

# Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought

From commitments  
to implementation





## **Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought: From commitments to implementation**

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**Author:** Global Mechanism of the UNCCD

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### **Global Mechanism of the UNCCD**

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

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The Global Mechanism (GM) has the mandate to facilitate the mobilization of financial resources to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). To do this, the GM provides advisory services to countries that request guidance and works together with developing countries, private sector investors and donors to mobilize substantial resources at the national, regional and global levels to address desertification, land degradation and drought.

## An enabling environment

### Voluntary national land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets

The health and productivity of global land resources are declining, while demand for those resources is increasing. The aim of land degradation neutrality (LDN) is to maintain or enhance land-based natural capital and its associated ecosystem services. LDN is defined as “a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems” (UNCCD, 2016). The concept was raised to galvanize efforts around a concrete target of “no net loss” and it aims to maintain the world’s resource of healthy and productive land through a dual-pronged approach of measures to avoid or reduce land degradation combined with measures to reverse existing degradation. LDN was also adopted as target for Sustainable Development Goal 15. Country Parties have been invited to commit voluntarily to LDN at the national level.

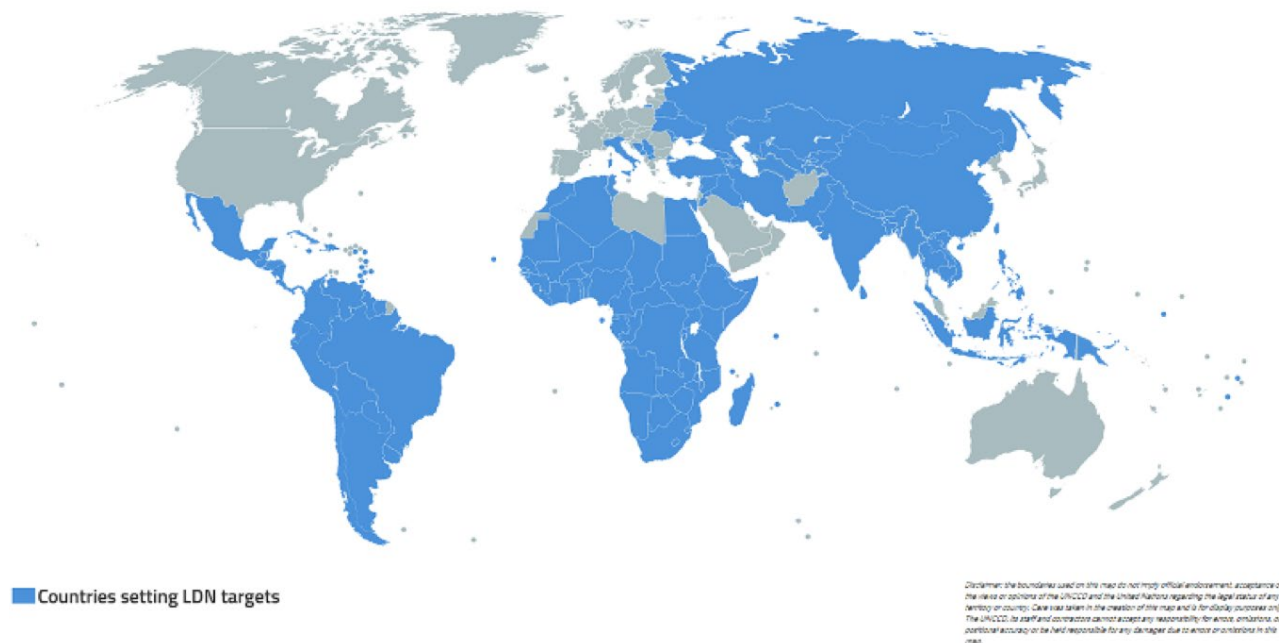
Interested countries can be supported with their national LDN target setting process, including setting national baselines, voluntary national LDN targets and associated measures to achieve LDN.

The main outputs of the LDN target setting process are:

- **A final country report** that provides a concise synthesis of the national process, summarizing the key LDN outputs and outcomes.
- **A report on country commitments to achieve LDN** that is more detailed. This reflects each country’s ambition for achieving LDN based on the national LDN targets defined and taking into account domestic circumstances and capabilities, and underlines the country commitment to the LDN response hierarchy (avoid, reduce, reverse).

## Key results

Globally, **129 countries** have pledged to establish national voluntary LDN targets and relevant measures to achieve LDN by 2030.

