylands SCCE. Suggested having a more targeted look at specific issues of drylands and encouraged the reference group to make suggestions on what those are.

Chris Magero (IUCN) – Suggested developing indicators on issues such as natural resource governance. Questioned how to assess and extract that at an impact scale. Suggested to focus on socio-ecological aspects of rangelands, and then to come up with clear indicators of how it will be assessed.

Ulrich Apel (GEF Secretariat) – On Geeta's points, agreed with having a specific focus to deal with the challenges of the scope. On sustainability, agreed with some of the overlaps and mentioned that sustainability in a huge portfolio may not be specific to drylands. Wondered if this was true for policy coherence as well and suggested that when looking specifically at policy coherence only in drylands, large programs would be an interesting case study. Referred to the Great Green Wall program as an example of how policy coherence can be achieved in this programmatic approach. Also, promised he'll share peer reviewed papers that can be referenced by the evaluation.

Carlo Carugi (GEF IEO) – Mentioned that also the PRC-GEF Drylands Partnership in Western China program could be reviewed to assess whether and how policy coherence can be achieved through a programmatic approach.

Geeta Batra (GEF IEO) – Suggested brainstorming on 4-5 issues as opposed to factors affecting sustainability. Cited governance as one issue.

Guadalupe Duron (STAP) – Suggested bringing in socioeconomic issues affecting the mobility of farmers and herders. Noted it's challenging to consolidate climatic and social variables in drylands, but it would help tremendously GEF-8 interventions and address a huge gap in the scientific literature. It boils down to look at variables that are influencing people's adaptability, not only to climate but also to other stressors. On paragraph 36, knowledge management needs to be included when talking about resilience and gender. Referenced STAP's recent papers on knowledge management and learning for scaling innovation and achieving transformation (...).

Chris Magero (IUCN) – Noted the variability of rangelands themselves, which is linked to governance as it can cover anywhere from management of the land to the rights of the people.

Geeta Batra (GEF IEO) - Two broad areas could be governance and the socioeconomic that's driving and underpinning it.

Ulrich Apel (GEF Secretariat) – The Program Framework Document (PFD) of the Drylands Sustainable Landscapes (DSL) program drafted by FAO contains an analysis of the environmental and socioeconomic issues in drylands. It says that land degradation and desertification are more pronounced in drylands and lead faster to environmental decline than in other ecoregions. Furthermore, drylands host several fragile states and are subject to out-migrations. There's more poverty as well as social conflicts in drylands than elsewhere.

Carlo Carugi (GEF IEO) – In drafting the approach paper we reviewed the DSL PFD. This document was also analyzed for the Formative Evaluation of the GEF Integrated Approach, we know it well. Will double check the specific sections suggested to see if anything else needs to be added to the approach paper from that analysis.

Ulrich Apel (GEF Secretariat) – The approach paper reference to recent GEF IEO findings pointing at unaddressed critical dryland forest ecosystems and at a fragmented programmatic approach sounds like an evaluative statement. We should be aware of the GEF history with UNCCD. Funding for the DSL program in GEF-7 was limited. Only half of the countries that applied could be selected.

Geeta Batra (GEF IEO) – Cognizant of DSL resource limitations.

Carlo Carugi (GEF IEO) – In response to Ulrich's comments on resource limitations, this finding came from the recently completed SFM evaluation. This issue will be further clarified in the approach paper.

Action Items

1. Reference group members can send any additional written comments on the approach paper in the next two weeks. IEO will then finalize the approach paper and post online with an audit trail table documenting all comments received and corresponding actions taken to respond to or address them.
2. IEO will draft meeting notes and circulate to reference group members for any additions or amendments before posting on the IEO website.