



KM:Land Initiative

Medium-sized Project:

Ensuring Impacts from SLM – Development of a Global Indicator System

Expert Workshop on SLM Indicators

1 October 2010, Rome, Italy

(hosted by FAO)

Workshop Report

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1. Introduction

The KM:Land project held an Expert Workshop on SLM indicators on 1 October, 2010. The Workshop was co-hosted by LADA-FAO at the FAO facilities in Rome, Italy. The purpose of the Workshop was to: discuss the findings of the pilot testing of the project impact indicators developed by the KM:Land project in selected UNDP/GEF projects, undertaken between May-September, 2010; and, to harness feedback from participants on the indicator system and guidance materials for their finalization. The Workshop was attended by project managers, SLM experts, and agency representatives. The final meeting agenda and participants list can be found in Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

Since the last Expert Advisory Group (EAG) meeting which took place in June 2009, the KM:Land project made progress on a number of key outputs, including:

- Finalization of the selected project-level impact indicators for use across the GEF Land Degradation (LD) portfolio, including measurement methodologies and reporting requirements, based on the feedback received at the last EAG meeting in June 2009;
- Finalization of draft guidance materials for measurement and reporting of indicators;
- Pilot testing of project-level indicators in five UNDP/GEF projects and a draft report of the findings; and,
- Finalization of an Analysis Report on Impact Pathways, and a Concept Note on a GEF SLM Learning Network.

During the Workshop, UNDP presented an overview of the selection of UNDP/GEF projects for pilot testing, and the KM:Land team provided a summary of the findings which emerged from the pilot testing visits. The project managers in attendance from the visited projects (Tajikistan, Senegal and Dominican Republic) were also invited to share their local perspectives from the pilot testing experience, including issues, challenges and recommendations for consideration. A summary of the presentations can be found in Annex 3. The presentations were followed by plenary discussions, and recommendations for a way forward for the KM:Land project was proposed. The following sections provide a summary of the outcomes and discussions of the Expert Workshop.

2. Decisions of the Expert Workshop

The discussions and presentations that took place during the Expert Workshop were critical in wrapping up the pilot testing activity and setting a way forward for the KM:Land project. By the end of the Workshop, it was decided that:

- The final product from the KM:Land project will be training or learning materials on the measurement and reporting of indicators, based on the findings of the pilot testing and feedback from the Workshop. These materials will be based on the existing guidelines produced by the KM:Land project. The materials will need to be presented in a simple, straightforward manner, and will need to present the options available for measuring and reporting on indicators in a practical, applied, and non-prescriptive way. The target audience of these materials will be project managers and non-experts, and it is envisioned that these materials will be distributed globally.
- Workshop participants, agencies, and members of the LD Task Force will be invited to provide feedback on the training/learning materials prior to their finalization.

- The draft report on the findings from the pilot testing will be finalized, and shared with all Workshop participants.

3. Summary of Workshop Discussions

3.1. Opening session

The Workshop opened with a welcome from Richard Thomas of UNU-INWEH and Freddy Nachtergaele of LADA-FAO.

3.2. Challenges facing indicator development

The indicators session of the Workshop began with a summary of the achievements and challenges of the KM:Land project to date, and highlighted the major activities that have been completed thus far. It was followed by an overview by UNDP (Nik Sekhran) on the challenges in selecting a set of project impact indicators to be used across the GEF LD portfolio. UNDP indicated that the indicator work is crucial to the development of the GEF LD portfolio as it will form the basis for reporting to donors on the impacts that have been achieved in the LD Focal Area (FA). However, the summation of different results and indicators across the portfolio will be a challenge for the GEF, and should be an organic process for years to come, hopefully guided by a learning and adaptive process. Thus far, it has not always been clear what LD projects are trying to achieve and what sort of impacts they intend to have. It is hoped that the KM:Land project's experience in selecting and testing project indicators will help to improve the measurement of impacts in the GEF LD portfolio, and will help to determine the major lessons learned from this portfolio of projects.