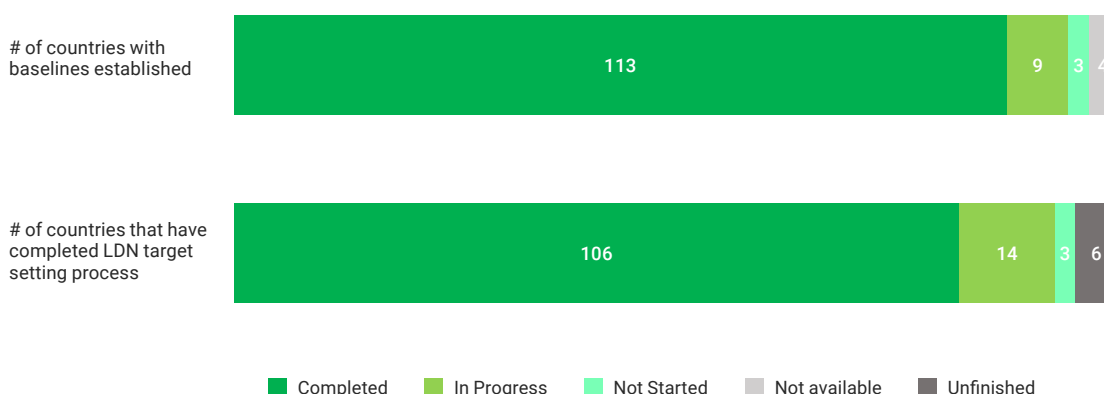


**106 countries** have successfully completed the LDN target setting process<sup>1</sup> as of April 2022.

One hundred of these countries having published their national reports detailing the outcomes of this process on the [UNCCD website](#), and 71 countries having officially adopted their LDN targets through high-level government commitments.

The GM continues to support countries to finalize their voluntary LDN target setting or secure high-level political commitments for LDN.

**Figure 1: Status of baselines established and completion of the LDN target setting process**



<sup>1</sup> Including countries that participated in LDN Pilot Project

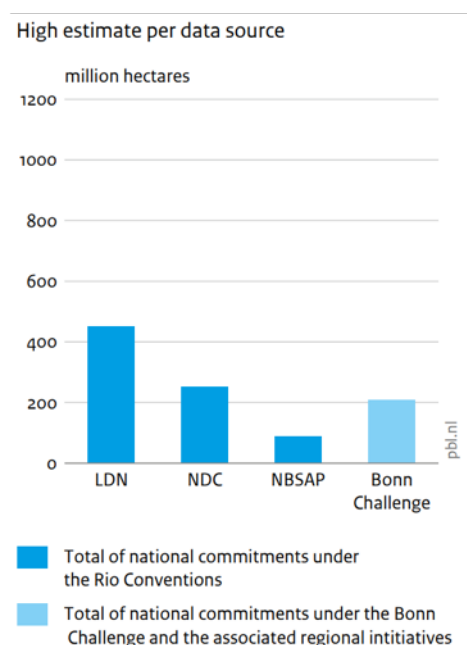


Measures that help to restore land and improve its management can offer multiple benefits to society simultaneously – contributing to food and water security and/or helping to address biodiversity loss and mitigate and adapt to climate change. The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 75/218, affirmed that combating desertification, land degradation and drought and achieving land degradation neutrality will also contribute to safeguarding livelihoods, preventing and preparing for future pandemics and building back better in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This diversity of benefits associated with land restoration can be further explored in the UNCCD Global Land Outlook 2.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 2: Global restoration commitments, 2020**



Restoration commitments are being made by countries across international conventions on climate, biodiversity and desertification and in the context of voluntary initiatives, such as the Bonn Challenge and the G20 Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Conserving Terrestrial Ecosystems.

Based on the latest global assessment of land restoration commitments,<sup>3</sup> the Land Degradation Neutrality target setting process has resulted in **voluntary commitments by country Parties to restore 450 million hectares of degraded land**.<sup>4</sup> An additional 250 million hectares are planned in the context of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and some 90 million hectares are included in the National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Current commitments from over 100 countries cover the restoration of almost 1 billion hectares of land over the next decade.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unccd.int/resources/global-land-outlook/glo2>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pbl.nl/en/publications/goals-and-commitments-for-the-restoration-decade>

<sup>4</sup> Source: UNCCD, UNFCCC, CBD, Bonn Challenge; collected and adapted by PBL for Global Restoration Commitments database, August 2020



## Looking ahead

A second phase of the LDN target setting programme (TSP 2.0) will assist countries that have already set voluntary LDN targets to **review, evaluate and refine their voluntary national LDN targets**. Tools will be made available to aid practical land-use decision making by drawing on geo-spatial technology and land-use planning tools and by helping make sure targets are gender-responsive and time-bound.







## Developing National Drought Plans (NDPs)

Drought puts livelihoods and ecosystems at risk and, in extreme cases, can trigger famine, displacement and conflict. Forecasts estimate that by 2050 droughts and water scarcity may affect over three-quarters of the world's population.

The [Drought Initiative](#) focuses on setting up drought preparedness systems, particularly through National Drought Plans (NDPs); working together at the regional level to reduce drought vulnerability and risk and providing a toolbox that stakeholders can use to boost the drought resilience of people and ecosystems. The GM of the UNCCD is helping countries to put in place **regional strategic frameworks**. The frameworks will guide long-term objectives in developing technical and institutional capacity to manage drought. This includes data sharing, early warning, monitoring, vulnerability and impact mapping, as well as drought risk mitigation measures.

