



Global Environment Facility

Summary of Document GEF/C.24/6/Rev.1

Scope and Coherence of the Land Degradation Activities in the GEF

Recommended Council Decision

The Council, having reviewed document GEF/C.24/6/Rev.1, *Scope and Coherence of the Land Degradation Activities in the GEF*, endorses the policies and direction presented in the paper that the GEF Secretariat and Implementing and Executing Agencies are pursuing in developing the GEF portfolio in land degradation.

Executive Summary

1. This document responds to the Council's decision at its May 2004 meeting requesting the "GEF Secretariat in collaboration with the Implementing Agencies, to prepare an analysis of the scope, implementation focus and coherence of land degradation activities for submission to its meeting in November 2004."
2. The document seeks to: (a) clarify a number of fundamental and longstanding issues associated with the definition of land degradation, global benefits arising from the focal area, the rationale for incremental costs, and linkages between the GEF and the UNCCD; (b) analyze the coherence of the land degradation portfolio; and (c) reflect on future directions towards more effective and sustained integration of natural resources management within the GEF.
3. The document draws on the findings of the recently concluded Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and describes how combating land degradation clearly produces global environmental benefits that are linked to its local and national origins.
4. It recognizes that incrementality in this focal area emerges in the form of additional activities and processes associated with the removal of barriers to sustainable land management and / or to the design and implementation of an "integrated ecosystem based" approach to land management. Key barriers that are addressed include, *inter alia*, institutional, policy and regulatory, technical, capacity, and knowledge base of best practice. GEF financing is also used to bring together different and diverse sectoral ministries and departments and communities to ensure coordinated sustainable management of an ecosystem that is responsive to both the environmental and developmental needs of the country. These concepts will be applied in determining incremental cost: lifting barriers, cost sharing and sliding scale.

5. In fulfilling its role as a financial mechanism of the UNCCD pursuant to article 20 of the Convention, GEF financing is directed towards: (a) capacity building; and (b) implementation of innovative and indigenous sustainable land management practices. In providing this assistance, the GEF will focus on assisting countries to implement national and regional programs, in particular their national action programs and sub-regional and regional action programs.

6. The document provides an analysis of the portfolio of projects and programs financed to date and notes that the objective of the sustainable land management operational program is to promote a programmatic approach and cross-sectoral integration for addressing trade-offs in managing natural resources through integrated land use planning and community driven development.

7. This objective has been met by a mix of projects that strike a balance between: (a) the land degradation strategic priorities of capacity building and implementation of innovative and indigenous sustainable land management practices; (b) traditional project modalities and piloting of innovative cross-sectoral and programmatic approaches; and (c) diverse land use systems.

8. The major challenge arising in the focal area is derived from the limitation on resources for this new and expanding focal area. After only 23 months of operations, resources identified for approved and pipeline projects fully match the US\$ 250 million programmed for the land degradation focal area in GEF-3. Most projects now entering the pipeline will mature under GEF-4, and it can be expected that the demands for this focal area under GEF-4 will be vastly greater than the resources allocated under GEF-3.

9. In looking to the future, the document describes the clear evolution towards identifying synergies among the focal areas and to GEF programming in the broader context of integrated natural resources management.