UNDP further highlighted its concerns over the ability of projects to measure indicators, the availability of data, and the availability of resources for measurement and reporting. A useful exercise will be to identify the challenges in collecting the data, and to ask practically whether these indicators are feasible in terms of their application. Finally, it was noted by both UNDP and UNU-INWEH that clear guidance from GEF in terms of shifting targets will be key for designing projects and measuring impacts (with the tracking tool development being one such example of a shifting target).

3.3. Selection of UNDP/GEF projects for pilot testing

Following the presentation by UNDP (Akihito Kono) on the selection of UNDP/GEF projects for pilot testing, Workshop participants expressed their concern that only low-risk projects were selected for pilot testing. They noted that according to the draft pilot testing report, challenges already exist in measuring indicators with the selected projects; it can therefore be assumed that measuring impacts will be even more challenging for higher-risk projects. It was noted by the GEF Secretariat that in selecting ideal projects for testing assumes that the future will also be ideal, and this is not necessarily the case.

Additionally, Workshop participants noted that the low-risk project selection criteria might compromise the findings of the pilot testing and the feasibility for applying these indicators across the LD portfolio. It was suggested that a sensitivity analysis be included in the pilot testing report to explain the impact of the selection criteria on the findings.

UNDP clarified that in selecting projects for pilot testing, it aimed to select projects which were well designed, had robust logframes and which had some capacity to measure data in order to determine the capacities of projects for measuring indicators. Country/regional distribution was also considered during project selection in order to ensure that the pilot testing would be sufficiently diverse. Further, projects were selected based on their workload and capacity to assist UNU in the pilot testing. In hindsight, UNDP acknowledged that projects from other risk groups might also have been considered.

Participants also inquired as to whether a poverty analysis assessment was included as part of the selection criteria. While UNDP noted that poverty was one of the main criteria used during the selection process through LDC and SIDS projects, the poverty criteria remains a challenge at the project site level in terms of disaggregated data.

Workshop participants noted that an additional challenge to the measurement of indicators will be the type or focus of the project; projects that operate on the ground will have an easier time measuring impacts through indicators than those which focus on higher-level activities, such as institutional capacity. UNDP acknowledged that there has been a shift in recent GEF cycles in the types of projects developed under the LD portfolio towards those which focus on higher-level activities.

3.4. Plenary discussion on pilot testing overview and local perspectives and experiences

Following presentations from the KM:Land project team (Caroline King) and the project managers from Tajikistan, Senegal and Dominican Republic, a number of issues were raised.

First, with regards to the human well-being indicators, it was noted that it would be difficult to show attribution to land degradation through the measurement of the sub-indicator on maternal mortality ratio; this is consistent with the findings of the pilot testing, as outlined in the draft report. It was also noted that the poverty sub-indicator should be used with caution, and can only provide one piece of the puzzle. It was suggested that subsistence affluence be taken into account within the poverty sub-indicator. It was also noted that it will be important to determine which segments of the population are being targeted by the LD projects.

Second, with regards to the indicator on water, Workshop participants noted that the project from Tajikistan is one of the few projects with the capacity to look at water issues; this was also consistent with the findings in the draft report. In general, it was noted that SLM projects aim to improve water efficiency, as integrated water management is implicit in SLM; however, this usually does not appear in the context of the two sub-indicators selected on water availability and water quality, and is complicated by the fact that LD projects aim to introduce improved land management practices. It was also suggested that the water availability indicator could be looked at in terms of land use practices, especially in terms of water use efficiency.

Finally, participants noted the need to integrate the indicators from project inception, together with a baseline survey. UNDP suggested that baseline data could be collected and submitted in the form of a tracking tool prior to project clearance and approval. However, the issue of cost and time will need to be addressed, as baseline surveys would entail financial and human resources. The importance of generating baseline data from the outset, though, was emphasized. Following on this, clear impact pathways outlined during the project design phase would help projects to achieve their intended impacts, but this would require some form of validation which could be done through the baseline surveys. Participants noted that this could be a lesson learned to apply in the future.