### Key results

Of the 73 countries that expressed interest in NDPs, 69 have advanced on their national process of designing national-level plans of action, with 60 of these countries having finalized their NDPs, and 9 countries in the process of developing their plans. There are already **34 validated National Drought Plans** publicly available on the [UNCCD website](#) in order to showcase best practices and promote learning among countries.

The GM has supported development of two regional drought resilience strategic frameworks – in Central Asia and Southern African Development Community (SADC).

### Looking ahead

The GM aims to continue to support countries in moving from drought planning to action. The GM is already starting to collaborate with partners, such as the International Federation of Red Cross in Nigeria and Madagascar, in response to the recommendations contained in NDPs.

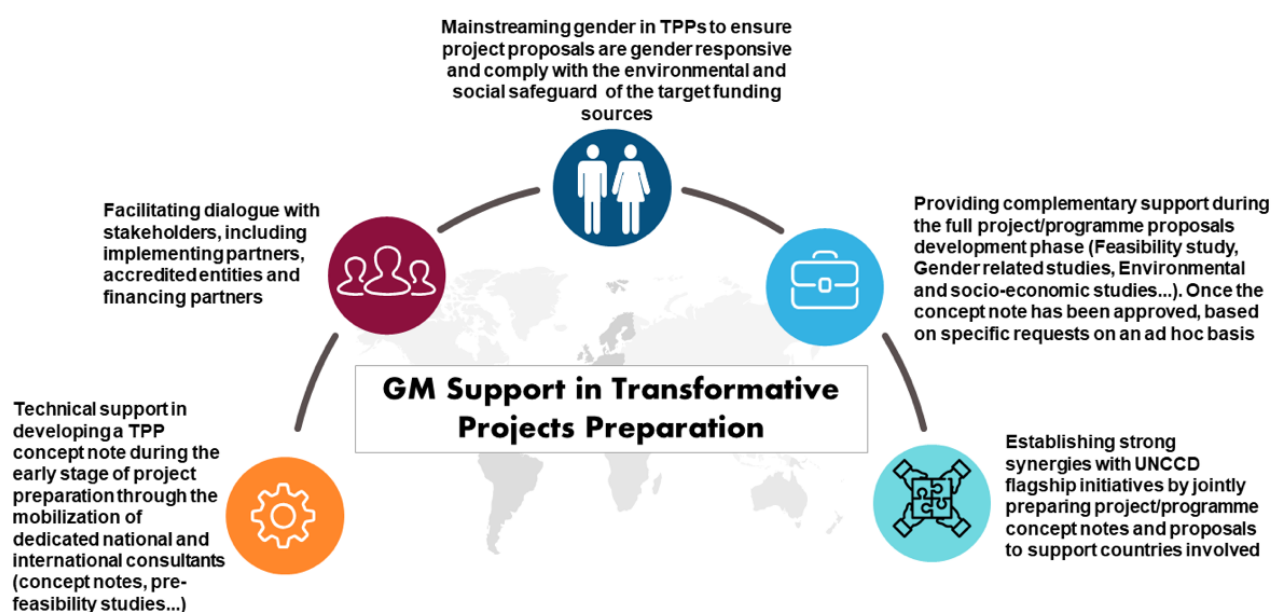
In addition, the GM will carry out assessments into the feasibility and options for establishing a Drought Resilience Fund and the potential for issuing Sustainable Land Bonds, in alignment with LDN, as a potential source of financing for both sustainable land management (SLM) and drought.

# Resource mobilization

The GM is assisting countries in translating the voluntary LDN targets and NDPs into concrete actions on the ground. This is done largely through development of gender-responsive transformative projects and programmes (TPP) that generate multiple benefits.

We focus on assisting countries that have requested support to develop **early-stage project/programme concept notes that can be further developed into full-fledged project proposals to implement land-based solutions, and responding to global priorities**, for example the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and building back better after the impacts of COVID 19.

Current requirements for country support	
To benefit from the GM support, country action is needed	A formal request should be sent to the GM and include:
The minimum <b>criteria</b> are that the <b>LDN targets are technically validated and/or the drought report is finalized.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A draft project or programme <b>idea note</b></li> <li>• Suggested or preferred <b>funding source(s)</b></li> <li>• Suggested or preferred <b>implementing partners</b> (that are eligible to access the identified source of funding)</li> </ul>



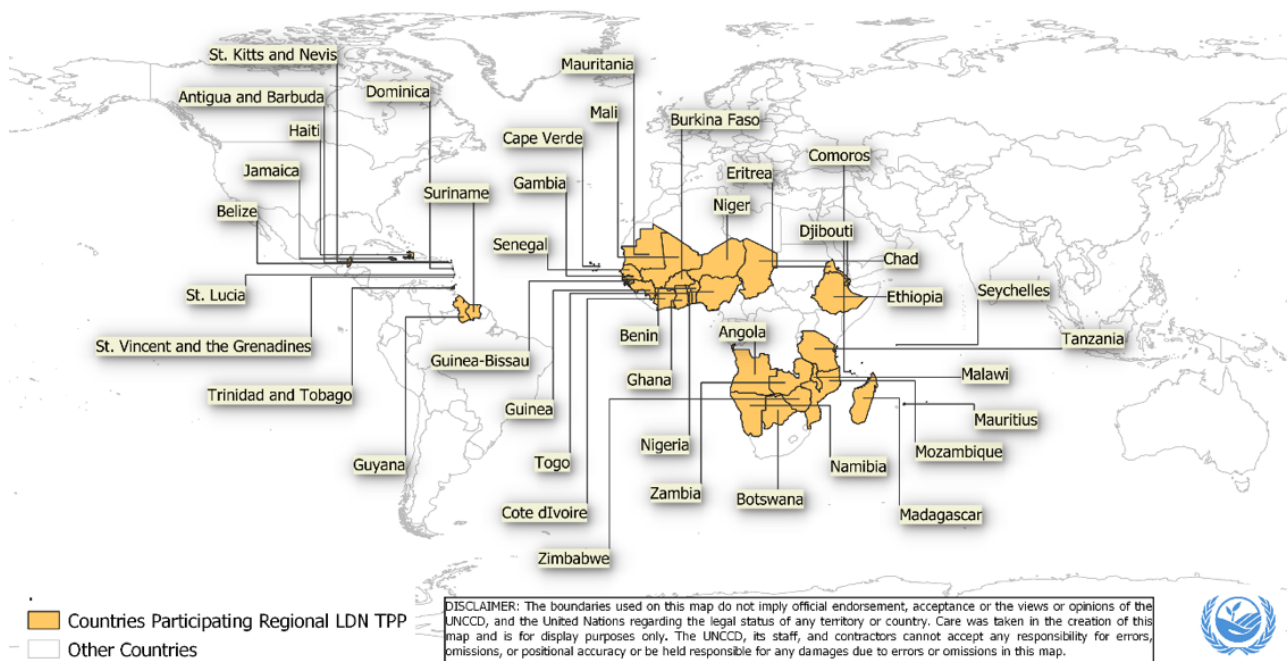
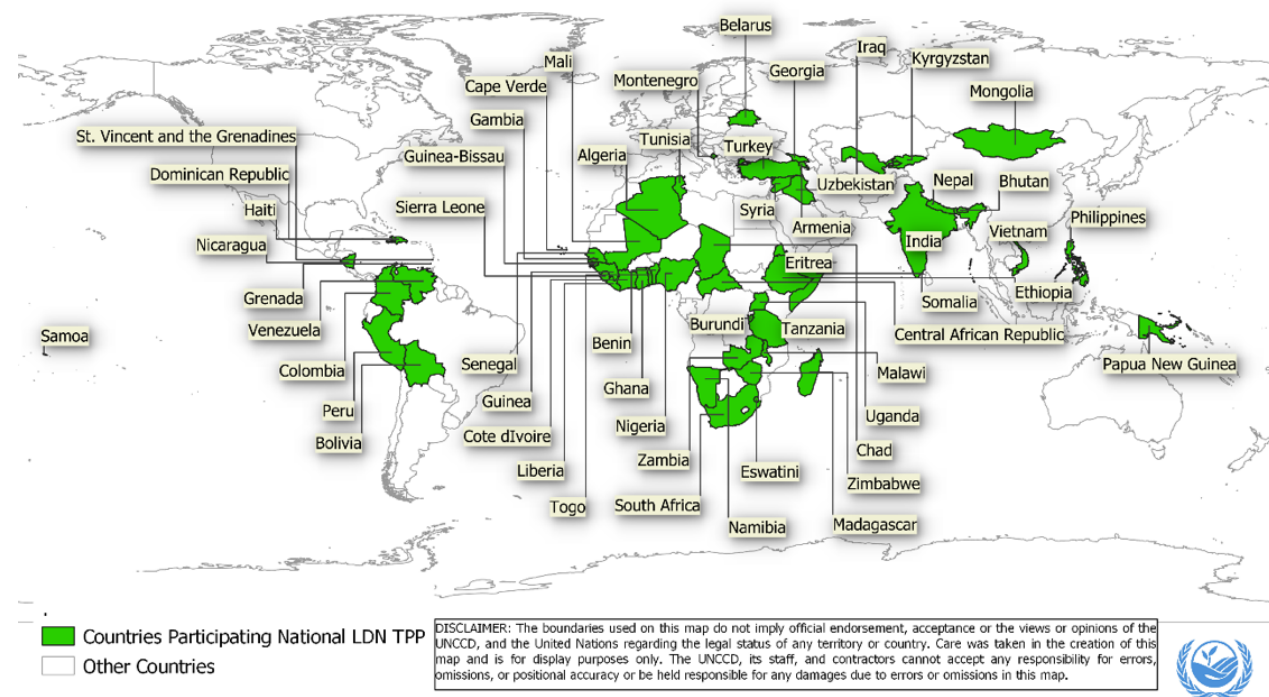
The GM has been working with implementing entities and other partners, targeting a wide range of funding sources such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund, and multilateral and bilateral funding sources as well as the private sector, among others.