3.5. Plenary discussion on pilot testing

A number of key issues were highlighted by Workshop participants for consideration in the uptake of indicators across LD projects and for the finalization of the guidance materials.

First, participants noted that the ultimate outcome of LD projects is to have a positive impact on human development, linking the environmental-development nexus, and therefore this component cannot be disregarded. There must be a clear link between LD projects and their impact on human development, which can be done through the human well-being indicators, even if some projects may initially show resistance to them.

Second, the measurability of indicators and associated costs remains a key issue that needs to be addressed. It was noted that the draft report lacked sufficient information on the time and resources that would be needed for the measurement of indicators, and some sort of indication on the cost-efficiency needs to be provided. Participants also expressed their reservations about the measurability of some of the selected indicators, and how some countries will obtain the data needed for the indicators. Since donors will insist that the indicators are measurable, hard data will be needed for this; however, collecting hard data in a cost-effective way will be a challenge. The GEF Secretariat noted that the most critical need for measurement will be the baseline data, which will require investment of M&E resources from the beginning of the project.

Given the costs associated with measurement, participants suggested that a non-prescriptive approach to measuring indicators could be used to address these challenges, as a prescriptive approach may turn out to be more costly without offering any additional benefits. While the five headline indicators (land cover, land use, carbon, water availability, human well-being) will in general be applicable to most LD projects, it will be useful to think of alternate approaches for measuring indicators which will be just as effective in providing information but without the associated costs. It was suggested that this could be determined on a case by case basis. Using a common method to measure indicators across the LD portfolio might not be necessary in order to be able to compare results or impacts across projects; however, participants suggested that it be clarified as to whether a common approach should be used.

Third, participants commented on the issue of attribution, particularly with respect to the human well-being sub-indicators of poverty and maternal mortality ratio. There was concern over whether these indicators would be practical, and whether they necessarily relate the impacts from SLM projects. However, while these sub-indicators may not have a direct link to SLM, the KM:Land project team argued that there is a need to include them as they provide a good overall indication of the positive and negative impacts occurring within the project area. While it may appear that certain sub-indicators do not demonstrate direct impacts from SLM, the set of selected indicators, together with the contextual indicators that were selected, are mutually reinforcing; the results from one indicator may be helpful in tracking the results from another indicator. Therefore, when used as a set, they provide an overall indication of the impacts from SLM projects. It was suggested that better clarification could be provided on how these mutually-reinforcing indicators can be linked (e.g., water availability indicator and human well-being; water availability and land use practices; etc.).

Fourth, participants commented on the need to reflect on establishing post-project impact assessments, which will be especially important for longer-term projects, and for measuring global environmental benefits (GEBs). Not only is there a need to begin planning for this type of activity, but resources will also need to be set aside. It was suggested that as part of its project outputs, the KM:Land project could

make a recommendation for the need to establish post-project impact assessments, possibly through a national institution. In addition, there is a need to link the indicators with knowledge management processes from the beginning of projects in order to capture the knowledge that is generated from a project. This will entail an investment of resources in knowledge management in each project.

Finally, participants sought clarification on how the impacts from the project or portfolio level could be used to determine impacts at the global level. The GEF Secretariat remarked that while it is difficult to attribute impact from global-level indicators, it is possible to aggregate data from the portfolio level to the global level, especially if projects measure indicators according to the same standards. In this respect, using a standard set of indicators at different scales at the portfolio level will be useful.

4. Conclusions

The KM:Land Expert Workshop on SLM indicators received positive feedback and insightful comments from participants on the findings of the KM:Land pilot testing of project impact indicators, and resulted in establishing a way forward from the pilot testing activity.