## Key results

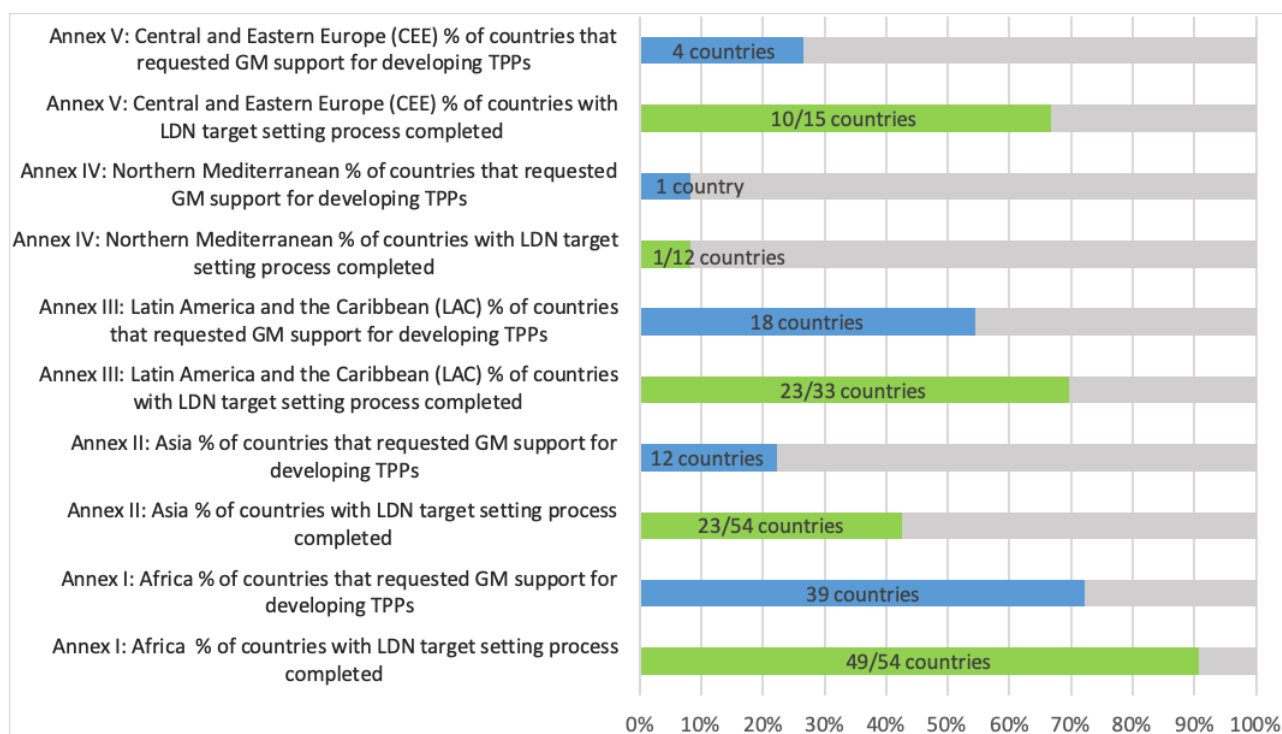
Since 2018, **74 countries** have participated in TPPs and are aiming to develop a national and/or regional/ sub-regional projects.

As of April 2022, **65 requests for support** – along with project ideas – have been submitted for further development into project concept notes and bankable proposals.

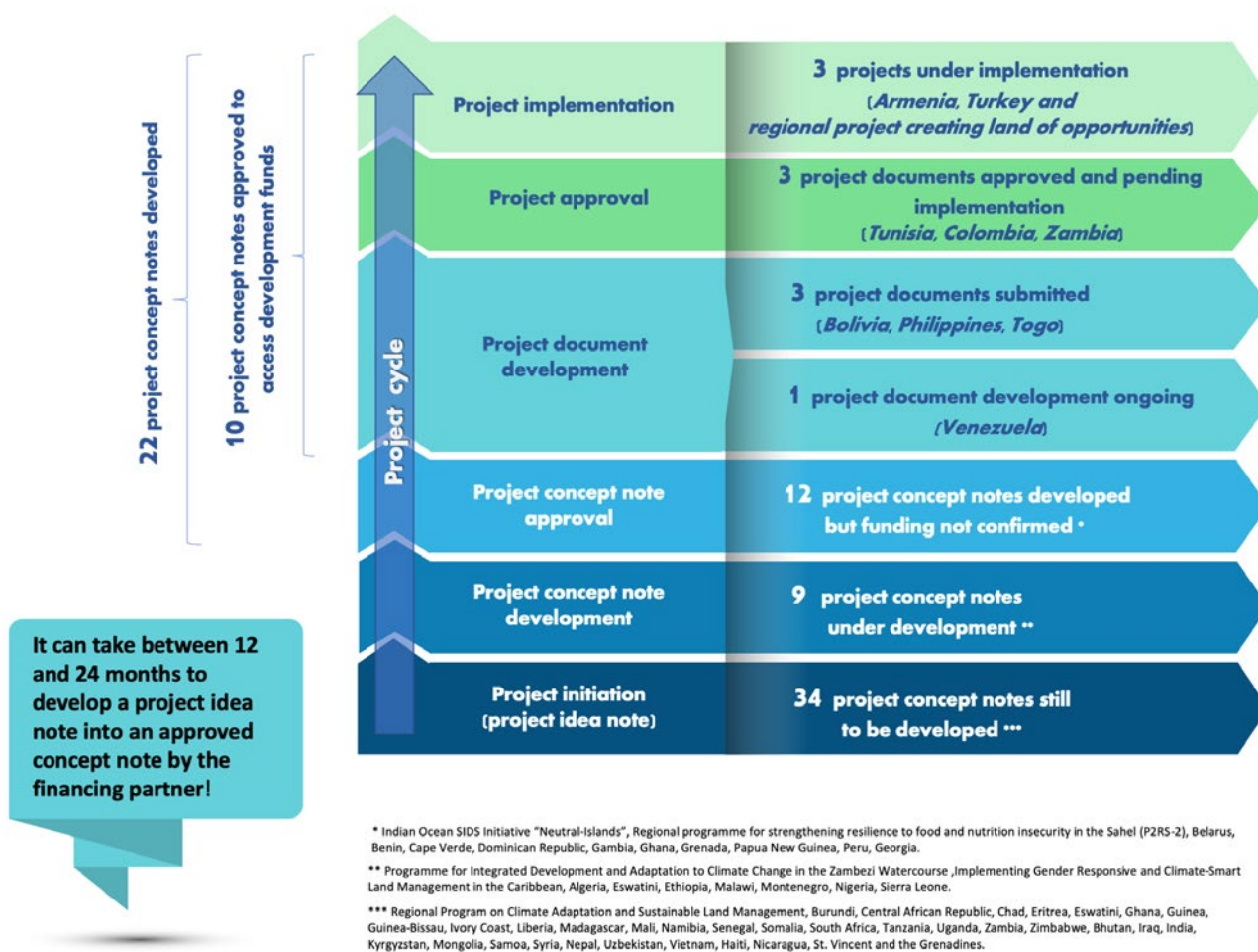




**Figure 3:** Comparison of percentage of countries with LDN TSP completed and the requests received for GM support for developing TPPs as per the UNCCD Regional Annexes







All concept notes in the pipeline are based on land-based solutions and are anticipated to generate multiple benefits<sup>5</sup> if approved for funding.