The GEF Secretariat expressed appreciation to the KM:Land project for the progress it has made and was pleased with the results of the pilot testing. Although it cautioned against overburdening projects with reporting requirements, it acknowledged the advantage of working together to measure and communicate these benefits. The GEF Secretariat acknowledged that the GEF LD FA has been a moving target over the last few years, and expressed appreciation for the patience of the KM:Land project during this time.

UNDP expressed appreciation for the tremendous efforts that have been made by the KM:Land project. UNU-INWEH indicated that, together with UNDP, they will work on developing the final outputs and remaining activities of the KM:Land project. Finally, UNU-INWEH thanked all participants for their contributions to the Workshop, and was grateful for the high level of agency participation.

Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

Session 1: Opening Session		
9:00 – 9:10	Opening Remarks	UNU-INWEH and UNDP
9:10 – 9:15	Welcome from LADA (host institution)	Freddy Nachtergaele, FAO
9:15 – 9:25	Introductions	
9:25 – 9:35	Meeting Objectives and Agenda Overview	Richard Thomas and Bhim Adhikari, UNU-INWEH
Session 2: Project Indicators and Pilot Testing		
<i>Session Moderator: Richard Thomas</i>		
<i>Rapporteur: Harriet Bigas</i>		
9:35 – 10:00	KM:Land project overview: progress to date	Bhim Adhikari and Richard Thomas, UNU-INWEH
10:00 – 10:10	Overview of UNDP/GEF projects selected for pilot testing	Nik Sekhran, UNDP
10:10 – 10:50	Project Indicators and findings of pilot testing	Caroline King, KM:Land project team
10:50 – 11:10	<i>Tea/coffee break</i>	
11:10 – 11:25	Experiences on measuring impacts: CACILM CPP: Demonstrating Local Responses to Combating Land Degradation and Improving Sustainable Land Management in SW Tajikistan	Firdavs Faizulloev
11:25 – 11:35	Experiences on measuring impacts: SIP: Groundnut Basin Soil Management and Regeneration, Senegal	Ibra Sounkarou Ndiaye
11:35 – 11:45	Experiences on measuring impacts: Demonstrating Sustainable Land Management in the Upper Sabana Yegua Watershed System, Dominican Republic	Ramon Baez
11:45 – 12:30	Plenary discussion on indicator pilot testing and linking it to KM systems	
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>	
14:00 – 15:30	Plenary discussion on indicator pilot testing and linking it to KM systems (continued)	
Session 3 Wrap-up and way forward: next steps for KM:Land project		
15:30 – 15:35	Mohamed Bakarr	Mohamed Bakarr, GEF
15:35 – 15:40	Nik Sekhran	Nik Sekhran, UNDP
15:40 – 15:55	Next steps for KM: Land project	Richard Thomas, UNU-INWEH
16:00	Close of workshop and tea/coffee break	

Annex 2: Participants List

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Annex 3: Summary of Presentations

1. KM:Land Project Overview: Progress to Date

Bhim Adhikari, UNU-INWEH

A brief history of the KM:Land project was provided, highlighting its major achievements and the challenges it has encountered throughout its implementation.

Among its achievements, the KM:Land project has identified, selected and received approval for four global indicators, which were presented to the GEF Council in 2008. Further, it has selected five project indicators including measurement methodologies and has produced guidelines for reporting. Pilot testing for the project indicators was conducted in 2010. The KM:Land project has additionally developed an intervention pathways model to guide project design, and a proposal for a KM:Land Learning Network.

Among the challenges, the KM:Land project underwent an Adaptive Management Review in 2008 which significantly delayed implementation of project activities. The project also faced numerous strategic shifts within the GEF. The KM:Land project was granted a no-cost extension until December 2010.

2. Overview of UNDP/GEF Project Selection for Pilot Testing

Akihito Kono, UNDP

The UNDP/GEF Land Degradation portfolio has a total of 17 projects which underwent the 2008-2009 UNDP Annual Performance Report (APR)/GEF Project Implementation Review (PIR) from which the projects for the KM:Land pilot testing were selected. Of these, 14 are country-specific projects, while 3 are global.