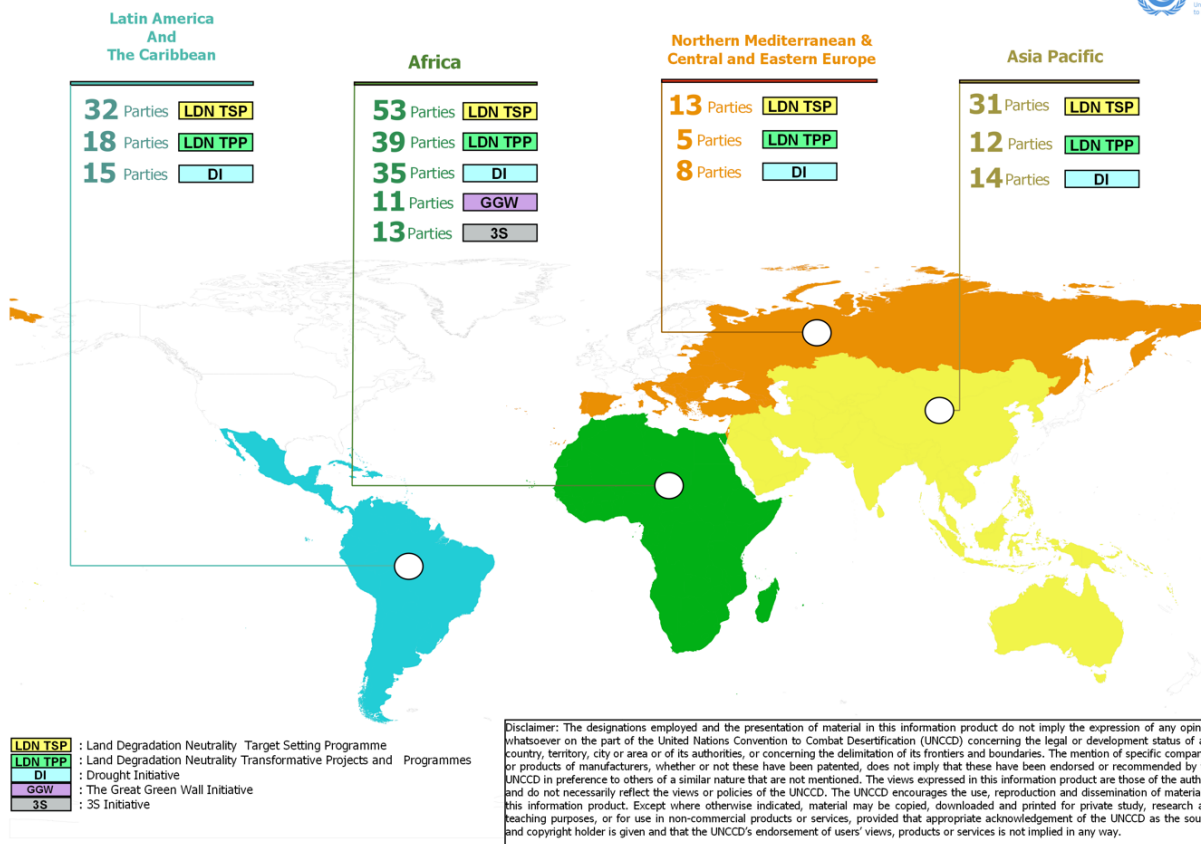
For example, the pipeline includes:

- **6 related to drought** (i.e., Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Madagascar)
- **20 addressing biodiversity loss** (i.e., Armenia, Bolivia, Guinea, Peru, Philippines),
- **31 contributing to climate change adaptation and mitigation** (i.e., Colombia, Eswatini, Ghana, Malawi)
- **22 contributing to creating green jobs** (i.e., Malawi, Nigeria, Tunisia)
- **2 regional and 10 national projects have benefited from additional support to prepare gender-specific studies** such as gender gap analyses and gender action plans

<sup>5</sup> This data is based on an analysis of projects' objectives, main components and main activities.



## Overview of country participation in GM initiatives per UNCCD Regional Annexes



# An emerging partnership for project preparation

## Our challenge

The GM's existing support to country Parties in target setting and drought planning has created momentum and demand for gender-responsive projects and programmes beyond our current capacity.

The structuring of investment-ready project proposals can be challenging. Implementing projects based on transformative land-based solutions are usually complex in nature, involving multiple objectives, stakeholders and institutions and requiring a variety of different interventions. Many stakeholders – including governments, NGOs and private investors – lack the knowledge, experience and institutional capacity to develop land-based project proposals that meet the quality requirements of public and private funders.



## Our solution

To meet demand and improve quality, the GM is changing its operating model. We are going to be focusing on developing the requisite capacities at the country level and establishing new, strategic partnerships to accelerate and expand the preparation of investment-ready land-based solutions globally.

We are growing the network of strategic partners we work with to design transformative projects – coordinating and streamlining outreach to co-create products (notably a pipeline of national, multi-country and regional bankable projects and innovative financing opportunities) and embarking on a process of matchmaking/brokering to kick-start more agile interactions. A small number of pilot demonstration projects will contribute to transforming the LDN theory and concepts and NDPs into practice and deliver results that can be up-scaled and replicated.

As of April 2022, more than 15 partners have expressed an interest in collaborating with us in this exciting partnership journey.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is supporting the GM of the UNCCD to establish a project preparation partnership that aims to become a 'global clearing house' for the preparation of projects that can address desertification and land degradation, drought, land tenure, land governance and deliver on other land-based solutions. We will keep a focus on encouraging gender responsiveness and assisting the most vulnerable populations and countries.

## Main components of the partnership



This approach will:

- Provide more flexible support to countries at different scales for a wider portfolio of land-based and integrated solutions;
- Contribute to building synergies in implementation among the three Rio Conventions;
- Support gender mainstreaming through the development of gender-responsive projects;
- Generate multiple benefits in terms of agriculture, health, migration and integrated planning;
- Work in a complimentary way with initiatives such as the G20 Global Initiative on Reducing Land Degradation and Enhancing Conservation of Terrestrial Habitats, the United Nations Forum on Forests Clearing House on Forest Financing, and the Commonwealth Climate Finance Hub;
- Scale up existing partnerships and be open to new offers of collaboration and partnership.

## Key results

- Two consultative meetings were convened with partners in December 2021 and February 2022 to confirm the value proposition.
- The Partnership Policy and Standard Operating Procedures are under development.
- A number of current partnerships where the GM is collaborating on project design have already evolved in line with the new operating model.



## Selected projects under development

### Using a Water-Energy-Food-Nexus approach to achieve climate resilience through the reduction of landscape degradation in South Africa

- **Geographic location:** Southern Africa
- **Participating countries:** South Africa
- **Project preparation partners:** Global Water Partnership (GWP), Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), IUCN and GM of the UNCCD
- **Project objective:** To build the climate resilience in vulnerable rural regions of South Africa by promoting the uptake of integrated approaches that prevent climate-change-induced land degradation while enhancing agricultural and ecosystem productivity and maintaining vulnerable biodiversity.
- **Target source of funding:** GCF
- **Progress:** Baseline report and pre-feasibility study completed.

### CSIDS-LDN/Climate Resilient Food Security and SLM Umbrella Project

- **Geographic location:** Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
- **Participating countries:** Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago (to be confirmed)
- **Programme preparation partners:** The Partnership Initiative for Sustainable Land Management (PISLM), GM of the UNCCD and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (to be confirmed)
- **Programme objective:** Harnessing Land Degradation Neutrality as a means to enhance climate smart sustainable land management, climate resilience and sustainable food security
- **Targeted sources of funding:** GCF and other interested funding partners
- **Progress:** Draft Simplified Approval Process Concept Note developed and soft submission to GCF.

### Sustainable, Stability and Security initiative (3S)

- **Geographic location:** Global
- **Programme preparation partners:** International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and GM of the UNCCD
- **Programme objective:** The proposal will include around 10 countries globally and will seek to channel climate finance to meet the overlapping objectives of Adaptation Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP+) and the 3S, specifically, reducing the climate change drivers of rural migration and unemployment.
- **Targeted sources of funding:** IFAD and GCF
- **Progress:** Programme development initiated by IFAD



### Programme for Integrated Development and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Zambezi Watercourse (PIDACC Zambezi)

- **Geographic location:** Southern Africa
- **Participating countries:** Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe
- **Programme preparation partners:** Zambezi Watercourse Commission (ZAMCOM), the African Development Bank (AfDB), GM of the UNCCD and the Climate Resilient Infrastructure Development Facility (CRIDF)
- **Programme objective:** To build strong communities that are resilient to climatic and economic shocks in the Zambezi Watercourse, through promoting inclusive transformative investments, job-creation and ecosystem-based solutions.
- **Targeted sources of funding:** AfDB, GEF, GCF and other interested funding partners
- **Progress:** AfDB Regional Operations seed funding allocated for three countries and the regional component; Project Preparation Mission completed in six countries



# Showcasing global programmes

## Pilot projects

The UNCCD, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Korea Forest Service (KFS) jointly launched the Changwon Initiative's Greening Drylands Partnership (GDP) at the UNCCD COP 10 in 2011. Through the GDP, the GM supports the implementation of small-scale pilot projects to demonstrate proof of concept, best practices and new innovations. These pilot projects can then be used to catalyse and generate the required awareness and interest for project developers and financing partners to scale up projects.

The GDP aims to contribute to the enhancement of livelihoods in communities affected by desertification, land degradation and drought; improve the conditions of the affected ecosystems, protect biodiversity and further engage in mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. This would help create conditions for an enabling environment for sustainable land management and green growth opportunities.

The GDP activities from 2017 to 2021 included projects in Kazakhstan (completed), Tajikistan (completed), Kyrgyzstan (completed), Armenia (completed), Belarus (second phase), Ecuador (second phase), Peru, Mongolia and Ethiopia.

Additional financial resources to implement pilot projects have been mobilized from Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).





## Enabling activities

The GEF, as the financial mechanism, supports a number of enabling activities that are designed to prepare plans and/or strategies and to help countries fulfil their obligations under the UNCCD.

### **The GM is currently engaged in the following GEF enabling activities**

#### **Global Support Programmes (GSPs) GSP II and GSP III: Strengthening capacities of Country Parties for UNCCD monitoring and reporting**

Implemented by UNEP and executed by the GM of the UNCCD.

The main objective of GSP III is to enhance technical and institutional capacity for land degradation monitoring and reporting in the context of the UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018–2030 and SDG target 15.3

#### **Enabling activities for implementing UNCCD COP Drought Decisions**

Implemented by FAO and executed by FAO and the GM of the UNCCD.

The project objective is to enable the UNCCD Parties to implement national drought plans according to the principles of integrated drought management.

#### **Integrating Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) into land use planning frameworks to strengthen national UNCCD enabling environments**

Implemented by IUCN and executed by the GM of the UNCCD.

The main objective is to strengthen LDN governance and land use planning in a gender-responsive manner. This project will be an integral part of the TSP 2.0 and is currently under development. It is expected to be approved by GEF during 2022.







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Platz der Vereinten Nationen 1  
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