A range of factors such as project status, intervention type, land-use type and national capacity were considered in selecting suitable projects for the pilot testing. The overall criteria used to select projects include: projects with good implementation track records which received a low-risk rating during the 2008-2009 APR/PIR process; projects which have completed or initiated the mid-term evaluation process; and, projects which have an in-depth M&E experience and have experience in measuring impacts. Finally, projects were also selected based on geographical regions with representative drylands and land degradation challenges.

3. Findings from the Pilot Testing of SLM Indicators

Caroline King, KM:Land project team

The objective of the pilot testing was to verify the extent to which the selected project indicators could be taken up in projects under the GEF LD portfolio. The indicators which were selected were expected to fit the SMART criteria (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timebound), and the pilot testing set out to determine to what extent it would be possible for projects to measure these indicators through a small sub-set of selected projects.

Five projects were selected for pilot testing in four countries (Tajikistan, Namibia, Senegal and Dominican Republic). Following the selection of projects by UNDP, the KM:Land project team developed a questionnaire and established email contact with the selected projects. These were followed by field

missions to the four countries for visits with the project teams, who also coordinated meetings with other relevant stakeholders.

The following is a summary of the pilot testing findings:

- i) The land cover and land use indicator was found to be relevant, as project interventions change land practices, uses and covers. Clear methods exist for measuring this indicator, and the required information and data can be collected.
- ii) The land productivity indicator was found to have direct relevance, but its measurability is mixed. Some information is available although project databases were found to be of varying stages of development and complexity. It was found that monitoring is only being done at the local level.
- iii) While the water availability indicator was found to be highly relevant, access to water was found to have less relevance. Information is available at the national level, however guidance will be needed on how to use this information. The water availability indicator is also tied to longer timescales.
- iv) The human well-being indicator was found to have direct relevance for the poverty sub-indicator, but not for those on maternal mortality ratio and malnourished children. It was found that information exists in national and project surveys, and the timescale depends on the intervals in these national data or surveys.

The priority recommendations which emerged from the pilot testing include: integrating the indicator on carbon sequestration; refining the water availability indicator; and, better reflection of land use classifications used in projects.

Overall, the findings of the pilot testing indicate that the five indicators appear to work well together as a set; projects are on learning curves in terms of data collection to monitor the selected indicators; there needs to be more connection between projects and national and global scientific processes; there are needs for basic guidance on the minimum requirements for reporting on indicators, and guidance should recommend use of with- and without-project scenarios; and, reporting requirements on these indicators could make a positive contribution to the adaptive management systems of the projects.

Further details on the pilot testing findings and recommendations can be found in the draft report.

4. Experiences on measuring impacts: Experiences from Tajikistan, Senegal and Dominican Republic

Firdavs Faizulloev, Ibra Sounkarou Ndiaye and Ramon Baez

The project managers from Tajikistan, Senegal and Dominican Republic presented a brief overview of their respective projects. They reported that the indicators on land cover/land use and land productivity would be the easiest to measure, while those on water availability and human well-being would be more challenging. In addition, they suggested that indicator measurement should commence through baseline surveys taken at project inception and followed through within the project's logical framework. Additionally, associated costs for measuring indicators currently not being monitored also needs to be addressed.

Further details on the findings from the individual project sites can be found in the pilot testing report.

Annex 4: List of Acronyms

APR	Annual Performance Report
EAG	Expert Advisory Group
FA	Focal Area
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
GEB	Global environmental benefits
GEF	Global Environment Facility
KM	Knowledge management
LADA	Land Degradation Assessment in Drylands
LD	Land degradation
LDC	Least developed countries
PIR	Project Implementation Review
SIDS	Small island developing states
SLM	Sustainable land management
SMART	Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNU-INWEH	United Nations University – Institute on Water, Environment and Health